

IN THE MATTER OF:

**COMPLAINT BY LEANNE BACON, PARISH CLERK TO NORTHILL PARISH COUNCIL
AND PARISH COUNCILLORS
AGAINST CLLR D.I. ROBINSON, NORTHILL PARISH COUNCIL**

**STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE HEARING
TO BE HELD ON 29 AND 30 SEPTEMBER 2014**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

LEANNE BACON

1. I, LEANNE BACON, Clerk to Northill Parish Council ("**the Council**") of 55 Fairfield, Gamlingay, Beds SG19 3LG. I have been the Clerk to the Parish Council since Sept 2011.
2. In my role as Parish Clerk, I was present at the General Meeting on 8 April 2013 and, as a result of Cllr Robinson's behaviour towards me at that meeting, I became very frustrated and upset.
3. In the past, I have experienced difficulties in dealing with Cllr Robinson, especially at meetings. Cllr Robinson tries to raise matters on which previous decisions have been made in "Matters Arising" and often tries to re-debate matters in the minutes and also tries to reverse previous decisions made by the Parish Council.
4. However, until the Parish Council Meeting on 8 April 2013, I felt that I had a reasonably good relationship with Cllr Robinson as he had participated at my recent appraisal meeting as Parish Clerk and had been very complimentary towards my performance and had supported an increase in my salary.

5. However, matters had become heated and controversial over an Affordable Housing scheme. Cllr Robinson and other local residents were unhappy with the decision to recommend the Biggleswade Road Site for the scheme. Planning permission had been granted for this site by Central Bedfordshire Council and development was to proceed shortly.

6. I had previously attempted to advise Cllr Robinson regarding procedure at meetings and governance issues and I had provided him with a copy of The Good Councillor's Guide produced by The National Associates of Local Councils.

7. I also mentioned two other issues which were of concern to Cllr Robinson namely, The Beacon [REDACTED] who were in dispute with the Parish Council. Cllr Robinson appeared, in my opinion, to be supporting the position of [REDACTED] against the Parish Council. (It is minuted that he said he supports them.) I believe this is the subject of a separate complaint made by Cllr Sally Mandley who has submitted a Witness Statement.

8. At the meeting on 8 April 2013, Cllr Robinson started to raise matters in his normal manner but became very insistent. The meeting was being chaired by Cllr David Milton who tried to put a stop to Cllr Robinson's behaviour but Cllr Robinson continued to ask questions and I took over the answering of the questions, whereupon there followed a quite heated and animated exchange between myself and Cllr Robinson. This continued for about 20 minutes until I walked out of the meeting. I was very frustrated and upset and felt that I was being harassed and bullied, particularly because this exchange had taken place in public. The Chair then adjourned the meeting as he could not conduct any further business without me being present at the meeting to take the minutes and fulfil the role of Parish Clerk and the meeting had descended into disorder.

9. I received an apology from Cllr Robinson after midnight on 9 April 2013 for the manner in which he addressed me at that meeting. This email apology was also circulated to all Members of the Parish Council.

10. Although Cllr Robinson did apologise for his behaviour on 9 April 2013, he has continued to be rude and aggressive in his questioning to me in public meetings. He consistently requests information that has already been provided to him; one example of this was that he insisted at a Parish Council Meeting that I provide current details of the balances in Parish Council bank accounts. I was given no notice of this request, nor did I have the bank statements or bank reconciliation to hand, as these are approved at Finance committee meetings, rather than full Council and therefore was not able to provide a completely up-to-date snapshot of the accounts. Cllr Robinson's questioning of me on the accounts when this information was not available, was totally unreasonable and appeared

to be an attempt to undermine my position as Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer and make me appear incompetent.

11. Since the Parish Council Meeting on 8 April 2013, Cllr Robinson's behaviour has continued to be a concern to both myself and the other Parish Council Members. He becomes very insistent on certain matters. He makes requests for information but does not accept this information when it is provided to him or particularly if he does not like the answer he is provided with. He has a role with a Resident Pressure Group called "Caldecote Voices" which I consider to be a particular problem and which I would suggest brings him into direct conflict with his role as a Parish Councillor and his declaration to provide by the Nolan Principles. I have been hesitant to further complain to the Central Bedfordshire Council because of the bureaucratic process and long timescales this involves. I have therefore sought to address the matter in other ways.

12. In May 2014, because of the continued behaviour of Cllr Robinson towards me as an employee of the Parish Council, I found it necessary to invoke the Parish Council's grievance procedure. Cllr Robinson did not attend the hearing and, in his absence, the Grievance Panel found a substantiated 11 out of 13 issues I had raised in the grievance procedure. The Panel, in determining the grievances I had raised, put in place various mechanisms which meant that Cllr Robinson did not approach me directly and communicated instead with the Chair of the Council, Cllr Helen Papworth.

Signed:

Leanne Bacon, Clerk to Northill Parish Council

Dated: 24 September 2014

