

**INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINT**  
**DECISION NOTICE**

**Subject Member: Cllr Paul Clapp**

**Background**

1. A complaint was sent on 11 August 2016 by Mr Andy Houghton (“the Complainant”) alleging that at a meeting of Walsoken Parish Council on 12 July 2016 Cllr Paul Clapp (“the Subject Member”) was rude and insulting towards the Parish Council thereby failing to show respect and courtesy and bringing Cambridgeshire County Council into disrepute.

**Summary of the Allegations**

2. The Parish Council meeting on 12 July 2016 included discussion about a controversial planning application which the Parish Council had already objected to. During that discussion the Complainant alleged that: *“Cllr Clapp then took it upon himself to shout, loudly and aggressively, “you’re not doing your jobs!” whilst stabbing his finger in the general direction of the Parish Council. He continued this inflammatory tone for a short period”*.
3. The Complainant also alleges that the Subject Member's contribution was a *“bullying and bullish tirade”*.
4. The Complainant further alleges that the Subject Member stated that he was a Cambridgeshire County Councillor and was upset that he had not been consulted about the planning issue. As Walsoken comes under Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council neither Cambridgeshire County Council nor the Subject Member would have any jurisdiction and would not have been consulted or even notified of the planning application.

**Evidence Considered**

5. The following documents were considered for the purposes of this complaint:-
  - a) Email complaint dated 11 August 2016 Complainant to Monitoring Officer;
  - b) Comments of Subject Member in response;
  - c) Parish Council minutes

**Jurisdiction**

6. For a complaint to be considered in connection with the Member’s Code of Conduct, the following test must be satisfied:

- a) the complaint was made against a person who, at the time the alleged action took place, was a member of Cambridgeshire County Council; and
  - b) the Subject Member had signed up to the Members' Code of Conduct in force at the time the alleged action took place; and
  - c) the Subject Member was conducting the business of their authority or acting, claiming to act or giving the impression of acting as a representative of the authority.
7. The Independent Person has concluded all three limbs of this test are satisfied in this matter. Whilst the Subject Member is not the Ward Councillor for Walsoken Parish, he attended the meeting in his official capacity after being asked to do so by residents of his Ward.

### **Initial Assessment Decision**

8. The Independent Person has considered whether the actions of the Subject Member described in paragraphs 2 to 4 above constitute a breach of the following provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct:
- a) Treating others with respect (paragraph 2.1); and
  - b) Bringing your office or authority into disrepute (paragraph 2.2(e)).
9. The Independent Person has concluded that, if proved, the actions complained of could amount to a breach of the Councillors Code of Conduct as the Subject Member was attending a meeting in another local authority area and should have been more circumspect in his comments.

### **Further Action**

10. The Independent Person has however also concluded that any potential breach is of a relatively low level and that the matter could be appropriately dealt with by way of local resolution.
11. The Independent Person accordingly recommends that the Subject Member provides an explanation of his viewpoint/actions together with an apology for any offence which may have been caused to the Complainants.

**Approved by:** Gill Holmes (Independent Person)  
Quentin Baker (Monitoring Officer)

**Dated:** 29 September 2016