

:

13 July 2020

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the **Standards Committee** will be held on **Wednesday, 15th July, 2020** at **10.30 am**. This will be a virtual meeting and you can attend the meeting via the following link <https://m.youtube.com/user/TeignbridgeDC/videos>

PHIL SHEARS
Managing Director

AGENDA

3. **Standards Investigation – Record of Interview Councillor Alan Connett** (Pages 3 - 4)

The Committee will consider the Investigator's Report regarding alleged breaches by District Cllr R Daws of the Council's Code of Conduct as follows:

- (a) Introduction by Chairman
- (b) Report summary by Investigator
- (c) Representations from Cllr Daws and questions from the Committee on:
 - (i) report sections regarding the findings of fact (including evidence from 2 out of 3 witnesses as notified by Cllr Daws regarding report paragraphs 6.8 to 6.16); and
 - (ii) whether a breach of the Code has occurred
- (d) Comments (if any) from Independent Persons
- (e) Committee adjourn (with Independent Persons) to determine whether breach occurred and only if a breach is found, which of the following available sanctions (if any) should be imposed:
 - Public censure / reprimand
 - Publish the Committee's findings
 - Recommend to full Council that Cllr Daws be removed from any committees (subject to compliance with allocation rules)
 - Training
- (f) Decision to be published within 7 days

If you would like this information in another format, please telephone 01626 361101 or e-mail info@teignbridge.gov.uk

**Document x: Record of interview with Councillor Alan Connett,
28 November 2019**

1. I introduced myself and explained my appointment and role. I advised you that I would be recording the interview and you consented to this.
2. I outlined the various incidents that had been drawn to my attention and we agreed which ones were directly relevant to you.
3. You told me you hadn't been involved in the arrangements for the Climate Change briefing. It had been advertised as a briefing and you had understood that it wasn't a formal Council meeting. It was a format that had been used many times before. Its purpose was to inform councillors and provide a space where questions could be asked and thinking developed.
4. If the Council was to hold an event for the public, you wouldn't expect it to be at 9am for an hour before a Council meeting. It would have been in the evening or an afternoon, when more people could attend, and would have been advertised accordingly. It clearly was not intended to be an event for the public.
5. You had arrived early and had been meeting with the MD about a number of issues related to your ward and your portfolio. The office door was closed. Your impression was that Councillor Daws walked in to the room without invitation. He was on his own at that point.
6. Initially, you thought that might have been because Councillor Daws hadn't seen you. However, having walked in to the room and seen you, he didn't acknowledge you and didn't do the usual courtesy of saying; oh I'm sorry, I didn't see you, would it be alright if I had a word. He immediately launched in to it, interrupting your meeting.
7. You said there was a sharp exchange. Councillor Daws was challenging the MD as to why the briefing wasn't open to the public. Towards the end, he used the phrase; *you're on thin ice*. It was aggressive in tone. You didn't feel comfortable about the manner of the exchange.
8. You had commented for the MD to let it go. That seemed to de-escalate the situation. The MD then said he had made his decision and that was it. Councillor Daws then left. The tense atmosphere remained and it was not possible to complete your meeting.
9. You didn't recall any other discourteous or disrespectful phrases. The manner of Councillor Daws was rude and aggressive. It was more than assertive; it was disrespectful.

10. You regarded Councillor Daws conduct as disrespectful to you as well as to the MD. You had been having a meeting about significant Council business.
11. You thought that the comment about being on thin ice related to the issue of the legality of the arrangements for the briefing. You said that it could be seen as a threat against him in his job and, given the wider context, the MD may have taken it that way. Councillor Daws wasn't clear what he meant so it was open to speculation.
12. After Councillor Daws left, the MD and you concluded your conversation. You then went to the Climate Change presentation. You became aware later that a member of the public had been brought in to the building. You didn't have first-hand knowledge of this.
13. You hadn't been directly involved in any of the other incidents. You said that the conduct of Councillors Daws and Mullone was generally aggressive in tone.
14. You mentioned a Planning Committee meeting which was receiving legal advice about the Wolborough appeal in confidential session. This was quite legitimate in order to protect the Council's legal position and to safeguard the public expenditure involved. That got translated by Councillors Daws and Mullone into it being a secret meeting. The tone was that the Council are yet again excluding the public.
15. You said you didn't follow the posts of the two councillors on Facebook. You had looked at the NSN website a few times. You had been told that a lot of the offensive material had been removed but in fact the tabs were still there and everything could still be read. You thought that the change was just superficial.
16. You confirmed you weren't on the Local Plan Working Group.
17. You commented that you understood what was done when in opposition and the aims of NSN. But in this case, the Council was being denigrated. In your view, their one ambition was to change the decision and everything was fair game.
18. You believed members were generally aware of the Code of Conduct and the Member/Officer Protocol

Sent to witness for confirmation	
Agreed by witness as an accurate record	