

Comments on the Code of Conduct

I would ask the Chair of the Hearing Panel and its members, to kindly accept and consider this version of my comments, which have been made in the light of points raised yesterday. My original reference to harassment has been removed since a definition has not yet been agreed and a few words added in red print at the end.

These comments refer to the NPC code of conduct 4.14, 4.15 & 4.16

4.14 Members must set an example by their behaviour.

I would like to quote the words of a witness who has attended Town & Parish Council meetings for over 50 years JP page 105. This would include most NPC meetings since my term of office.

'Cllr Robinson is very passionate about the representative work that he carries out in the Parish and can be very persistent when enquiring or questioning, but I did not consider he was being offensive in any way.'

In addition no complainants can produce evidence of actions that breaches this part of the code.

4.14 ...and shall act in such a way that enhances public trust in the integrity of the Council...

I consider that my actions in questioning the Chair, though persistent, were actually an attempt to enhance public trust in the integrity of NPC, by providing transparency. The fact that there were confidential matters stated from the developers, which still remain unpublicised, does not enhance public trust.

4.14...and its members. I do not consider my actions compromised my honesty and integrity in any way. Revealing the contents of the letter from the owner of the IRS was an attempt to demonstrate to the Council and to the public that the chosen site of the parish & the Council was and always had been available. The comments about sole ownership, involvement with GUHG, CB planning and the offer to match any price are the words of the owner. This statement makes reasons for NPC wishing to progress with the BRS without representation of the majority of the parish, debate or resolution, to be somewhat irregular and in danger of leading NPC into disrepute. I consider the withholding of confidential information on such an important issue of a planning recommendation is a betrayal of public trust.

4.15 Members must show respect and courtesy to others. Any alleged misdemeanour of gesticulating, and asking a known person's name reflect traits that are seen in every day life. My gesticulating was intended to merely emphasise my comments or questions as Prince Charles constantly does, and may be some of us here do this occasionally. In no way was it considered to be offensive. Regarding the name, it is often difficult for all Councillors to remember official titles & surnames. Councillors outside the meeting & in correspondence refer to each other by Christian names apart from the Clerk to me, and I find it somewhat sad to be treated differently.

4.16 Members should value the Council's officers and work along side them to achieve the Council's objectives. I believe my comments at the appraisal confirm my value of the Clerk in a Clerk's role. However, I have reservations about this when the Clerk takes over the role of the Chair.

4.16 Members must on no account behave in a manner that constitutes bullying. Having agreed the definition of bullying, I consider it an outrageous accusation to be levelled at me. I completely deny the allegation and would request substantiated evidence that I was, or ever have been, behaving like a bully during my term of office.

The allegations lose their quality when it has been corroborated by reliable witness statements that all my questions were addressed to the Chair who certainly did not allege that I was bullying him. It is comforting to know that the Chair, sitting next to the Clerk, confirmed at the meeting on the 2/5/13 that I did not harass or bully the Clerk.

I would ask the panel to consider the difference between a person causing harassment and an event causing harassment. I would suggest the reasons for the agreed disorder seen at the meeting played a significant part in harassing many people including the Clerk as opposed to a specific member causing harassment.

I now understand that our Planning Committee has full powers of resolution and that it is common policy in many other parish councils for the Clerk to answer for the Chair. I also respect the comments made concerning confidentiality on the issue of reasons for choice of building site.

I was not aware of the above points at the meeting on the 8/4/13 and it may explain my concerns and those of my witnesses expressed yesterday. In view of this, I would put to the panel for its consideration, that my detailed, persistent and robust questioning during the meeting was at the time, was appropriate and rational on the information presented to both residents of the parish and myself.

Also, I wish to confirm that I have no personal issue with the development in Biggleswade Road or with the reasons that Central Beds approved the application, recognising this was the only application submitted at the time.

Finally, I would ask you to reconsider the matter raised by me regarding David Milton confirming his comments on harassing and bullying, were not referring to me. (I now understand he was referring to [REDACTED] and his comments at the Clerk's appraisal evening which were witnessed by me). The reference in the minutes of 'no comment' does not confirm that I did harass and bully the Clerk and I would like to be given the opportunity to call witnesses who were present at the meeting on the 2/5/13, who will confirm to the panel that the answer was 'No'. Establishing whether this is a fact or not is a major part of my defence and for that reason I would ask the panel to grant me this opportunity.

Thank you Mr Chairman for giving me the opportunity to make this submission regarding breach of the code.