

North East Derbyshire District Council

Standards Committee

25 February 2026

CODE OF CONDUCT UPDATE ON RECENT CASES

Report of the Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Classification: This report is public

Report By: Sarah Sternberg - Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer: Sarah Sternberg - Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

PURPOSE / SUMMARY

To update members with some Code of Conduct cases

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be noted.

IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details: In so far as the cases deal with the legal issues around Members complying with the Code of Conduct.

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Decision Information	
<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>NEDDC: Revenue - £125,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £310,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No
<p>District Wards Significantly Affected</p>	None
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) details:	
<p>Stage 1 screening undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed EIA stage 1 to be appended if not required to do a stage 2 	Not applicable – report is for information.
<p>Stage 2 full assessment undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed EIA stage 2 needs to be appended to the report 	No, not applicable
<p>Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Cabinet <input type="checkbox"/> SMT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>	Yes Details: Standards Committee

<p>Links to Council Plan priorities;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A great place that cares for the environment A great place to live well A great place to work A great place to access good public services
All

REPORT DETAILS

1 **Background** (reasons for bringing the report)

1.1 From time to time cases of Members breaching the Code of Conduct are reported. This report outlines some of those cases.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

2.1 Case 1

Tameside Council

This is a well known case. It involved 6 Cllrs and 2 MPs (including the former Denton and Gorton MP) in a WhatsApp Group called “Trigger me Timbers”. This concerned statements made between 2019 and 2022. The allegations were externally investigated and a 2-day hearing held at the end of which the Cllrs were found to have breached the Code of Conduct.

The investigator made the point that the Code applies when a Cllr is engaging in media activity including the use of social media.

The statements made on the group chat included:

- (During Covid) that sick people should make their way to the local crematorium as it could save a lot of money
- Comparison of a local couple to Fred and Rose West
- That a certain child was an idiot who needs his backside slapping
- Kids in Stockport have always enjoyed swimming in street rubbish /raw sewage
- “the public are ****holes, I know, I’ve met them...” and “f*****g get in, now boot them the f*** out of your goddam ward.”
- “You’d be surprised how low the average IQ is in Denton”. And “three toes, must be Reddish feet.”

One Cllr was found to have breached the Code of Conduct by using the Council phone for political purposes.

The Leader who was one of the group, claimed it was not her role to police conduct or to set an example.

The Cllrs have been censured, stripped of their committee memberships and are required to undertake training on the code of conduct.

2.2 Case 2

Isle of Wight Council – branded dysfunctional.

An independent review of the governance at the Isle of Wight Council found the following:

“There is consensus that a small group of vocal and articulate members disproportionately influences the way the Council operates and impacts on the Council’s reputation with what is regarded as inappropriate behaviour at full Council and Committee meetings and sometimes outside formal decision making processes. Formal meetings are webcast allowing the general public to witness this behaviour by a small minority of councillors.”

Some staff “are reluctant to attend meetings with Members “for fear they will be ridiculed or criticised in public”.

Staff told the Council’s statutory officers about member behaviour which “could be construed as bullying/harassment behaviours” including “comments made by some councillors about members of the Council’s staff in the local press and on social media. There are examples of some councillors openly calling for officers to be disciplined and for “formal investigations” of staff”.

“Some members expressed the view that a number of officers are “incompetent” and their advice is then discounted or ignored with some members seeming to prefer to substitute their own opinions in place of professional advice from officers.”

“These incidents are a clear indication that there are problems currently with the operation of the member/officer interface.”

2.3 Case 3

Wokingham Borough Council

A councillor broke the code of conduct by voting on a planning application when he had publicly said he was strongly opposed to the application. He should have declared an interest as he was legally advised to do. Breached the provisions in the Code of Conduct on predetermination.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 To inform Members of cases which have been publicised.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 The report is for information so there is no alternative.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet you must provide copies of the background papers)	
None	