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Three-year ban for Dartmouth councillor

A Dartmouth Town councillor was disqualified for three years on Thursday (28 May 2009) following a Standards Board for England investigation.

The Adjudication Panel for England, an independent judicial tribunal, agreed with the Standards Board's ethical standards officer that Councillor Brian Boughton had breached the Code of Conduct by bullying a council officer, treating a council officer and several councillors with disrespect, and bringing his office and the council into disrepute.

Councillor Boughton, who is also a former member of South Hams District Council, was alleged to have bullied and undermined the Dartmouth town clerk over a long period. He subjected the clerk at one stage to almost daily visits in the council's offices, during which he would frequently become aggressive, angry and intimidating in front of officers and members. He also repeatedly accused the clerk of incompetence, to his face and to others.

Councillor Boughton's conduct at council meetings, attended by the local press and the general public, was often aggressive, and was so disruptive that on one occasion, a senior police officer attending the meeting believed it to be verging on public disorder and considered intervening.

He was also disrespectful to other members, referring to the mayor as a 'bloody hypocritical bitch', and claiming in a letter to a new member that two of their fellow councillors were showing 'signs of serious dementia'. Council staff found his discussions with other members so heated that they had to ask for the conversations to be held elsewhere, as they disturbed the running of the council office.

Dr Robert Chilton, chair of the Standards Board, said: "Councillor Boughton's conduct was not only personally distressing to a number of individuals, but also brought his office and authority into disrepute and affected the smooth running of the council.

"People have every right to expect high standards from those elected to represent them, and in falling so far short of those standards, Councillor Boughton has seriously undermined the public's trust and confidence in local democracy. The three-year disqualification recognises this, and sends a clear message to the electorate that councillors who breach the Code of Conduct can be brought to account."

Ends.