Councillors accused of throwin

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'SECRET' meetings held between Cranleigh's borough councillors and developers have been criticised by a former parish councillor who previously attempted to end similar talks.

A meeting on Tuesday September 22 saw Cranleigh's Waverley borough councillors and developers discuss plans for roads, paths, parking, a medical centre and affordable housing.

Attending were parish and borough councillors Brian Ellis, Patricia Ellis, Jeanette Stennett, Stewart Stennett and Mary Foryzsewski.

Parish councillors who are not also borough councillors, members of the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and the public were not aware of the gathering. A second meeting also took place last Friday between borough councillors and developers.

Former parish councillor Ken Reed has described the meetings as 'complicated and convoluted,' and claimed there is a conflict of interest.

In April last year, he proposed that the public should be allowed to be present at all future meetings involving the parish council and any developer. It was agreed not to hold any more private meetings with developers, with parish councillors saying there is a need to be more democratic.

Mr Reed said: "We made the decision when we did because we felt there was predetermination. When you start having meetings with developers and you make suggestions about the applications, by doing it in private, or secret, there is no one checking the direction you are going in. The feeling from the public is they are not being told what is happening.

"Usually, that is not the case, but you get the opinion that decisions are being made at that stage, and not at official council meetings.

"They have thrown the agreed policy out the window, how many more will they do the same to?"

A spokesman for Cranleigh Parish Council, said: "The

g out policy on secret meetings

parish council was unaware of the meeting with developers held by those Waverley borough councillors who represent Cranleigh.

"The meeting was initiated by borough councillors and those present were acting in their role as borough councillors, not parish councillors.

"The parish council has not conflicted with its policy not to meet in private with developers as the parish council has not sanctioned any meeting between the parish and developers."

As part of Cranleigh Parish Council's meeting last night (Thursday), after the *Surrey Advertiser* went to print, an item on the agenda entitled 'Meeting between Cranleigh Waverley Borough Councillors and Developers' was brought forward by Cllr Foryzsewski.

It recommended that all members of Cranleigh Parish Council be 'included in all communications, discussions and meetings at Waverley Borough Council with regard to development sites.'

It said: "As the parish council is responsible for facilitating the Neighbourhood Plan (NP), to keep fully informed the NP Steering Group on a monthly basis or as frequently as possible".

However, developers have welcomed the meetings and seen them as positive.

A spokesman for KPI, said: "The Knowle Park Initiative has always stressed that planning applicants, local councillors and members of the community should work together in order to ensure that development in Cranleigh is both sustainable and meets the needs of the village."

A spokesman for Thakeham, which currently has an application to build up to 400 homes in Alford, said: "We welcome the opportunity to be involved with councillors and developers to discuss ways for the local authority and developers to work together to deliver these vital homes and infrastructure."

Parish councillors did not comment on the agenda ahead of the meeting.