

CHAIR'S REPORT FOLLOWING COMPLAINT RECEIVED FROM R. CLIFFORD ON R. SINCLAIR

12/01/2024 – complaint from Roger Clifford by email to Susie Amodio asking her to forward it to the committee. The complaint incorrectly referred to Robert Davies, he meant Rob Sinclair and it concerned abuse from Rob directed at Roger at table tennis on Thursday 11th.

12/01/2024 – Spoke to Jackie Duffy on phone.

Notes: She was playing with Roger, Ronnie and Steve Cann. When Rob Sinclair came over and started to go on at Roger about how could he come back when he had hurt 2 of his good friends [Joan and Ronnie]. At first she thought he was being funny and then realised he was really angry and having a go. She was left shaken by it. A lot of others in the room wouldn't have been aware because the acoustics in the room makes it hard to hear what's going on.

Did Rob physically threaten Roger? She didn't hear him being threatened.

13/01/2024 – Spoke to Steve Cann on the phone.

Notes: Rob Sinclair did indeed interrupt the game and was verbally abusive to Roger, swearing (F word). Roger kept calm and just avoided Rob's eye. Rob may have had just cause in saying something to Roger because of what had happened in the past, but he went about dealing with it the wrong way. Steve also thought Rob was joking at first but he soon realised he wasn't.

Did Rob physically threaten Roger? No, he didn't threaten physical violence but he was very violent in his manner. Even he [Steve] was quite shaken by what happened.

13/01/2024 – emailed Ronnie Wilford to ask if we could speak re the incident. Awaiting response.

13/01/2024 – emailed Rob Sinclair asking if we could meet so I could hear his side of the story. He phoned back and at first was very untrusting and said he was not happy about this. He really couldn't understand why I needed to know. Referred to us as a "spurious organisation". He felt he was being interrogated. I explained we were not spurious, we were the u3a and we had received a complaint from a Roger. All I wanted was to hear Rob's side to the events.

He called Roger a devious man, manipulative, and that he tries to dominate and order people around. Said he should be black-balled. I said you cannot black-ball people just like that. There needs to have been complaints and then you go through a proper procedure. Rob went on to explain there had been an incident last summer between Roger and Clive and Clive refused to play with Roger any more. It got heated, Joan tried to intervene to smooth things over and Roger was abusive towards her. She was left in tears. Then he talked about the incident with Ronnie. Ronnie is a nice guy but he had an argument with Roger because Roger was trying to order him around. He tried emailing Roger about it but Roger replied by email and was very abusive. Steve Cann tried to make the peace (by email) and got no response at all. Roger left the u3a at that point (following an upset in other group, probably the walking group) and then they heard he had been badmouthing people in Rothbury u3a.

Why did you swear at him? "When I saw that Roger had returned with no apologies, I saw the red mist. So for my sins I decided to confront him."

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I mentioned we have a Code of Conduct which states that we must respect other u3a members. Rob's response: I don't want to be lectured at by you. I set up this group. Roger is a disruptor and is nasty. I'll sort him out in my own way.

I asked, what do you mean by that? Rob replied, I will argue with him. I dislike him so much. You must know what he's like?

I replied, I've not been in a group with Roger, but I've been at the garden party with him and on a social trip and he was very chatty. Rob replied, he's full of gob-shite and that's not a swear word because I heard it on Countdown!

I explained Roger will not be at Tuesday's table tennis because it was unlikely we'll have spoken to everyone by then and then the committee will need to meet to review the matter.

13/01/2024 – tried phoning Mike Jevans, the Table Tennis Group Co-ordinator. He was in bed following an operation. Left a message there'd been an incident between RC and RS at table tennis.

15/01/2024 – Committee Interim meeting held. See separate minutes for agreed actions.

16/01/2024 - Stephen spoke to Ronnie Wilford at TT. He said he hadn't received my email or it may have been deleted in his junk folder. Stephen explained we were trying to build a picture of what had happened on the day so we could manage a complaint from roger. Ronnie commented he had plenty to say about Roger.

16/01/2024 – I forwarded Ronnie another copy of my request to speak to him.

17/01/2024 – Mike Jevans phoned to say he had got the details of the incident from Rob Sinclair. He told RS that he'd gone too far and he shouldn't overreact like that again. He confirmed that Roger had annoyed a lot of people when he used to be in the group but he appreciates a lot of people have put that behind them. I explained the process we are going through and that I am waiting to speak to Ronnie but I was concerned that Ronnie is fearful of speaking to me and if Mike Jevans should speak to him, please could he make him aware I only want to hear his version of the events. We also discussed that roger will not be allowed back into table tennis (or any other group) until he pays his subs as both taster sessions have been used. Mike seemed perfectly happy with the committee's handling of the incident. It was a positive discussion.

21/01/2024 – No word received from Ronnie. His silence could be read as speaking volumes. Email received from Roger headed "Closure and Moving Forward". He would like the "incident" (I believe he means "complaint") converted into a "Matter of Record where it can remain unless needed in the future."

Chair's recommendations to committee: (1) That we agree to Roger's request and thank him for it. (2) That we explain the steps taken so far including the development of a Code of Conduct (which we also send to Roger). (3) That we write to Rob explaining Roger has withdrawn the complaint about the incident but not before we had spoken to 2 people who had witnessed the outburst. As a result of this we have developed the Code of Conduct which we expect all parties to adhere to.