

Councillors are accused of holding head hostage

Police called after head teacher's car allegedly 'blocked' in row

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THREE councillors have been accused of holding the head teacher of Wrotham School "hostage" in a row over a boiler and a 3G pitch.

Police were called to a stand-off between head teacher Matthew Wright and councillors Mike Taylor, Robin Betts and Harry Rayner on Friday afternoon.

It ended with chair of governors Sheila Smith writing a missive to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council claiming the councillors were "guilty of aggravated obstruction and holding Mr Wright hostage in the school" after they had allegedly blocked his vehicle in the car park.

The councillors, who are members of a management committee for the 2011-built 3G pitch in Whitegate Field, had turned up to discuss concerns over its use of community funds in the purchase of a new boiler.

Dipped

It is alleged that the school dipped into a community sinking fund for the maintenance of the 3G pitch - owned by the borough council - of which the school is the main user.

The borough council has accused the school of taking £11,295 from the emergency funds to pay for a new boiler in its own changing rooms. The authority requested an emergency meeting at 4.30pm on Friday but Mr Wright said he was unavailable.

The councillors claim Mr Wright also refused to speak to them when they turned up, before he asked them to leave.

But Borough Green Parish Council chairman Mike Taylor had parked his work van in the car park - in a position that Mr Wright claimed blocked him from leaving.

A police spokesman said they were called at 3.43pm to a report a member of staff's car had been



'OBSTRUCTION': Main picture, head teacher Matthew Wright accused Mike Taylor of blocking his way out of the car park. Left, Matthew Wright, and right Mike Taylor, Robin Betts and Harry Rayner. Inset, before and after Mr Wright was able to manoeuvre out of the space

blocked in but said the man "was able to manoeuvre his vehicle and leave the premises without police assistance".

Mr Taylor said: "I had been asked to leave the premises so I couldn't go back in to get my van - I didn't do it on purpose and he was able to leave in the end anyway."

Mr Wright left the school in his car some time later, after the three councillors had gone for a cup of tea near the 3G pitch at Wrotham School.

Despite this, just hours after the incident, Mrs Smith emailed the borough's sports development director Beverley Emmerson, say-

ing: "What happened this afternoon at Wrotham School was disgraceful and indeed criminal."

"In our opinion three members of your committee were guilty of aggravated obstruction and holding Mr Wright hostage in the school, both serious criminal acts."

The school has since sent Mr Rayner, Wrotham Parish Council vice-chairman, another letter banning him from the school grounds.

Mr Rayner said the councillors were well within their rights to investigate claims of financial impropriety.

Mr Rayner said the manage-

ment committee would be contacting the school's auditors.

On the school's accusation of "aggravated obstruction", he added: "It's a bit like asking me if I have stopped beating my wife. I have never beaten my wife, so it's completely pointless."

Responding to the claims about the boiler, Mr Wright, who denies it cost £11,295, said: "A boiler which serves the changing rooms for the school and community outdoor sports facilities at Wrotham school broke down and needed to be replaced."

"As the Community Use Agreement clearly states that the school can use any operational surplus

money to maintain the amenities, we went ahead and bought a new boiler at a cost of £7,500 plus £1,500 VAT, which is recoverable."

"This was an appropriate use of this money for essential maintenance which means the changing rooms can continue to be used by the school and the local community outside of school hours."

Adrian Stanfield, the borough council's director of central services, said: "The council is reviewing all related documentation in regard to this matter and following this review will be proposing that a meeting of the 3G committee takes place to discuss this further."



Sailor's out of Rio 2016 with cancer

SEVENOAKS sailor Elliot Willis has had to abandon dreams of winning gold at this year's Rio Olympics to undergo treatment for bowel cancer.

The 32-year-old had been set to compete alongside Luke Patience in the 470 Men's pairing but discovered he had cancer following tests in December.

Due to his ongoing treatment, as a two person crew, they are unable to follow the combined training programme required to maximise their chances of success in Rio.

Stephen Park, Royal Yachting Association Olympic manager and Team GB sailing team leader, said: "The circumstances surrounding the deselection of Luke and Elliot are obviously disappointing for everyone."

"However, as a team we knew we would be set a number of challenges in this journey to Rio 2016 and this is just one we have to deal with along the road. Hopefully this doesn't mark the end of Elliot's Olympic journey and we look forward to seeing him back in the boat soon."

Mr Willis, a former Sackville School pupil, and Patience are the world number two-ranked pair and were among the first athletes to be selected to Team GB for the Games in September.

At the time of his diagnosis, Mr Willis, a star alumnus of Chipstead Sailing Club, said his main focus was to get better.

"Clearly it's pretty shocking news to receive," he said.

"It's still my dream to win Olympic gold but right now my focus and energy needs to be on getting better."

"My health is my number one concern and I will take advice and recommendations of the medical professionals as they establish the right course of treatment for me."

'Women's vote could decide Brexit'

A LEADING councillor has called on Sevenoaks MP Michael Fallon to explain why he will be voting for the country to stay in the EU.

Anna Firth, district councillor for Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge, launched her Vote Leave campaign, called Women for Britain, at a coffee morning in the Pond View Café, Otford, last week.

She said: "At the coffee morning security was said to be an important factor. I would like to understand why Michael Fallon has come to his view. But I do respect him as a senior and experienced MP and he is entitled to his own opinion."

She said the women's vote is "absolutely critical" in deciding the outcome of the EU referendum, to be held on June 23, after exit polling in Scotland showed the women's vote decided the fate of the independence referendum.

Mrs Firth added: "Polling



WOMEN FOR BRITAIN: The Vote Leave group meet for the first time

shows double the number of women have not made their mind up than men. When women make up their minds it will decide the referendum.

"We are providing a forum where we can get together to discuss the EU and how it will affect us, our families and our children in an open way."

"If we leave the EU, we will be able to scrap VAT for sanitary products, and contraception costs will be lower."

"The Equal Pay Act, the Abortion Act, and the Divorce Reform Act were all enforced before we joined the EU, and the contraceptive pill was made free on the NHS."

"And Margaret Thatcher became the first female Prime Minister without any EU assistance."

Claire Pearsall, district councillor for Ash and New Ash Green, explained her views on defence. "I understand concerns about what is happening in the Middle East and about Russia but I think ultimately we would be better placed looking after ourselves," she said.

"We still have one of the best trained and equipped armies in the world and this doesn't rely on EU membership."

The Sevenoaks Women for Britain campaign will have a street stall outside Tesco in the High Street on Saturday between 10.30am and 12.30pm, talking about Vote Leave.

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