

## Cornwall Council

A ST AGNES councillor accused of secretly recording a **business meeting** has been cleared of breaching the code of conduct.

Jim Noonan said he was relieved at the outcome, claiming the complaint was part of a "vexatious and vindictive campaign" against him by a former councillor and others.

He also criticised the investigation, which took more than two years and cost £5,000 of taxpayers' **money**.

Former council chairman Doug Wilcox alleged Mr Noonan had recorded his conversations with the owner of Mount Pleasant Eco Park, Tim Stirrup, on two occasions in October 2010 and reported them to the full council without his permission.

After an investigation by Cornwall Council's legal and democratic services department, Mr Noonan was found not to have brought the council into disrepute or breached the code of conduct.

Allegations that he had also failed to treat others with respect and bullied fellow councillors were dismissed.

Mr Noonan told the West Briton: "There was no disputing the fact that the recordings were made, as from the outset I confirmed this, but claimed that they were done with the consent of all parties present.

"It was stated on the recordings that they were only intended to act as an aide memoir to support accuracy in **reporting** the meetings .... It has been accepted that Mr Stirrup was aware of the recordings being made and that he consented.

"What should have been a simple investigation to determine the facts of the matter has been mired by Mr Wilcox's attempts to draw in claims of bullying, being disrespectful and bringing myself and my authority into disrepute.

"Mr Wilcox has continued his personal, vexatious campaign against me. To date no allegation made against me has been upheld by the standards committee, and all they have achieved is a disruption to my personal life and to my work as a councillor."

Mr Wilcox and five other members resigned in 2011 after it was revealed that Cornwall Council had spent more than £30,000 investigating more than 30 complaints by councillors, including Jim Noonan, against one another.

Mr Wilcox criticised the length of time it took to deal with his complaint, while denying any campaign against Mr Noonan.

"I'm glad I resigned," he said. "I want to put the whole affair behind me. If I'd had a campaign, would I have made just two allegations against him?"

Mr Stirrup said he was surprised by the findings, as it was not the way in which a councillor should behave.