

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
CLLR SALLY MANDLEY**

1. I, SALLY MANDLEY, a Parish Councillor on Northill Parish Council (“the Council”) and my address is Manor Place, Upper Caldecote. I have been a member of the Parish Council for approximately 7 years.
2. I was in attendance at the Parish Council Meeting on 8 April 2013 and, as a result of behaviour I witnessed at that meeting, I made a formal complaint to the Central Bedfordshire Council Monitoring Officer.
3. Cllr Robinson’s behaviour at the Parish Council Meeting on 8 April 2013 was not a one-off. For some time previous to this meeting, he had taken an active role in supporting [REDACTED] who had applied on three occasions to buy a piece of land [REDACTED]. I have observed Cllr Robinson becoming increasingly friendly with [REDACTED]. Cllr Robinson is, of course, free to associate with whomever he wishes, but from what I have observed, this friendship has developed to such an extent that I consider that it is affecting his judgement on Council business. Cllr Robinson was asked by the Chairman, Andrew Wild, to consider his position with regard to his friendship [REDACTED] and whether he should declare an interest as he is very vocal in supporting [REDACTED] at meetings.

4. On the advice of Bedfordshire Local Council Association, the Parish Council was advised that it was not appropriate to have an item on the Agenda "Matters Arising". The reason being that adequate notice of these items could not be given and it is not appropriate to allow further debate on decisions that have directly been made and acted upon. Cllr Robinson was very unhappy that "Matters Arising" had been removed from the Agenda.

5. One item of business that had occupied the Parish Council prior to the meeting on 8 April 2013 was a decision on a site for Affordable Housing. A needs assessment had taken place and two sites were under consideration by Grand Union Housing Association and a consultation exercise was carried out with regard to a plot on Ickwell Road and another at Biggleswade [which is approximately 5 houses away from Cllr Robinson].

6. Ickwell Road was the first choice for the Affordable Housing site but, when Grand Union Housing Association approached the 5 co-owners of the land, there was no consensus to sell the land to the Housing Association. However, the owner of the Biggleswade site was willing to sell the land to the Housing Association and this was the reason that this site was progressed.

7. Cllr Robinson clearly disagreed with this decision and seemed to have a lack of understanding about the process of democratic decision making, in that once a decision is made by the Parish Council, it cannot immediately be overturned because a member of the Parish Council does not agree with the decision.

8. At the meeting on the 8 April 2013, Cllr Robinson questioned the decision that had been taken on the site for the Affordable Housing. He became very loud, rude and erratic and was shouting. Other Parish members indicated a desire to speak by raising their hands in the normal way to attract the attention of the Chairman and the Chairman tried to allow other members of the Parish Council to speak. Cllr Robinson continued with his tirade and it only stopped when the Clerk left the room and the Chairman called the meeting to a halt.

9. Prior to the meeting on 8 April, I am aware that the Clerk had corresponded with Cllr Robinson. In that correspondence, she dealt with several matters and she gave him a further copy of the "Good Councillor's Guide" and referred him in particular to paragraph 39, Annual Parish Meeting, page 26 – duty to act properly as a Councillor and represent all the electorate. This guidance also makes reference to the role of the Chair and that the Chairman is in charge of the meeting and should command respect. Cllr Robinson, in his reply to the Clerk on 20 March 2013, stated that perhaps he did need to agree with Council decisions and stated that he would endeavour to pay closer attention to the rules.

10. However, a week later on 8 April, Cllr Robinson was out of control at the Meeting and was vigorously challenging a validly made decision of the Parish Council and was very insistent and demanding in his questions addressed to the Chair, but because of the responses that were needed, the information was supplied by the Clerk who had the information and this became a tirade against the Clerk, rather than questions being addressed to the Chairman.

11. In May 2014, Leanne Bacon made a formal grievance complaint to Northill Parish Council and I sat on the Panel appointed to hear the grievance. The grievance was a formal complaint about Cllr Robinson's behaviour since April 2012, including:-

- He continually brings up matters that have been discussed and determined by Northill Parish Council which is timewasting and unnecessary.
- He does not respect the decisions taken by the majority of members on the Parish Council.
- He challenges the minutes and asks for all his comments to be recorded in full in the minutes.
- He continually complains that he does not receive information or is given incomplete or inaccurate information, although he is given the same information as all other Parish Councillors.

12. The Clerk stated in her grievance that this behaviour affects her personally in her role as Clerk.

13. Cllr Robinson asks the same questions over and over again if not satisfied or he does not like the information he receives and does not take the advice supplied. He apologises for his conduct but does not moderate his behaviour.

14. The outcome of the Grievance Hearing was that the Panel found 11 of the 13 grounds substantiated on the evidence before the Panel.

15. The Panel had 5 days to determine the grievance raised by our Clerk and invited him to a meeting. Cllr Robinson declined to attend the meeting.

16. The Panel determined that Cllr Robinson should only address the Chair in meetings and should send all correspondence to the Chairman in future.

17. I would describe the behaviour I have observed towards the Clerk as bullying and harassing, particularly on the evening of 8 April 2013.

18. Cllr Robinson does not appear to make decisions on merit and on the information before the meeting and comes to the meeting with a pre-determined and biased approach to the issues under discussion. He harasses and berates our Clerk and refused to accept corporate decisions and takes every opportunity to publically belittle her at meetings.

19. Cllr Robinson denies that he has any friendship with [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] He makes visual contact with [REDACTED] during meetings and gestures to [REDACTED] He has been observed driving around to [REDACTED] at 10.30pm immediately after Council Meetings which I think goes beyond [REDACTED] being merely acquaintances of Cllr Robinson.

Signed: ..

[REDACTED]
Cllr Sally Mandley,
Northhill Parish Council

Dated: [23] September 2014