

Report of the Independent Persons 2021/2022

Report of Graham Hudson:

February 2022

A complaint was raised about an alleged irregularity in declaring an interest at a meeting in that it was not declared at the earliest opportunity. In this case I fully agreed with the Monitoring Officer's opinion that the formal record of the meeting (minutes) be used to determine the facts and that there was no breach of the code of conduct.

November 2021

A complaint against a Councillor for using derogatory language was reviewed. While I agreed with the Monitoring Officer that there had not been a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, it should be noted by members that phrases, however light hearted they may appear at face value, have the potential to have a far deeper meaning to those persons at which they are directed, particularly in relation to their mental health. The draft findings were that there was not a serious breach of the Councillor's Code of Conduct. I agreed with this and the recommendations that members should be reminded of the Social Media Policy and specifically its links to the Code of Conduct.

June 2021

This complaint was made in relation to Councillors speaking at a planning committee meeting. The complainant having had their application declined, objected to Councillors who were not on the committee speaking at the meeting from the public gallery. This was found to be entirely in line with procedures and therefore no breach of the Code of Conduct.

Report of Amanda Orchard:

I have been engaged on very few occasions during the last financial year which is usually an indication of a fairly low levels of complaint/conflict between councillors and the public. I have only been engaged with as a first step in the process on one occasion which I'm pleased to say has meant that matters haven't progressed further to a hearing stage. I am delighted that this is the position of the Council but remain on hand to offer advice where appropriate from an independent perspective.

Report of David Richardson:

I was appointed as an Independent Person to the Council at the beginning of 2021/22. During the last year, I was consulted on two complaints, each against Members of Parish Councils. In both cases I was satisfied the complaints procedures had been properly applied and that officers had proportionately investigated the allegations. I broadly concurred with the conclusions reached about the complaints. Although I was not entirely convinced that a breach of the Code had occurred in one case, the matter was finely balanced and I was satisfied the Investigating Officer's contrary view was not an unreasonable judgment.