

Ms. Rosie Radford
Mayor of Oswestry
Oswestry Town Council
The Guildhall Bailey Head
Oswestry
SY11 1PZ
7th October 2025

Dear Mayor,

Subject: Conflict of Interest and Grant Compliance Concerns at 10 Smithfield Road and 20 Church Street

I am writing as a resident of Oswestry, a retired citizen and an advocate for transparency in local government. Over recent months I have been researching the distribution of public grants to properties in our town and have found several areas of concern. When I raised these matters with the Town Clerk, I was surprised by the lack of engagement, so I feel obliged to bring them directly to your attention.

Conflict of Interest

Oswestry's Markets and Events Officer, Mr David Clough, and his partner, Ms Linda Clark, appear to have been significant beneficiaries of two grant schemes administered by or through the Town Council. According to public records, they jointly own or direct multiple companies – including Clough & Clark Property Ltd, Forage Oswestry Ltd and Smithfield Coffee House Oswestry Ltd – whose registered addresses are 20 Church Street. Mr Clough also serves as a director of Laburnum Drive Properties Ltd, while simultaneously holding a senior post within the council. Such dual roles present a clear potential conflict of interest and warrant close examination.

Breathing New Life into Empty Properties – 10 Smithfield Road

The council's "Breathing New Life into Empty Properties" scheme requires applicants to demonstrate that a property has been vacant for at least six months and to complete the funded works within six months. Grant terms stipulate that funds must be repaid if conditions are not met. Ms Clark received funding to refurbish 10 Smithfield Road and opened the Smithfield Coffee House in 2024. Local reviews now indicate that the coffee house had closed by October 2025. If the property is no longer trading, it would appear that the grant conditions are not being honoured, raising the question of whether the funds should be reclaimed.

High-Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Grants – 20 Church Street

In addition, 20 Church Street received a £12,000 shop-front grant and a £24,942.30 repurposing grant through the HSHAZ programme. Historic England's guidance states that these grants are to be repaid if the property is sold or leased on a full-repairing basis within three years, and recipients must fund 40 % of the works themselves. Having received significant public investment to restore this Grade II listed building, Mr Clough and Ms Clark subsequently let it on what has been described as a long-term lease to Halls Estate Agents. Without full transparency, it is impossible for the public to know whether the lease terms meet HSHAZ conditions or whether grant funds should be clawed back.

Request for Action

These matters are not just technicalities. They strike at the heart of public trust in local governance. As Mayor, you hold responsibility for upholding that trust. I therefore respectfully request that you:

1. **Review the Town Council's handling of both grant schemes**, including whether the Town Clerk followed proper due-diligence procedures when officers or their partners are beneficiaries.
2. **Investigate potential breaches of grant conditions**, specifically whether 10 Smithfield Road remains eligible under the "Breathing New Life" criteria and whether the letting of 20 Church Street triggers HSHAZ repayment clauses.
3. **Clarify conflict-of-interest policies**, ensuring that council officers and committee members do not oversee grants awarded to companies in which they or their partners have an interest.
4. **Publish a transparent report** on the findings, together with any measures taken to safeguard against similar situations.

I appreciate that you have many duties, but confidence in the integrity of Oswestry's local government depends upon your leadership in this matter. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my findings further or to provide you with supporting documentation if required. Thank you for your time and prompt attention to these concerns.

Yours sincerely,