

Appendix E - Dr Baxter's statement (signed 8 March 2016) and exhibit AB1

,STATEMENT OF DR ANTHONY BAXTER

Before the interview the investigating officer ran through the process that she would follow and explained that a copy of the statement would be appended to the draft and final reports provided to him, Alex Farmer and Selina Bannerman that it was likely that the statement may get into the public domain.

I ANTHONY DAVID BAXTER of
state as follows:

1. I am a former Councillor and various complaints have been made against me by Mrs Alexandra Farmer (also know as Alexandra Denison) regarding my alleged conduct when at Much Hadham Parish Council.
2. I make this witness statement in response to the complaints made by Mrs Farmer ('Alex Farmer') against me and Selina Bannerman.
3. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. Except where otherwise stated the facts are derived from my own knowledge or from the documents that I refer to. My statement is arranged in response to the numbered complaints by Alex Farmer.

General background

4. I have lived in the village for about 15 years. I moved here from Oxford, but my job is in Manchester, so I have a weekly commute, going up on Monday and back on Thursday or Friday. I am a Chief Executive of a public listed company for 10 years, chairman of two other companies. I have been a chief executive in the pharmaceutical industry overall for more than 30 years.
5. I joined the Parish Council about 5 or 6 years ago – as the Parish Council was short of people and I was co-opted in 2009. I am a scientist by trade, so planning, local government is not my bag. I was interested in wild life and there was an issue over toxic waste at the golf club and I got involved with this and the cleanliness of the river.
6. I was in place when the new Code of Conduct and I received a refresher on the Code when I undertook the Chairman's course in June 2015. I did not request any other training – although I had been on some local courses (building and planning). These were relatively informal.
7. I knew Alex Farmer as she invited us to a party in her house – as newcomers to the village. Our children were at the same school and I used to bump into her on the train. I think that we overlapped when she was a Parish Councillor. My only dealings with her recently have when she was representing the Sports Association.

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8. I had never met or knew Selina Bannerman, Mike Keogh or John Carey before I was on the Parish Council. I have got to know them since the Pavilion Project and I would even regard them now as friends. I do not, however, consider that this causes a compromise of my position. I am a Chief Executive of a public listed company for 10 years, chairman of two other companies. I have been a Chief Executive in the pharmaceutical industry overall for more than 30 years. I know how to be independent; I argue and disagree with people, including those I am friendly with. I supported Councillors, however, as they were, as you say, under my watch.
9. I put my name forward in May 2015 to be Chair, as three Parish Councillors had resigned at the time. I had no intention to be Chairman. I fully expected someone else to be Chairman – but was elected unanimously.
10. Whilst I had been Vice Chairman for a brief period, when I took over as Chairman in May the Parish Council was relatively new and inexperienced. Selina Bannerman had come after me and had been on for about three years. There were some others – Alex Young (now acting Chairman), Richard Key, Mike Keogh and Ian Hunt were brand new and all inexperienced and whilst I had been there for five years, I had not really done so in a senior role.
11. We were all reliant on the Parish Council Clerk – John Ingham. He had a lot of respect from the Parish Council.
12. I had never worked in local government or had experience in it before I was a Parish Councillor. I have been a school governor. Running a Parish Council is relatively straight forward. The point about having the Clerk is that he was the legal advisor – and other than the Pavilion there was nothing tricky to deal with when I was there.
13. Historically the Parish Council was very much an autonomous body it did not involve itself in the management of the village hall or the sports association, it let them get on with things. Will Compton took over as Chairman of the Parish Council in 2013 after many years of Chairmanship by Martin Dillon – but stood down when he was going for the District Council in May 2015.
14. In terms of the running of the Parish Council, the role had expanded under William Compton – including taking more interest in the Village Hall and central assets of the village. The road and walls and paths – the whole agenda of the Parish Council expanded and I thought that it was better, under my Chairmanship to have Councillors with a ‘portfolio’ for want of a better word. So you would have specific Councillors undertaking this role and speaking about an issue and it worked exceptionally well for 5 months. People enjoyed the freedom and responsibility of an area, and things like street lights were fixed in record time, and relationships with the Highways department of EHC

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were improved. I have letters on file that support the fact we were more attentive to needs of the village during this time.

15. I resigned as a Parish Councillor on 1 December 2015 and exhibit the resignation letter I provided on that day at AB1.
16. My statement is arranged in response to the numbered complaints by Alex Farmer.

1 Background - The Pavilion Renovation Project

17. The decision to refurbish, how to finance and fundraise for the Pavilion was made before I was the Chairman and the proposal was by Selina Bannerman I believe and seconded by Blaise Morris who was Deputy Chairman under William Compton. It was voted on by the whole Parish Council and unanimously supported.
18. The Pavilion was built around 1949 and it was a very basic structure. The Sports Association had been responsible for the recreation ground, and had been left to get on with it by past PC administrations. The Pavilion had, for whatever reason, fallen into disrepair to the point that it was not fit for purpose or use by anybody except the football teams who didn't much use the facility and didn't care for it (e.g. washing their boots in the showers which resulted in blocked drains) and spent 5 minutes in there before and after the game.
19. Two or three years ago the pavilion was used for baby weighing sessions to support the local Health Centre but you would not have put babies in there prior to the renovation because of the condition of the Pavilion. So the Pavilion had community use before the renovation, but not since it had fallen into dilapidation.
20. Before my time as Chairman, there was a commission raised through a sub-committee to see what we could do with the pavilion in terms of repair. There was a Pavilion project, that I was on (and Selina was not on) with others like Mrs Sandra McAdam and former District Councillor Mike Carver and we came up with a plan to knock it down, do a rebuild and do fundraising to pay for it; but when you looked at the costs of a rebuild verses a refurb, it was too expensive to do that (as you would be talking of hundreds of thousands of pounds). When we looked (and also got an architects opinion) at the structure it was sound and could be used and so a refurbishment plan was put together. I was not involved in the pre-Pavilion building works; it was just the scoping angle as far as that sub-committee was concerned.
21. Quotes were obtained in 2014 and these varied from £300,000 to the one that went with for £100,000, so we got a good deal.
22. There is a related dispute with the Sports Association over the management of the Pavilion, but I always viewed this as a parallel issue. It dates back to when former District Councillor Mike Carver was on the Parish Council –. He said that the Parish Council ought to have

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an asset register and there should be a firmer agreement with the bodies who managed the Parish Council assets. On or around 2013 the Parish Council said to the Sports Association that it ought to firm up this relationship and there was then a very much 'them and us' culture. The Parish Council tried to do the right thing – as the Deeds clearly state that the Parish Council owns the land and the Sports Association is to manage it, but the Sports Association was managing it on behalf of the Parish Council. The Deeds need to be updated to deal with this issue and ideally this should have been sorted out, but it wasn't, mainly in my opinion due to the intransigence of the Sports Association people.

23. The various groups saw this as criticism, so by the time that I became Chairman there was already some antagonism between the Sports Association and the Parish Council. At the back end of 2014 the Sports Association was told that the Pavilion would be taken off them in terms of responsibility I believe. This was because there was a feeling that the Sports Association did not want to update the Pavilion and this was because they did not want other parishioners to use it. The Sports Association became a lot more autocratic about the situation – in particular, members of the bowls club and tennis club; and when others wanted to widen the pavilion's use, this caused issues.
24. I understand that it has been said that there were other facilities in the village, namely the village hall that could be used for some of the non-sporting uses and the Pavilion did not need to be changed into a building that could be used as a community facility. However, I do not think this is the case. I think the Village Hall saw the Pavilion as a threat to their ability to raise money. The Village Hall has a much larger floor space and would have been used for other purposes but when money is so tight the Village Hall people saw the Pavilion as a threat to their ability to raise finances or to take on social events. But that is a complete fallacy, as the Village Hall is a large venue verses the small Pavilion for about 25 people. Their uses would have catered for different needs within the village. Some people wanted the pavilion to be used as a venue to pop in - coffee mornings, mothers and toddlers groups etc. There was a ground swell locally for these uses once the Pavilion renovation project started, to have this.
25. We had several meetings with the Sports Association. I do not recall going to a specific one in the summer (I think that Selina Bannerman and Richard Key went). Some things got sorted out and there was dialogue - I had hoped this dialogue would continue and I said so when we opened the Pavilion in my opening speech. However, by that point the position with the Sports Association had become so entrenched that there was an unwillingness to let this issue go and they ceased dialogue with the Parish Council.
26. The Sports Association had been allowed to run their own show for around 25 years until the Parish Council wanted to get the Pavilion back under its control and to commence the refurbishment which the

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Sports Association were resisting. Then there was a fundamental problem with the Sports Association, who felt they were being criticised for the Pavilion and use of the tennis courts by parishioners in general. Alex Farmer, as an articulate person, took on the Sports Association case and joined the Sports Association as a tennis club representative. I suggested mediation on the issue before, but this was not going to get resolved despite my best efforts. Even Fred Pavey, Chairman of the Sports Association tried to resolve it, as he was representing the various Sports Association factions. They did not want discussion or reorganisation; they were implacable in their resistance. It went from utopia to downright warfare from opening the Pavilion in a matter of 6 weeks.

Grant, or loan

27. William Compton was in charge as Chairman when the Community Loan was considered and the PC agreed to get a Loan. This was decided before I was Chairman.
28. This was a contentious part of the funding for the Pavilion project. The Clerk, John Ingham suggested taking this community loan if I recall rightly and said this was a normal thing for PC's to do when considering such a project. He is a Clerk to five other Parish Councils including Brickendon and they had got a community loan and he had said it was 'normal'.
29. We then intended to pay this community loan off with a grant or donations, but there were people who felt and stated (such as Alex Farmer) that if you get loan you could not get grants. I do not believe that to be the case as we had had discussions with the Hertfordshire cricket association and the ECB (and they indicated that they would be prepared to pay for the whole of the loan provided the recreation ground was open to all parishioners). There were also possibilities of funds from local stores like Tesco and those in the village.
30. The aim, however, was to get the Pavilion up and running as soon as possible and then to use any grant to pay off the loan. Alex Farmer raised the question of whether the PC should pay off part of the loan immediately at a Parish Council meeting and I asked the Clerk to look into whether we could do this.
31. When we looked into it, the rules of the Community loan stated that you could not pay off the loan in the first year without penalty, but could do so after 12 months. There would then be no penalties paid by residents via the precept should the PC decide to pay the loan off early. The intention as far as I was concerned was that the Pavilion would have been self-funding and any additional monies received would be used to pay down the loan. The Pavilion Committee took on the role of making the pavilion self sustaining financially.
32. I have gone through the minutes and when I took over in May, in June we said that the building work is ongoing and have 2 months to prepare

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and I think the Clerk said we needed a Committee to manage the project as the cost of the project justified a separate committee. This was proposed.

33. We had a vote, and who was going to be on it and I would refer you to John Ingham, the Clerk to confirm that. John Ingham used the phrase that the new committee would operate with “full delegated authority” and report into the Parish Council. By forming the Pavilion Committee at the PC meeting in June I felt I was acting entirely legally and within the law. John Ingham said I would have to be the Chairman Committee and we voted for Mr John Carey to be the vice Chairman.
34. I have seen the wording of the minutes for June 2015 which refer to the Pavilion Committee being set up. I was one month into the Chairmanship at the time and if I had realised the wording did not properly reflect what had happened I would have sorted this out, but I can assure that this is what happened.
35. When Alex Farmer raised the point that we were supposed to have a Committee with terms of reference and a constitution, I asked John Ingham and he said that at Brickendon (where he also works and they had a similar renovation project) that we did not legally need a separate Committee but that it was good practice. We decided to have a Committee to sort out various issues – like buying cleaning items, and crockery. As Chairman, I would check off what the Pavilion Committee wanted to buy. The Committee had full delegated authority, as I understand it, to buy the things needed to make the pavilion functional.
36. John Carey was voted by the Parish Council to be on that Committee. I have reviewed the minutes since and it should have been made clear. Alex Farmer was in the meeting when this decision was taken.
37. We did not have terms of reference for the Pavilion Committee at first, but long term it needed to be managed. I stated at the meeting that all we were doing was buying cleaning items and catering equipment.
38. Later on we did look to write terms of reference, as it was the Parish Council’s intention that the Pavilion would be income generating; but the row with Mrs Farmer and Cllr Hunt kicked off then in October 2015. It was unfortunate timing, as we were under huge time pressure to get the Pavilion open in August, and it was unfortunate that this issue came up. We thought we were doing the right things at the right time.
39. In terms of minutes, in the past there was no electronic record. The Clerk prepared the written minutes, but there was no website to put them on. Under Will Compton’s leadership, another Councillor, Will Philips tried to set up the website – but it was not completed and Councillors were jittery about getting the minutes on to the website. My son Alex, who was a Parish Councillor at the time, took this on and got a functioning website set up. Selina took on the responsibility after my

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son left the Parish Council. Minutes and agendas from PC meetings were regularly posted.

2. 2.1 Parish Council Meeting of 6th of October

Member obligations 1 & 2; alleged breach: respect, bullying and intimidation by Mrs Bannerman

40. There were quite a few people at the Parish Council meeting.
41. I was sitting at the top of the Green Tye room and Alex Farmer was at the back.
42. We used to in the past let residents wait until the end of the meeting before allowing them to ask Residents questions, and I believe that it was my idea to bring this to the front of the meeting to give people more time to ask questions.
43. Alex Farmer asked a question relating to the funding of the pavilion and this was answered by Selina Bannerman. Alex Farmer was not happy with the answer and she asked pretty much the same question again. She asked the questions a couple more times.
44. Selina was pretty irritated, as Alex Farmer basically said that we had stolen the money. Selina did lean across to me and said something like "what is she on about " but I did not think this was something that was loud or could be heard. It was an aside and I cannot believe Alex Farmer heard it as it was sotto voce. Maybe Alex Farmer lip read and interpreted it in a particular way.
45. Mrs Wetherall and Alex Farmer are good friends and it does not surprise me that she supported Alex Farmer's account. I believe they came with malice aforethought to cause problems at the meeting.
46. In retrospect I should have moved the questions on, but I was quite a new Parish Chairman. I wanted to make sure people could make their views. I did not want people to think there was no free speech. At the end I said that I think the answer covered that question. Then Mrs Wetherall asked a similar question to Mrs Farmers and I think then it was clear that this was a bear-baiting contest.
47. All previously Parish Council meetings had previously been held in good humour, but this was the first time that I had encountered hostility rather than genuine residents concern. Alex Farmer organised a cabal of people to ask the same question of Selina.
48. In the context of what had gone on before, I think asking that question – even if this had been heard, was not disrespectful or bullying. I accept that people can come to the Parish Council to ask questions, but that was not Alex Farmer's purpose. I thought that it was not a benign question. It was antagonistic – with Alex Farmer in effect acting in loco parentis for the Sports Association and it was aimed at getting a certain response.

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49. There were mitigating circumstances for Selina to show annoyance but this did not warrant a complaint that she had been disrespectful or rude. It was frustration on Selina's part; she was fed up with the nature of the questions as she had put her heart and soul into that project.
50. I appreciate that the Parish Council is a forum for questions and if it had been a brand new resident talking about another matter that would be different. But this was Alex Farmer, they had a history in relation to questioning and I believe Alex was planning to have a go at Selina. I therefore consider the complaint to be vexatious.
51. Selina is a good woman who cares about the village and Alex Farmer knew that this nature of questioning would push Selina's buttons and perhaps I should have intervened and said that this can be answered by me.
52. I do not think the answer provided to Alex Farmer was dismissive – Selina Bannerman answered the question and following the question being asked again in a different way, she answered again. It was not rude or disrespectful her attitude was understandable.
53. I believe in treating all equally, and tried to keep this debate equal but at the meeting Alex Farmer bullied Selina Bannerman for want of a better word.

2.2 Member Obligation 4: alleged breach not using Council resources in accordance with its requirements, cleaner, architect, TV etc:

54. The overall expenditure at the time of the complaint was around £4000, with part of that being the £2000 for the locks etc.
55. I recorded at the time in the complaint I made concerning Cllr Hunt that Alex Farmer said:
"Can you tell us how much more tax payer's money over the builders costs and the separate architect fees is going to be spent on the pavilion. I understand that items have not been approved have been purchased for example a TV and a coffee maker."
56. We were accused of using tax payer's money to purchase items for the pavilion and we were not doing so, we were using donations and this was the answer provided to Alex Farmer by Selina Bannerman. We had money from three different pots of £12,000 from various sources and I am not sure what, if any of the £4000 was made from Mr Morrison's funds of £5000, Play Much Hadham or what was from 'Buy a brick'. It was up to the Parish Council. There was no loan or other funds to fit out the Pavilion or get a cleaner. The money that we spent was from the donation pot, not the Council's resources.
57. In terms of the 'Buy a brick' fundraiser at the outset, prior to my Chairmanship, I think it was not made one hundred percent clear that

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the donations from this would be used for more than renovation. Some people may genuinely have thought that they were literally buying a brick; but the vast majority of people thought these donations were for getting the Pavilion up and running.

58. When I became Chairman I made it clear in Parish Council meetings, when I was asked residents questions, that the money donated was to be used, in part, for the renovation and to pay off the loan. My view was that the Parish Council could decide what it (the donations) should be used for. It would be wrong to think or say that this money was misused. For example, I went back to Mr Morrison after this allegation and asked what he thought the money was for and he said to get the Pavilion up and running.

2.3 Alleged breach of the principles of objectivity and accountability:

I made a complaint regarding Cllr Ian Hunts behaviour on 6th October. Three other Parish Councillors, the Clerk Mr John Ingham and a member of the public also made written complaints against Cllr Hunt also concerning Cllr Hunt's behaviour. In my opinion he is pedantic and difficult to deal with. There was, I believe, an association between him and Alex Farmer (whether by email or over coffee)

59. I wanted Much Hadham to function as an effective Parish Council. I respected that Cllr Hunt was elected or co-opted to represent the village; he was financially literate to an extent that others weren't.

60. Before the meeting on October 6th, Ian Hunt had phoned me to say he proposed disbanding the Pavilion Committee. I asked him to help to work with the Pavilion Committee at the meeting as I thought he had a contribution and should work with these people rather than be antagonistic. I expected him to co-operate and show some grace. Instead he read out a prepared statement which was a diatribe.

61. I withdrew the request for his help with the Pavilion Committee post Parish Council meeting. My original request was that Cllr Hunt could help the Pavilion Committee get on with putting terms of reference into place and to do this as soon as possible. Following the meeting there were 30 odd emails between John Carey (Vice Chairman of the Pavilion Committee) and Cllr Hunt where Mr Carey tried to elicit Cllr Hunts help but Cllr Hunt was obstructive in achieving the goal of getting a terms of reference in place. Cllr Hunt said he was, for example, not prepared to help John Carey until he "knew him better", to come round for coffee first and John was not prepared to do this - he just wanted to get on with getting terms of reference in place.

62. I felt that Ian Hunt was being deliberately obtuse, deliberately unhelpful and unwilling to help. There were various pre-conditions set and I believed he was procrastinating and I took the decision, as I said in my complaint form to the Standards Committee, to rescind the request for assistance from him for the benefit of the village. I then got on with

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drafting the terms of reference myself, which was not rocket science as I based them on previous ones that Cllr Ian Hunt had prepared himself for the Neighbourhood Planning Committee. If I had not done so, days would have gone by with nothing being achieved with respect to the terms of reference and I felt I was justified and as Chairman had the authority to rescind my request of Cllr Hunt.

63. I was one hundred percent accountable and objective. It had been an exceptional meeting on the 6th October followed by this issue of Cllr Hunts unwillingness to help the Pavilion Committee. Bearing in mind I thought there was collusion between Alex Farmer and Cllr Hunt to damage the Pavilion Committee. I thought it was Cllr Hunts job to represent the interests of all residents.

3 Member obligation 4 – alleged use of resources contrary to Council requirements by Mrs Bannerman - Pavilion locks

64. I refer to the comments I made regarding setting up the Committee and the use of the money we had received. As far as I was concerned, this Committee had been set up with full delegation and had authority to deal with finances. The one thing that caused some concern was the big cash item (£2000) for locks.

65. When the Pavilion was near to being finished, the insurance person / locksmith expert came over and said that they were not insuring the building as the locks were not up to spec.

66. The decision to replace the locks was not made at a PC meeting. The contractor handed the Pavilion over to the Parish Council outside of a PC meeting. I was not at the meeting as it was midweek. I understand that the insurance company / locksmith was represented said that they would not insure the building as the locks were not safe. £110,000 had been spent and a rapid decision had to be taken to make sure the Pavilion building was insurable and insured. I am not sure if advice was sought or provided by the Clerk on this but we were caught between a rock and a hard place. Either the locks were repaired and the building insured or they weren't and the PC was liable if anything had happened to the Pavilion.

67. Because it was a large amount of around £2000, in retrospect it should have been authorised by a special committee meeting. If we had waited until the next Parish Council meeting and the building had burnt down and we were not covered by insurance then we would have been criticised. It was presented to the Parish Council after that for approval.

68. I understand that Alex Farmer said that she sent me the insurance documents. I do not recall receiving them but if I did I would have passed them on. I did not check the wording to see what used to be covered, as I believe that this was a different issue. The new insurance people / locksmith said that with regards to the renovated building that the building needed certain locks to be replaced. This had to be replaced and put in place for the new insurance.

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69. Alex Farmer took great exception to replacing the locks, as she was representing the Sports Association, as it was seen as criticism of them (the Sports Association were responsible for the old locks). I do not recall or cannot comment on whether they were alleged to be invalid. As I have previously explained, this £2000 was part of the expenditure from the pot of donations, so we did not use council tax payer's money or the Council's resources and it was authorised by the Parish Council retrospectively.

4 Correspondence with Fred Pavey and Member obligations 1 & 2 – alleged failure to show respect, bullying and intimidation by Mrs Bannerman: & Alleged breach of the principle of leadership by me in respect of the correspondence with Fred Pavey:

70. Fred Pavey never complained to me about the emails he received from Selina Bannerman. I did not consider the emails sent by her, that are referred to by Alex Farmer as disrespectful, bullying and intimidating.

71. If I believed this had happened, then I would have said to Mrs Bannerman to be careful, be factual and accurate and not offensive. Having read some of them, I can see it was a two way street - like chucking snowballs, and not sure who threw the first snowball. There were strong emails from both sides and there was frustration with the Sports Association and some came close to the mark.

72. In terms of my leadership, however, once the work on the Pavilion had started and there were individual things that needed to be done, there was correspondence between the Councillors and also others on the Sports Association – not just Fred Pavey. There were heated discussions and these came around July -September.

73. As I stated above, during my Chairmanship individual Councillors had portfolios and were expected to undertake a particular role. If someone stepped out of line then I was critical. I remember when Ian Hunt wrote a very rude note about John Ingham and I addressed this.

74. I spoke to Fred Pavey after I became Chairman and I said that I would try to sort the problems out. Various parties were involved on both sides – Alex Farmer and the footballers also sent emails. On their own the emails referred to may seem strong, but in the context of the exchanges of communications as a whole, the individuals on both sides were expressing strong views.

75. This whole situation with the pavilion went from being very ordered and professionally run, dare I say, to one of anarchy. As I have said before, I do not think even Kofi Annan could have dealt with it.

76. Finally I would like to say that I take these complaints seriously. I have sixteen box files that I have had since being on the Parish Council and many since being Chairman of the Parish Council. I have to say that

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there is a great deal of scepticism about this investigation. At the heart of this situation is the conduct of East Herts District Council. There are concerns from the whole of the village, over the way that this has been handled.

77. Hand on my heart, I believe the complaints by Mrs Farmer were made vexatiously because the Parish Council was seen by her to be sticking its nose into the Sports Association's affairs. Overall this has been a very sad affair. All I have tried to do is help with the Pavillion and I do believe there has been other agendas. I was a new Chairman, I did the best I could. I am not sure I got the best advice all the time. Was Selina rash and impetuous sometimes – yes. Could I have done things better – probably; but it was an overwhelming tsunami. I no longer want to have anything to do with the whole thing.

this witness statement are true.

ANTHONY BAXTER

Dated this 8th day of March 2016

Chairman's Resignation Letter.

01/12/2015

Dr A D Baxter

Dear Parish Councillors and members of the public, In addition to the statements of former Councillors Key, Keogh and Bannerman, and John Carey, Vice Chairman of the Pavilion Committee, I would also like to make a brief statement.

The events of the past two months since October 6th have been very satisfactory to any but a few of the participants and to the parishioners as a whole. The whole atmosphere of angst, abuse, distrust and ill temper has not been good for the village and the Parish.

To sum up very recent events, there were several Code of Conduct complaints made as a result of the October 6th Parish Council meeting, an event that was noxious to me and to many people who attended. These Code of Conduct complaints were submitted to the EDC Standards sub - committee and there was a meeting of that committee on the 24th November, which subsequently made their judgement. In short, the complaints against Cllr Bannerman were dropped as the sub committee acknowledged that she had apologised immediately. The complaints against Cllr Hunt were deemed to 'not to contain sufficient evidence' to warrant further action and recommendations. Whilst I respect the decision of the sub committee, I have to say I find it hard to understand why seven letters of complaint containing detailed content, facts and concerns about Cllr Hunts behaviour were not found to be deserving of further investigation. The complaint by Mrs Farmer, pertaining to the Pavilion Project and people associated with it was deemed by the standards sub-committee to be worth further investigation in accordance with the Code of Conduct procedure. The details of Mr Jeff Hughes, the Monitoring Officer of EHC, report will be covered later in the meeting under Chairman's comments.

I personally and sincerely welcome this investigation and I will do all I can to support the process. I am very confident that the actions of the Pavilion Committee will be found to be entirely above board and that the needless allegations and accusations about their conduct will be found to be groundless. The level of vitriol directed against the Pavilion Committee by certain individuals was entirely unjustified and disruptive to a committee whose actions were blameless in trying to provide a valuable new asset to all Parishioners. Those individuals should, in my opinion, close their eyes to hide their shame.

Among the many things that disturb me about all these events is the manner in which the EHC standards sub-committee was convened, how it operated, how they divulged their conclusions and the consequences of the publication of their findings in the press as a result.

I cannot in all consciousness accept that the EHC standards sub committee's procedures and policies in dealing with these complaints, which prevent those people subjected to complaints from the opportunity of making their own comments on any accusations or allegations in return. I will come

back to this in a moment but I am now considering taking legal action against the standards sub committee and will be reporting their performance to their own Code of Conduct Committee - which of course is somewhat ironic. I do not feel that it is appropriate that whilst I am dealing with this matter that I continue as Chairman of the MHPC and at the end of this statement I will stand down as Chairman and resign as a Parish Councillor.

To further explain the aforementioned statement, Cllr Bannerman and I received notification of the accusations / complaints 5 days - which was the bare minimum by law before the date set for the sub committee hearing. On inspection of the paperwork containing the complaints of Mrs Farmer, I could clearly see that there were numerous inaccuracies, falsehoods and errors in her text. I contacted the MHPC solicitor from Tees Law to ask advice on how we should proceed as I had major concerns about the contents of Mrs Farmers complaint and also that Cllr Graham McAndrew who is known to the Parish Council and some of the complainants was perhaps conflicted to sit on the sub committee for that reason. I asked for a few days delay to clarify these points and the solicitor spoke to Jeff Hughes of EHC who had been named on the correspondence. Mr Hughes said that the standards sub committee would consider the complaints and if minded to do so consider the matter in a private meeting without press and public present. Mr Hughes said that myself and or Cllr Bannerman need not attend and that the sub committee was merely going to make recommendations as to whether further investigations were necessary. He specifically advised our solicitor that if the affected councillors made written submissions in respect to the complaint / allegations at this stage, these would not be placed before the sub committee at the initial hearing. Mr Hughes did not accept that Cllr McAndrew was conflicted and would be part of the sub committee and not replaced as requested.

On Thursday last week I heard that the decisions had been made from a Parishioner who had read them in the Herts and Essex Observer. No one from EHC had the courtesy to inform me directly. The article repeated several of the falsehoods and errors in Mrs Farmers complaint but these were stated now as evidence and not opinion. Mr Hughes followed up with a written account of the meeting and recommendations sent to me which also referred to evidence presented and not opinion.

The concerns we had about this matter were forwarded to our District Councillor Ian Devonshire. Cllr Devonshire responded:

Hi Selina,

I don't understand how this has got into the public domain, as I was advised not to attend this sub committee meeting as it was a private consultative meeting. I have not yet read the local paper but I fully understand that this will have caused unnecessary stress. Happy to talk if you want.

Ian Devonshire.

I find it extraordinary that our village District Councillor was advised not to attend this meeting , an important meeting concerning his home village as it was a private consultative meeting and yet the meeting went ahead at the 11th hour as a public meeting. I find this very strange and worrying. It is also worrying that the press reported an entirely one sided view of the matter without having heard another account or checked the veracity of the statements.

Having considered all the facts and issues concerning all these events since the October the 6th meeting it is my opinion that this whole situation has not got anything so much to do with the Pavilion and the Pavilion committee but a lot more to do with building of houses in the village. There are established rumours that as a Category 1 village, 10% of the current housing stock or about 95 planned homes in the Village or more are being considered to be built. The number of 239 houses has been more recently suggested and three landowners have been approached by EHC, one of whom I spoke to this morning to confirm this, to build on their land to meet this rumoured housing total by 2031.

A Neighbourhood Plan Committee, Chaired by Cllr Hunt, was convened in September. This committee will oversee the implementation of EHC local plan which includes how many houses and where housing and supporting infrastructure will be located in the Parish.

All of those Parish Councillors who have resigned in the last month would not have supported any further housing over the 10% or 95 new houses proposed. It is well known and well recorded that the Parish Councillors and Pavilion Committee members who have resigned this evening including myself have encountered what we consider to be bullying and overly antagonistic behaviour from Councillor Hunt directing attacks on the integrity of the people just mentioned. As a consequence of Cllr Hunts behaviour, much of the Parish Council opposition to any excessive East Herts Council building development plans over that proposed by District Councillors in May 2015 is likely to disappear with them.

The complaints to the Parish Council from the Sports Association and Village Hall Committee have escalated in recent times after many years of simmering discontent. Whether this is in coincidence with the other complaints being made, I will not comment on now. However, something must be done in my opinion with the reporting and management of these organisations by the Parish Council.

My suggestion to the Parish Council and the village is that they should appoint an independent mediator through the organisation CEDR to agree the parameters of the relationship between the Sports Association, Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council and agree a Terms of Reference by which each organisation will operate in support of each other in a fully transparent process which makes each organisation fully accountable both operationally and financially. Without mediation, the discontent and unsatisfactory communications between these organisations and the Parish Council will continue forever and be open to malign influence in the future to the detriment of the whole village

I hope that any future Parish Council or Village organisations will have the foresight to consider the impact of any political agenda before making decisions that affect the village and its residents.

Further whilst I appreciate that the Herts and Essex Observer sought to publish the Sub-Committee's findings, as were stated on 24 November, I have already stated that no councillor was offered the opportunity to present their position or make representations about the allegations made against them. If there is a reporter from Herts and Essex Observer in the room, I would ask that they publish a more balanced account of these matters in their next edition.

I believe I am in a much better position to challenge the decisions and statements which I may consider to be wrong by East Herts Council and any future Much Hadham Parish Council by being freed from the restrictions of being involved with the Parish Council especially as Chairman - and it is on a matter of principle concerning the recent activities of the standards sub committee of EHC and the continuing disruptive behaviour of Cllr Hunt that I hereby resign.

Thank you for your attention.