

# MIKE OLLEY



## Suella's 'dead cats' can't hide disastrous immigration record

Tory chaos in Manchester, finding who's to blame for Birmingham's bankruptcy, and handbag shopping in the Council House. **MIKE OLLEY** gives us his inside view on politics

**O**H no, she's at it again! Suella Braverman, our Home Secretary, is walking around the Tory conference with a bag full of dead cats, whipping up fury around immigration.

From her antics in Manchester, you could be mistaken for thinking she's seeking leadership of the Conservative party.

The 'dead cat' strategy is where politicians make a shocking announcement to divert attention from a failure. Attack immigrants and you get noticed.

But Suella's reported outbursts are nothing short of cheap headline grabbers to distract us from her and the Tories' woeful, pathetic, pitiful and disastrous record on immigration.

In short: over the summer, they have failed to stop the boats. At the same time, tens of thousands of migrants have all been processed properly, with many ready to be deported. Yet tough-talking and scary Suella does next to nothing. Is the job beyond her? Or is she just happier chucking dead cats for media attention?

Anyway, I was delighted to see local MP Khalid Mahmood (Labour, Perry Barr) excitedly pick up on her failures on right-wing TV channel



Former city council leader John Clancy and Cllr Yvonne Mosquito



GB News. Khalid even offered a few policy points from Labour: joint action with French enforcement authorities, properly funding the National Crime Agency to do its stuff. No dead cats there. Well done, Khalid. Shame on Suella.

■ Why, oh why, is Birmingham in such a dire position of bankruptcy? After all, the senior officers who have run our council for the last few years have all been paid well enough.

Most earn their money, and they deserve it. But the chances are that some won't get to enjoy their valuable pensions for too long once they retire, as high-pressure jobs such as theirs statistically knocks years off lives.

But let's put worthy officers to one side. What's indisputable is that certain mandarins have failed to prevent our council's bankruptcy. They know who they are, and the good officers also know. The promised inquiry will hopefully see them brought to account.

And so they should be. Former council leader John Clancy tells me that there should no longer be any expensive equal pay claims. He apparently resolved the issue years ago with a clever deal built

around pension scheme overpayments. If that's the case, then it appears some not-so-clever officers unpicked that deal, costing the city close to £1 billion and a tarnished reputation. Frankly, if this is the case, those officers should be prosecuted.

A barrister pal tells me that such officers could face a charge of misconduct in public office, the maximum penalty for which is life imprisonment. Ouch!

What would need to be proven is whether they wilfully neglected to perform their duties. If the Crown Prosecution Service is given enough evidence to go on once HM Government has scrutinised the chaos, they may well pursue several prosecutions.

“Officers could face a charge of misconduct in public office, the maximum penalty for which is life imprisonment.”

I hope they do, because bankrupting northern Europe's largest local authority should not be taken lightly.

■ Oh dear ... my long-time friend Cllr Yvonne Mosquito (Labour, Bordesley & Highgate) was snapped sitting in the council chamber doing a bit of early



Suella Braverman

Christmas handbag shopping on her mobile phone last week.

Having sat through more than 150 council meetings myself, I don't blame her. I used to play snake on my Nokia 3310. I got jolly good at it. But of course, we live in different times nowadays.

We all must go around pretending we are paragons of virtue, living on planet moral high ground.

We are under the constant threat of 'cancel culture' criticism (normally from sanctimonious types who themselves are lying in the gutter).

My advice to Cllr Mosquito is to get a privacy screen on her phone and carry on with your handbag shopping. I know you're more than bright enough to listen at the council meeting and shop at the same time.

Even us blokes could do that, well, most of the time we could.

■ Mike Olley served on Birmingham City Council from 1991 to 2005, when he was made an Alderman.

## Fire service e-bike battery warning after severe blaze

WEST Midlands Fire Service issued dramatic images of the aftermath of an inferno that gutted a Midland flat - and issued a warning over a popular item many leave plugged in overnight.

Firefighters tackled the blaze on the 11th floor of Samuel Vale House in Radford, Coventry, on Saturday.

No-one was hurt, but several people were evacuated from other flats.

It is believed the fire was

started accidentally as a result of an electric bike battery being left on charge.

The service urged people who use motor-assisted pedal cycles to charge them safely and always exercise caution.

A spokesman said: "To reduce the risk of fires related to e-bikes at home, always exercise caution when charging batteries.

"Never attempt to modify or tamper with the battery.

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

"When charging, always adhere to the manufacturer's instructions and never leave a battery charging unattended or charge it while you are sleeping.

"When it's fully charged, unplug your charger right away.

"Always use the correct charger for your batteries and buy replacements from reputable sellers only."



The blaze was apparently caused by an e-bike battery left on charge overnight