

Standards Hearing Sub-Committee

10 April 2025



Title	Determination of the complaints against a Councillor
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report Author	Linda Heron, Monitoring Officer
Ward(s) Affected	All wards
Exempt	Report – No Appendices A and B – Yes
Exemption Reason	Appendices A and B contain exempt information within the meaning of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 and by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order 2006 Paragraph 1 and 2 – Information relating to any individual or any information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
Corporate Priority	This item is not in the current list of Corporate Priorities but still requires a decision.
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Make a determination of the complaints
Reason for Recommendation	In accordance with the Council's Arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct, this Sub-Committee is required to make a determination of the complaint.

1. Summary of the report

What is the situation	Why we want to do something
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Following two complaints, the Assessment Sub-Committee directed the Monitoring Officer to instigate a formal investigation. The investigation has taken place, and the Hearing Sub-Committee needs to consider whether or not they agree with the findings and if so, consider any further action in relation to the complaints.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To uphold the Nolan Principles and follow the Council's Arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct as published.

This is what we want to do about it	These are the next steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make a finding in relation to the investigation of the complaints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider the Investigator's Reports.

1.1 The Sub-Committee is required to consider the Investigator's Reports and determine the complaints against Cllr Saliagopoulos that she has failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

1.2 The Sub-Committee is asked to review the report in order to determine whether Cllr Saliagopoulos has breached the Code of Conduct.

2. Complaint

2.1 The two complaints made by Cllr Button and Cllr Williams respectively relate to the social media communications from Cllr Saliagopoulos and whether or not by posting those communications on social media Cllr Saliagopoulos breached the Council's Code of Conduct.

2.2 On receipt of each of the complaint, the Deputy Monitoring Officer consulted with the Independent Person in accordance with the Council's published Arrangements for dealing with allegations of misconduct.

2.3 An Assessment Sub-Committee was held on 8 August 2024, and a sanction had been imposed (an apology to each of the complainants). The Sub-Committee also directed the Monitoring Officer to instigate formal investigation in the event the sanction had not been complied with.

2.4 Cllr Saliagopoulos supplied a form of apology to the Monitoring Officer for onward transmission to the complainants. The Monitoring Officer explained that the apology should be made to the complainants. To date the apology had not been made to either of the complainants.

2.5 Ms Claire Storey was appointed as the external investigator to consider and report on the complaints. The Final Confidential Report in respect of each complaint is attached at exempt Appendices A and B.

3. Hearings process

3.1 The purpose of the hearing is to consider the Report, hear any representations and make a determination on the basis of that evidence, and (if appropriate) decide on any action to be taken. The Independent Chair may direct the manner in which the hearing is to be conducted but otherwise the following general principles will apply:

- (a) The Investigator will present his report and explain her conclusions
- (b) The Investigator will call witnesses (if any) to support her conclusions
- (c) Committee Members and the councillor concerned will have the opportunity to question the Investigator
- (d) The Independent Person who was initially consulted on the two complaints may be asked to comment
- (e) The Councillor concerned will make representations to the Sub-Committee and give evidence

- (f) The Sub-Committee (after private deliberation if necessary) will inform the Councillor of its decision and any action to be taken
- (g) A written notice will be published after the hearing

4. Possible Outcomes

- 4.1 If the Sub-Committee finds that the Councillor did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, it may dismiss the complaints.
- 4.2 If the Sub-Committee finds that the Councillor did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, it may decide on any or a combination of the following actions:
 - (a) Require the Councillor to publish an apology either privately or in public
 - (b) Require the Councillor to attend training
 - (c) Censure the Councillor
 - (d) Report to the Council to censure the Councillor
 - (e) Require the Monitoring Officer to publish a report in the newspaper or on the Council's website about the Councillor's conduct
 - (f) Withdraw privileges provided by the Council such as computer equipment, internet or email access
 - (g) Recommend to the Councillor's group leader that the councillor be removed from a committee or an outside body (as appropriate): or
 - (h) A combination of any of the above.
- 4.3 The Sub-Committee may set the time frame for the actions required to be taken.
- 4.4 The Sub-Committee has no power to suspend or disqualify a councillor or withdraw allowances.

5. Contact

- 5.1 Linda Heron, Group Head Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer.

Background papers:

Assessment Sub-Committee reports and minutes from 8 August 2024

Appendices:

Appendix A: Investigation Report of Claire Storey – Complaint by Cllr Button

Appendix B: Investigation Report of Claire Storey – Complaint by Cllr Williams