

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS TO
AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
17 NOVEMBER 2020**

Mr C Barron and Ms B Vine, Ross on Wye

Question:

A Ross Gazette article published 28th October (<https://www.rossgazette.com/article.cfm?id=119893&headline=%E2%80%98Lack%20of%20debate%E2%80%99%20blamed%20for%20mass%20council%20resignations§ionIs=News&searchyear=2020&cat=Planning>) reported that Herefordshire Council's Audit and Governance Committee has asked the authority to check on resignations as a way of tracking where things are going wrong.

We wish to ask the Committee what investigations are being undertaken in respect of the underlying reasons for the resignations and the unusually large number of Code of Conduct complaints registered against Walford Parish Councillors?

Answer:

Herefordshire Council cannot comment on specific parish councils.

However, resignations from parish councils are monitored to ensure that they remain quorate and able to fulfil their statutory functions. If a parish council falls below its quoracy number, then Herefordshire Council have a legal duty to appoint Ward councillors to the parish council until it becomes quorate again. Resignations from a parish council are not investigated.

Resignations and code of conduct complaints follow two separate processes which do not cross over. A parish council could have a large number of code of conduct complaints which may not result in resignations.

When considering code of conduct complaints, the monitoring officer will take into account the number of complaints received during the year (and, if necessary, over the last couple of years) when considering how the complaint should be dealt with and any recommendations to the parish council or councillor.

Code of conduct complaints are monitored on a six monthly basis by the standards panel and any issues are reported to the audit and governance committee on an annual basis. If there are significant issues arising from a standards panel meeting before the annual report, then these would be reported to the next available audit and governance committee.