

How the Hancock dynasty has milked the system and ripped off Portsmouth

The following describes how Mike Hancock, MP for Portsmouth South and City Councillor, has made a fortune by having many political jobs by arranging for his daughter and wife to be paid as Portsmouth city Councillors, and by employing them as an MP's assistant, with no evidence that they have actually done any work for him.

Michael Thomas Hancock (known as Mike Hancock, MP, CBE) was born on 9 April 1946. He married Jacqueline Elliott (born on 31 July 1944) on 9 September 1967. At that time Jacqui Elliott lived with her parents, Sidney and Gwendoline Elliott, in their Portsmouth City Council house at 5 Ledbury Road, Paulsgrove, Portsmouth. Mike and Jacqui Hancock had two children, Dean and Jodi, who was born on 2 March 1973.

Mike Hancock has been a member of Portsmouth City Council from 1971 until the present. He was elected as an MP in a by-election on 14 June 1984, losing his seat in the 1987 election. He was re-elected as MP in the 1997 election and has retained his seat until now. He was a member of Hampshire County Council from 1973 to 1997, being Leader from 1993 to 1997. He was also Leader of Portsmouth City Council from 1989 to 1997. Since becoming an MP again in 1997 he has remained as a City Councillor since 2002 and has been Executive Member on the City Council responsible for Planning Regeneration and Economic Development. Whilst there are a few MPs who are also local councillors, it is believed that Mike Hancock is the only MP who holds a position as a paid Executive Member of a Council, thus getting two salaries as a politician. Not content with that, he has been a member of the Council of Europe, and so able to claim expenses as an MP, as an Executive Member of the City Council, and from his European appointments. Mike Hancock has a particular interest in animal welfare and the protection of children. He has been Chairman of the southern region of the NSPCC since 1989 and has been a member of the Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade Group since 2009.

Not content with his own salary as a politician, Mike Hancock has arranged that his family members have become City Councillors and worked for him as assistants to him as an MP. His daughter, Jodi Hancock was a City Councillor from 2000 to 2002 and was also employed by Mike Hancock in parliament as some sort of research assistant. When Jodi Hancock moved with her partner, Mark Richardson to Blyth, Nottinghamshire in early 2002, Mike Hancock replaced her with his wife Jacqui, who has been a City Councillor from 2002 to the present. Mrs Hancock has also been employed by Mike Hancock as his MP's assistant, apparently working from his constituency office at 1A Albert Road, Southsea. However no-one has ever seen Mrs Hancock working at 1A Albert Road, and she has hardly ever, if ever, spoken at a City Council meeting. That means that for 10 years now Mike Hancock's daughter or wife have received substantial unaudited payments as Mike Hancock's assistant, on top of their income and expenses as a City Councillor.

But whatever amounts have been paid to the Hancocks as City Councillors what is even worse is that none of the Hancocks were really eligible to be Councillors anyway. Essentially

people are only meant to be Councillors if they live or have their main or only place of work in the City, although there is an extra qualification for anyone who owns or rents land or premises in the City. Mike and Jacqui Hancock, and their daughter Jodi, have not lived in Portsmouth since they moved to Fareham in September 1977, 33 years ago, when Jodi was 4 years old. Since 1997 Mike Hancock's main place of work has been the House of Commons as an MP. Yet despite that Mike Hancock was elected to the City Council in 2000, 2002 and 2006, and is standing again this year. Jodi Hancock was elected in 2000; Jacqui Hancock was elected in 2002 and 2006, and is also standing again this year. So how was this allowed to happen? By clever manipulation of the system, that's how. We will explain.

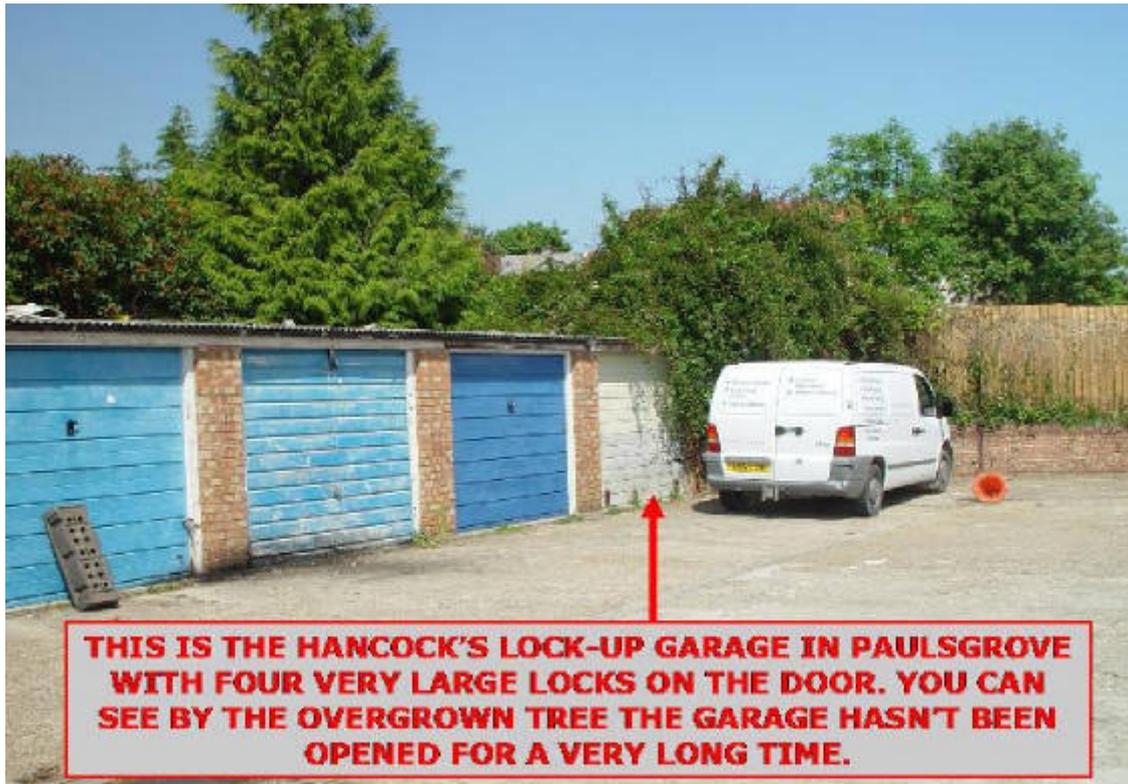
At each election to be eligible to stand as a Councillor a candidate must meet at least 1 of these 4 qualifications:

1. Be registered on the electoral roll for the area of the Council
2. Have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the local authority area for the 12 months before the day of nomination
3. Their main or only place of work during the last 12 months has been in the local authority area
4. They have lived in the local authority area during the whole of the last 12 months

For many years Jacqui Hancock's mum and dad had lived at 5 Ledbury Road, Paulsgrove, the Council house where Jacqui was living when she married Mike in 1967. In 1980 Mrs Thatcher's government brought in the right to buy Council houses at a large discount in the Housing Act 1980. This was strongly opposed by the Labour Party and Mike Hancock was the Leader of the Labour Group on Portsmouth City Council at the time. But in 1981 Mike Hancock defected to the SDP and was elected as MP for Portsmouth South in the by-election on 14 June 1984. So by then Mike Hancock was an MP, a County Councillor and a City Councillor, all at the same time.

It was then that Sidney and Gwendoline Elliott, Jacqui's mum and dad, decided to buy their Council house at 5 Ledbury Road under the provisions of the Housing Act 1980. The Deed was signed on 1 March 1985 at a house two doors away from Mike and Jacqui's house in Fareham. The House was sold by Portsmouth City Council to Sidney and Gwendoline Elliott for £7,700, the discount being £11,550, some of which would be repayable if the house was sold within 5 years.

So far so good. But there was a strange addition to the property transferred. Also transferred with 5 Ledbury Road (and within the price) was a lock-up garage then known as Garage 20G Ledbury Road, Paulsgrove. This garage is 1 of 28 garages then owned by Portsmouth City Council in a block of garages off Ledbury Road which are available for rent to residents of the local council estates, including Ledbury Road. The other 27 garages are still owned by Portsmouth City Council, and no-one else has been allowed to buy one, when they have asked. So Mike Hancock's parents-in-law were allowed to purchase a garage with their Council house, possibly at no cost, when their son-in-law as the MP and a local Councillor.



Sadly Sidney Elliott died in 1990, leaving Gwendoline alone in No 5 Ledbury Road. In 1994 Mike and Jacqui Hancock moved to their present house at 29 Rockingham Way Portchester in the Borough of Fareham. And then, on 5 February 1996, 5Ledbury Road was transferred by Gwendoline to Mike and Jacqui Hancock, the Transfer document again being witnessed by a neighbour at Mike and Jacqui's house in Fareham. Although not mentioned in the Transfer, the garage came with the Title, although by now it had been renumbered No 1 by Portsmouth City Council.

In the 1996 Transfer Gwendoline Elliott had the right to remain in the house as long as she lived. Her death was registered in January 2000, but before then Mike and Jacqui Hancock sold the house to its present owner on 17 May 1999 for £45,000. The witness to this Transfer document was Jodi Hancock giving her address as 29 Rockingham Way, Portchester and her occupation as a secretary. But strangely this time the Transfer document was only a transfer of part of the Title, namely the house. So all that is left of the Title is the garage, which has been owned by Mike and Jacqui Hancock to this day. Under Mike Hancock's declaration of interests it is now called Plot 1, Garage Car Park, Ledbury Road, Paulsgrove, Portsmouth.

By this time Mike Hancock was an MP again, and employed his daughter Jodi as an assistant, according to the Registers held at the House of Commons. However not content with that Jodi stood as a candidate in the 1999 City Council elections, her qualification being that she worked for Mike Hancock in Portsmouth! And apparently that was her main or only job. She lost the election in 1999, but was elected in 2000 so for 2 years got paid as a Councillor and as Mike Hancock's assistant, plus expenses. Not bad for a 26 year old young lady, who had left Portsmouth at the age of 4!

But in early 2002 Jodi Hancock moved with her partner to their present house in Blyth, Nottinghamshire. So that particular gravy train had to come to an end. But the solution was easy. Mike Hancock employed his wife Jacqui, and got her onto the Council instead! So she got elected to the Council in 2002 and again in 2006, saying that she 'occupied' the garage which she owned off Ledbury Road, and her main or only place of work was Mike Hancock's constituency office in Albert Road, Southsea. The fact that the garage has been locked up for years and no-one has ever seen Jacqui Hancock at the office in Albert Road is apparently irrelevant. Since Parliament has suggested that the employment of MP's spouses is not a good idea Jacqui Hancock has decided that her work for Mike Hancock is voluntary and unpaid. Instead, according to application form this year, Jacqui Hancock's qualifications as a candidate are her ownership of the garage and that her main or only employer is Portsmouth City Council!

So that is how Mike Hancock and his wife and daughter have been able to get paid lots of our money as City Councillors, even though they have not lived or worked in the City as their main employment since 1973! Why did Jacqui Hancock say last year that her main employer was Mike Hancock? Probably because he paid her more than Portsmouth City Council. The JAC party would like to know how much more and would like a full audit of all monies paid to Jodi and Jacqui Hancock since Mike Hancock was re-elected as an MP in 1997. Other MPs have had to go through this so why not Mike Hancock?

But Mike Hancock is not only good at making sure his family members get well paid, he is also pretty good at the other tricks that MPs have rightly been pilloried for. His mortgages for a start. According to the recent Report to Parliament Mr Hancock was overpaid a total of £2,674.26 for mortgage interest in 2005/2006 to 2008/2009; £1,467.16 in 2008/2009. Since 1 April 2009 Mike Hancock has quickly paid this money back, but why did he claim it in the first place, and which house was it on? His second home in Fareham we assume, when he was paying for work done by his wife's friend, property developer David Sheppard, but we should be told.

And Mike Hancock is also pretty good at going to far-away Eastern countries at someone else's expense and not declaring it when raising questions in Parliament. He has only just done it following a visit to Taiwan. We know that Mike Hancock is very interested in the welfare of children and has been the Chairman of the Southern region of the NSPCC since 1989. We also know that he is currently an office holding member of the Thailand Group, the Prostitution and the Global Sex Trade Group, among many others, and is Chair of the All-Party Russia Group, but is there a full disclosure of expenses paid, and by whom, in relation to these trips to far-away places.

Our main concern is that some MPs have been prosecuted, and others forced to resign for much less than we have described. Why is Mike Hancock different from the others? Nick Clegg has stated publicly that his party stands for fairness, and will not tolerate dubious expense claims and payments to family members by MPs. Why does this not apply to Mike Hancock? Will Nick Clegg or local MP Chris Huhne please tell us?

But apart from hearing from Mr Clegg and Mr Huhne, the JAC Party also calls upon Sir Ian Kennedy to explain the position of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority on employing relations. According to the Daily Mail on Tuesday March 30 “59% of the public oppose the employment of MPs’ wives recognising that it will always be open to abuse, and cannot be properly monitored. How are auditors going to judge the performance of MPs’ spouses? As the Daily Mail headline stated “THEY STILL DON’T GET IT (CONT)”.

In the JAC Party’s opinion IPSA Chief Sir Ian Kennedy should consider his position now, before the IPSA loses any more credibility. And Mike Hancock’s actions should be investigated and referred to the CPS to see if he should be prosecuted, like the four MPs, who have in our opinion, done much less.