

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON
ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 10.00am pm on 17 MARCH 2016**

Present: Councillor T Knight – Chairman
Councillors H Asker and D Jones.
Mrs C Wellingbrook–Doswell (Independent Person)

Officers in attendance:- M Cox (Democratic Services Officer). C Oliva
(Solicitor – Investigating Officer) and C Nicholson
(Solicitor).

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SC8 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

**SC9 HEARING INTO AN ALLEGATION OF A BREACH OF THE CODE
OF CONDUCT**

The hearing had been called to determine an allegation of a breach of the Code of Conduct of Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council.

Councillor Jones raised concern about the validity of this meeting. He said the recommendation on the Investigating Officer's report gave the wrong impression of the purpose of the meeting. The report said 'that members determine whether they accept the findings of the Solicitor or whether they wish there to be formal hearing'

In the light of this wording he had not expecting this to be a formal hearing. This had the following implications

- For a formal hearing he would have requested additional information ie the minutes of the Village Green Committee on 4 November 2015
- Members of the public may have chosen to defer attendance until a formal hearing was held.

The Solicitor said this meeting was being recorded, which would give the public the opportunity to listen live or to replay the recording after the meeting. She confirmed that the subject members and the complainants were aware of the nature of the meeting.

In relation to the request for additional papers, the Investigating Officer said she hadn't received the minutes mentioned but in any event they were not relevant to the details of the complaint. The matter to be considered was specific to whether the motion passed at the meeting was disrespectful.

The Committee felt that the additional information might be relevant to understanding the background of the complaint and could indicate bias.

The members of the committee and the Independent person agreed that it would be unwise to proceed today when there was some doubt as to the purpose of this meeting.

RESOLVED that the meeting be adjourned to 2pm on 14 April 2016 to allow for the preparation of a revised report and for members to receive the additional papers requested.