

I refer to Mr Simpson's statement dated 24 Nov 2009.

I will not comment on the facts as alleged by Mr Simpson; those are a matter for the Committee to decide in the forthcoming hearing.

The cricket match per se has never been the issue in this case, particularly so when I was dealing with the complaint against Cllr Marsh.

If Mr Simpson had an understanding re Paul Abbott, it was not one that I shared or was aware of. Mr Simpson has repeatedly changed his position during my dealings with him. He has agreed to telephone interviews, face to face interviews (both with himself and Messrs Gorrall and Abbott), only to subsequently change his mind.

I accept I was selective in my use of conversation. If I had not my report would have been as lengthy and rambling as the numerous conversations we had. I pointed out more than once to Mr Simpson that as I was charging hourly, he was responsible for increasing the cost of the case. I have conducted telephone interviews with witnesses which took a fraction of the time it took for Mr Simpson to decide whether he would be interviewed.

On 16 October I phoned Mr Simpson at home. His partner answered and said he was not in and she did not know when she would next see him, but it would probably be the following week. A few minutes later I received a call from Mr Simpson on his mobile phone. He proceeded to harangue me about my report. Despite my offer to take on board his concerns and to look again at my report he continued to be argumentative. On at least 3 occasions I warned him that unless he spoke to me in a reasonable manner I would hang up. He continued in a similar vein so reluctantly I did just that. It is not something I did lightly or have ever done in my professional life before.

I find Mr Simpson's comments about my investigation frankly bizarre. In the numerous conversations we had – most instigated by him and certainly prolonged by him – he stressed that he understood that I was only doing my job. Until the final conversation he raised no complaint about the manner in which I conducted the investigation.

The final call to him was at the suggestion of David Whelan, although I fully agreed in the light of Mr Simpson's comments on my draft report that he should be given a final opportunity to be interviewed. It was a simple offer to go on the record and I strongly deny it or any other conduct could be construed as harassment.

I do not accept that Mr Simpson can represent absent witnesses. They should attend to give their own account so that the Committee can assess the truth of what they say.

John Stone
26 Nov 2009