

Cheshire West and Chester

A COMPLAINANT challenging Cheshire West and Chester Council leader Mike Jones says the authority's code of conduct 'lies in tatters' after the councillor refused to co-operate with the investigation.

Tattenhall resident and former Sportsman's Arms landlord Colin Oats overheard Cllr Jones call two residents d***heads at a public meeting to discuss housing applications in The Barbour Institute last July.

An external investigator found Cllr Jones broke the councillors' code of conduct, although the council leader refused to co-operate with the inquiry. How the leader will be dealt with has yet to be decided.

Mr Oats, who is becoming frustrated with the lengthy process, said: "Any councillor can now turn around and say 'I'm not willing to participate in the investigation' and there is nothing the council can do because Cllr Jones has set the precedent."

Cllr Jones has agreed to apologise to all those present. But Mr Oats insists he will only accept an apology if Cllr Jones identifies the two unnamed people he says the comments were aimed at and apologises to the individuals concerned.

This approach is backed by Tom Fell, founder of Cheshire Farm Ice Cream and a former parish councillor, who believes the Tory ward councillor directed his 'd***heads' outburst at him and another person in the room after he sought Cllr Jones' views.

Council spokeswoman Rachel Ashley said: "The council's monitoring officer has set out in a simple and factual way the offer of resolution which has been made and the options available to the complainant.

"If agreement cannot be reached, the procedure provides for the complaint to be considered by a panel of members who will make the final decision."