

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Civic Affairs Committee

20th March 2014

AUTHOR/S: Monitoring Officer

UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

Purpose

1. To update members on complaints cases regarding alleged breaches of the code of conduct.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Civic Affairs Committee **note** the progress of outstanding complaints and the conclusion of cases resolved since the last meeting.

3. **Complaint cases concluded since last meeting:**

- (a) **CORCOM 956**

The complaint was made by a resident in relation to a district councillor, who is also a parish councillor, concerning his involvement in an issue in his parish in which he is alleged to have an interest which has not been declared. After consideration of the evidence by the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person it was considered that the district councillor did not have any relevant interests to declare and had not breached the code of conduct so no further action would be taken.

4. **New complaint cases/cases outstanding at 10th March 2014:**

- (a) **CORCOMS1054, 1055, 1056, 1057**

This complaint was made by a representative of a group of residents about four parish councillors following negotiations taking place on the renewal of a lease on a building owned by the parish council. As one of the councillors was the chairman of the parish council the parish council requested that the complaint was dealt with by the Monitoring Officer. The complainant alleged a number of breaches of the code of conduct including failure to treat with respect, bullying and threatening behaviour, inappropriate conduct and displaying a lack of leadership. The Monitoring Officer and Independent Person concluded that the four councillors did not appear to have breached the code of conduct or acted improperly in any way and felt the complaints stemmed from frustration at the outcome of the lease negotiations which was not an appropriate use of the code of conduct complaints procedures. It was also concluded that parish councillors who support the actions of their Chairman in representing the parish council's wishes did not display a lack of leadership. No further action is to be taken.

(b) **CORCOM 1046**

This complaint was made by a two parish councillors and a resident about a parish councillor. As one of the councillors was the chairman of the parish council the parish council requested that the complaint was dealt with by the Monitoring Officer. The complaints involve failure to declare interests at the parish council. Further responses are currently awaited before the written evidence will be considered by the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person.

5. **Other complaints**

The Monitoring Officer continues to advise a number of parish councils in relation to conduct-related issues such as when and how to declare interests which do not form the basis of a formal complaint.

BACKGROUND PAPERS: Localism Act 2011
SCDC Code of Conduct Complaints procedures

Contact Officer: Fiona McMillan
Monitoring Officer
Telephone: (01954) 713027