**¬ The evidence against Mrs Copeman.**

DC Foreman, the case officer, told Roger Giles, ex-Parish Cllr and ex-Parish Chair, during a phone call in 2023 (?) “the case doesn’t stack up”

In these notes I will refer to the case officer as “CO” and reviewing officers as “RO”

A problem throughout the time Peter Gardiner and me, Peter Cox, were investigating for the Council and liaising with DC Foreman, was a difference in the meaning of theft.

1. Case officer said, and superiors confirmed, that Norfolk Constabulary can only proove theft of cash if they know what it was spent on, and later unless admitted. An un-named reviewing officer wrote in April 2021 that in relation to cash transactions, “it maybe prudent for one further interview to cover each and every cash transaction and if admitted by the suspect in an unambiguous and clear admission, then this cash amount can be factored in also.” Did that happen, if so with what result?
2. Case officer also said cheque fraud could only be proved if payment was credited to Mrs Copeman’s bank account shown on a time-limited number of statements
3. To lay people points 1 and 2 sound absurb. I asked the case officer several times what law covers that. She never replied.
4. Peter Gardiner passed to the case officer microfiche images of suspicious cheque payments that he obtained from the Council's bank when he was Council Chair. They included coded details of receiving bank which when de-coded would have provided the "paper-trail" CID needed. We are not aware that any were checked. We asked the case-officer to obtain more cheque fiches from Barclays as neither PG or me were now able to do. We understand she didn’t.
5. It will be difficult, probably impossible, in nearly all money theft cases, to do.
6. Post Officer sub-postmasters were prosecuted, fined &/or jailed merely because of errors created by flawd accounting software.
7. I don’t know of any cases where the investigators had to show where the money allegedly stolen was spent.
8. We worked on the conditions laid down by local authority accounting rules, regulations and standing orders, which requires proof of what money WASN’T spent on.
9. That’s easy. If it wasn’t on goods and services authorised by the authority, that’s theft.
10. The reviewer also stated that CPS wanted details of Mrs Copeman’s hiring and whether she revealed previous criminal history. The reviewer ackowledged that I had already explained that cannot be provided. Some numbered pages of the Council’s minute book covering her interview in 1995 and later appointment are missng.
11. In May 2005, Council minutes page 2008, records adoption of her Contract of Appointment “already circulated” but the contract itself is missing.
12. In 2017/18, Cllr Goodger apparently burnt some of the Cherk’s council papers, at her request. We were only able to provide what we did due to my late wife, a legal executive and ex-Cllr, keeping minutes and other documents in her usual meticulous way. The fact that we can show those particular pages are missing suggests Mrs Copeman removed and destroyed them. Thats not evidence, but it is a fact that they were missing and the only person with access to the minutes books was the Clerk who was allowed by the Council to keep at home.

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| NORFOLK CID/CPS QUERIES and COMMENTS | PETER COX’S COMMENTS and/or ANSWERS |
| In order for me to consider a Conditional Caution I have to be content that the following conditions are met:  1. The offender has admitted the offence  2. There is sufficient evidence for a RPOC  3. The Public Interest is served by the offender complying with suitable conditions rather than a prosecution.  4. The offender accepts the conditions  The caveat to the above is that if the offender fails to meet any of the Conditions, the case has to be ready to progress to court with a RPOC and this would be based on the ability to evidence beyond all reasonable doubt that the exact amount alleged to have been taken has been taken by the suspect. | As this document was forwarded to people who are not lawyers or police trained, things like “RPOC” needed explanation. On-line searches unhelpful.  My view is that is was CID’s job to investigate matters that we were not authorised to do. Police should do police work.  Nor was it our job to format evidence in a manner for court purposes.  That’s also for police, or lawyers, to do based on what we provided.  We stressed several times that what we listed was **THEFT** according to public authority financial rules and regulations with the exception of a couple of small amounts which needed Police investigation/interegation, and if that was unsuccessful or not possible, to delete those amounts. |
| Having reviewed the evidence and read the OIC’s comments I am content that:  1. The suspect has admitted the offence. However, while she admits to the Fraud, she makes it clear that she was shocked it was as high a figure as it was. When shown the corresponding documents she admitted she must have taken that amount but this would not be seen as a clear and unambiguous admission. It would be seen as a sufficient enough admission with the corresponding evidence to back it up but for the cash amounts which we cannot evidence to the required standard, this would not be a sufficient enough admission.  2. I have been told the suspect will accept a Conditional Caution and therefore the consent element has been covered.  3. The Suspect is 72 years of age and is therefore over the 18 years required for a Conditional Caution and has the financial means to repay the money taken.  4. The victim(s) have been consulted and are keen for an out of court disposal/Conditional Caution. |  |
| While the above conditions are met, at this stage I do not believe this case is of the Evidential Standard where there is a RPOC for the total amount. This is a key element as if the conditions are not met then the case should automatically be transferred to the courts. A number of Actions were set by CPS when they reviewed the case back in August 2020 and some of these have not been completed.  These include:  A. The appointing of a forensic accountant to evidence the fraud.  This has not been done as the local parish council did not have the funds and so appointed a local book keeper instead. While not a forensic accountant, he has evidenced the fraud and produced a number of documents to evidence this. | A forensic accountant would have been appointed FOC if the Council in Sept 2018 (which included Cllrs Goodger and Barker) had advised insurers and claimed under Employee Theft.They would also have got the money back less £250 excess.  I brought that to WPC’s attention in Oct?Nov? 2018 but they still didn’t claim.  But I did, on 6th March 2019 after becoming stand-in Parish Clerk which gave me access to our insurance agent. I was told it was probably too late but the claim was registered with ref no: 7404556.  I advised DC Foreman by email on 31/03/2020 of all that, incl refs, and she offered to speak to our insurers.  I do not recall being told in Aug 2020 that a forensic accountant was needed, nor at any other time. Why were we not told when the case opened in Sept 2018? We - and the police – may have wasted 2 years work!  As for forensic accounting, it was me that detected Mrs Copeman’s writing and signature on an AGAR in the name of a person she made up. |
| However, this is a summary and I cannot see a paper trail showing where this missing money has gone and is not of the required standard for court. | The summary tab on the spreadsheet links to other tabs with source data.  Our job was to establish the amount she stole, not what she spent it on.  We established theft in accordance with public authority financial rules and regulations. Those do not require proof of how money was spent, just that it was taken contrary to those rules. If the police need to estabish where money went, they should have investigated, not us. But for starters the Copeman’s brand new car in Sept 2018 and a narrow boat moored at Wellingborough. |
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