

Appendix F - Mr Ingham's statement (MHPC Clerk) (signed and returned 12 February 2016) and exhibits JI1-2

STATEMENT OF JOHN INGHAM

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 Mrs Farmer, Mrs Bannerman, Dr Baxter and the Monitoring Officer and that it was likely that his statement would get into the public domain.

I JOHN INGHAM, Parish Clerk of Much Hadham Parish Council state as follows:

1. I make this witness statement in respect of the complaints made by Mrs Farmer against Mrs Selina Bannerman and Dr Anthony Baxter.
2. 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.
3. I have worked as the Parish Clerk at Much Hadham for 20 years. I am a Clerk to three other Parish Councils and have been at the other Parish Councils for around 30 years.
4. I can confirm that the Pavilion Committee was approved by the Parish Council on the 19th of May 2015, which I attended and Clerked. It was part of an appendix item on the Pavilion update. I refer to the minutes and appendix which is exhibit J11. The minutes refer to the Pavilion and the proposals in the appendix being fully supported. 16 members of the public were at that Parish Council meeting and I expect Mrs Farmer was there, although, I do not know for certain. John Carey was appointed on or around this time.
5. The appendix included proposals for the structure and included representatives of the Sports Association. It also included how deposits were going to be taken and what sort of events were going to take place. In my opinion this could be considered effective terms of reference.
6. In relation to obtaining a loan ^{raved} as opposed to grant funding or fundraising, I can confirm that I ~~sorted out~~ the loan with the Public Works Board. This was for £114,000. Given the timescales for the proposed opening of the Pavilion there was insufficient time to fundraise prior to obtaining the loan. However I can confirm that no penalties are going to be paid for early repayment.
7. In terms of the availability of minutes on the website that is not my responsibility at the Parish Council.
8. In relation to the complaints regarding Mrs Bannerman and Dr Baxter's alleged conduct on the 6th of October I can confirm that I have not seen these complaints from Mrs Farmer.
9. I was, however, present at the meeting and clerking it.

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10. I heard what Mrs Farmer was saying and it was certainly ^{disturbing} ~~a bit much~~ to be accused of misrepresenting things, doing things illegally and not following procedure. Mrs Farmer definitely said misrepresentation of the use of Council funds. She said that expenditure had been incurred and that part of the money from the 'Buy a brick' campaign had been used and that people had been misled as it had then been spent on cleaners. This was said in a nasty ill-founded way. She was rude and accusing in an officious manner.
11. I was sitting to the side so I could not see Mrs Bannerman, so I could not say whether she looked upwards or not. I did not hear any comments from her during the questions by Mrs Farmer.
12. Mrs Bannerman answered the questions following a lot of provocation and goading with allegations of expenditure being illegal. I did not believe however that she was rude, disrespectful or bullying towards Mrs Farmer when she answered. Mrs Bannerman was being provoked and she had to defend herself from the allegations. In her response she refuted what Mrs Farmer had said. At the end of the day the 'Buy a brick' campaign was to get money in, to sort out the building. Mrs Farmer's questioning was antagonistic. A few people are trying to do some good and benefit for the community and they were being undermined.
13. During this time Dr Baxter chaired the meeting very well; there was a lot of discussion at the Parish Council meeting, longer than is normally allowed. The standing orders indicate it should be around 20 minutes for residents' comments and I believe it took around 45 minutes. Dr Baxter did not stifle the debate at that meeting.
14. In terms of the allegation of misuse of Council resources, this was completely untrue. The money from the loan, the Chaldean Trust and the donations, as well as those providing funds under the 'Buy a brick' could be spent for the building. If putting a TV in helps the use of the building, then that would be acceptable. Some of the expenditure had to be retrospectively approved, for example the locks on the doors which Mrs Bannerman paid for herself and the Parish Council approved this at meeting on the 6th October. The sum of £2,840.77 was approved and Mrs Farmer was there when that took place (see exhibit J12). We had received more than enough money from, for example, the grant from the Chaldean Trust and other donations to cover things such as tables, crockery, cleaning materials and cleaner's overall time. Around £4,000 was spent and there was more than enough money to cover the cost of these things without touching the 'Buy a brick' money. So there was no ~~use~~ of Council resources and the expenditure was approved by the Parish Council.

Misuse

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15. In respect of the allegation about Dr Baxter withdrawing his request to Councillor Hunt to assist with the Pavilion Committee, I was not involved in that. However, on the evening I can say that Councillor Hunt acted diabolically. He made a number of allegations in the meeting that money had been spent illegally and there was no good governance and Parish Council was going to run out of money by the end of the financial year. Dr Baxter had tried to move things on by asking him to help sort this out. Councillor Hunt responded that he needed this and that before he would help. Unfortunately I did not keep a full detailed record for the minutes at that time of what he actually said because he would normally provide me with a copy of this after the meeting. This time he refused to do so. It was not the first time he had done that sort of thing. He often made snide remarks.
16. It seemed to me as if Councillor Hunt and Mrs Farmer were in league with each other.
17. In terms of Mrs Bannerman's emails being disrespectful, bullying and intimidatory towards Fred Pavey, I had no direct knowledge of that. I am outside of the email loop. Fred Pavey never complain to me about emails he received from Selina Bannerman.
18. I have always got on well with Fred Pavey, but I can say that I believed that there was always a degree of antagonism - as there was a feeling that the Sports Association was not representing the Parish. It was a clique of groups who wanted to stop other from playing at the recreational grounds, for example the girls football. There was some resentment from the Sports Association that the Pavilion was ~~done up~~ ^{done up} in time and ~~to budget~~ ^{on} ~~refused to do~~ ^{refused to do}
19. I would only add that there is a general feeling in the village that it is sad that the Parish has lost a good set of Councillors. Councillors who gave up their time and goodwill to sort out the Pavilion. Nobody had done anything like this before and there is a lot of snipping all the time and taking a dig at the Parish Council over this.
20. Tony Baxter was one of the best Chairmen that the Parish Council has had. He was very professional. Selina Bannerman is a doer. I feel very sorry for them and we have lost some really good Councillors.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

JOHN INGHAM

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15. PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP

There was nothing to report on this matter.

16. PAVILION UPDATE, FUNDING AND PAVILION COMMITTEE'S PROPOSALS

Cllr Mrs Bannerman referred to the proposals as outlined in Appendix B, the contents of which were fully supported by members.

17. TENNIS COURTS

Cllr Mrs Bannerman referred to the attached Appendix C and to the proposal contained therein as follows:

“That the Tennis Club provide one hour per day from say 1.00 pm to 2.00 pm for a holiday membership for all children under 14 years of age during every school holiday for a £1 membership payment for the purposes of being fully insured on the courts.”

RESOLVED that the proposal be fully supported by the Parish Council.

18. TRANSPARENCY OBLIGATIONS FOR PARISH COUNCILS

Members had been circulated with details concerning the transparency obligations for small Local Authorities which had come into force on 1 April 2015. Parish Councils with a turnover of less than £25,000 were now subject to the Transparency Code which made it mandatory for Parish Councils to publish specific information relative to its statutory functions. The information specified under the Code must be published on an available free of charge website.

The Clerk stated that much of the information set out in the requirements, ie minutes, agendas, etc, were already on the website and arrangements would be made with Cllr A Baxter for additional requirements under the Code to be made available.

19. VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE REQUEST

Cllr Mrs Liversage drew attention to the various items of expenditure incurred by the Village Hall Committee and she requested that, like the Sports Association, gross amounts be paid by the Parish Council with the Village Hall Committee reimbursing the Parish Council the net amount, ie less the VAT.

The Clerk stated that, as the Village Hall was owned by the Parish Council as was the pavilion, then this request was perfectly in order.

Proposal for a new Pavilion Committee

The Committee's task is to be responsible for the maintenance, marketing, bookings and fees, cleaning and inclusivity of the pavilion. The Committee will write and format a plan and ongoing set of rules and structure to run the pavilion for and on behalf of the Parishioners.

This Pavilion Committee will include the SA PC reps x 2, Any 2 members of the SA as appointed by the SA and 2 members of the public who have an interest in the Pavilion activities. For the initial set up committee those members of the public will be John Carey as Chairman and Mike Keogh until such a time that the Code of Conduct and rules have been established.

There will be a structure put in place where deposits are taken and the caretaker will sign off after the pavilion has been cleaned and do a check in and check out after its use. There will be a strict no boots policy in the lounge area.

The deposit will be forfeit in exchange for cleaning if the group does not wish to undertake this themselves. It will be left ready for the next person the same way we would expect to find it.

There will be an active attempt at offering the pavilion to all members of the Parish and will include, but not be limited to, Bridge parties, fundraising mornings/days, Children's parties, Cricket club, Rounder's clubs, children's art clubs, chess club, football, Running club, Biking Club, and any other number of sporting and leisure activities that would like to use the facilities for gathering, washing and changing, shelter and refreshments.

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17. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT(i) Payment of Accounts

RESOLVED that the accounts as set out on the attached statement (see Appendix C) be duly authorised for payment.

(ii) Financial Statement

RESOLVED that the contents of the attached schedule (see Appendix D) be received.

18. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

19. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

- Parish Council's grant policy (November meeting).
- Pension Regulator – Workplace pension scheme (November meeting).
- Calendar of meetings for 2016 (November meeting).
- Operational and financial risk assessments (November meeting).
- HMF – all forthcoming meetings.

20. CONFIRMATION OF DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, 3 November 2015, at 7.30 pm in the Much Hadham Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

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App C

MUCH HADHAM PARISH COUNCIL

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

582	Cllr Mrs Liversage	£100.99	Pavilion expenses – reimbursement
583	Glenplan Ltd	£816.00	Pavilion – additional works
584	not honoured		
585	not honoured		
586	Cllr Mrs Bannerman	£2,840.77	Pavilion expenses – reimbursement
587	Cllr Key	£56.70	Pavilion expenses – reimbursement
588	Cllr Mrs Bannerman	£945.90	Pavilion tables – reimbursement
589	Broadmead Leisure	£60.00	Inspection of play equipment
590	Mr A Baxter	£71.86	Website subscription – reimbursement
591	Tennyson Insurance	£162.62	Addition to pavilion insurance
592	Abel Alarm Co	£186.00	Pavilion – call out
594	J Ingham	£91.20	Binding Minutes – reimbursement
595	Cllr Hunt	£314.98	Neighbourhood Plan – printing costs
596	Cllr Key	£78.88	Pavilion expenses

Burial Authority

593	Affinity Water	£40.94	Water rates
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