

Standards Sub-Committee

DECISION NOTICE: BREACH OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Subject Member: Former Ware Town Councillor, Jeanette Taylor

We notify all concerned parties in writing once we have determined a complaint. This decision notice will be sent to;

- The person making the allegation
- The Subject Member

Complaint

On 30th January 2019, the Standards Sub Committee considered a complaint that former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor, had allegedly breached the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct by breaching the principles of selflessness, honesty and leadership.

The complaint alleged that the subject member had failed to comply with the Code as follows:

- A) That as a Ware Town Councillor, the Councillor used her office to secure financial advantage and then used her position as a Ware Town Councillor to pursue a complaint in a way not open to a member of the public contrary to the principle of selflessness in the Ware Town Council Members' Code of Conduct.
- B) That as a Ware Town Councillor, the Councillor bullied staff and councillors of Ware Town Council and staff of contractors by failing to value colleagues and therefore breached the Code of Conduct by failing to treat people with respect.

Code of Conduct

The Standards Sub Committee agreed that following the complaint, the relevant parts of the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct are:

1. Selflessness

SELFLESSNESS: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

2. Honesty

HONESTY: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

3. Leadership

LEADERSHIP: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Decision

The Standards Sub Committee reached the conclusion that former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor had been acting in her capacity as a Councillor at the time of the alleged actions. This conclusion was based upon her use of a Hertfordshire County Council email address for correspondence on the issue, attending meetings with fellow Councillors and failing throughout to declare that she was attending as a private citizen, asking for items to be placed on agendas, failing to distinguish between her involvement as a private citizen and did not take steps to identify herself as a private individual.

The Standards Sub Committee found that :

- Former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor did breach the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct by failing to abide by the principles of selflessness, honesty and leadership.
- The principle of **selflessness** as set out in the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct definition, was breached.
- Reason: Former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor secured a financial advantage and pursued a complaint in a way not open to a member of the public. Former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor did not act solely in the public interest but instead pursued the underlying issues in a manner which resulted in financial benefit for herself with no apparent reciprocal benefit to the Council, Ware Priory Trading or residents.

- The principle of **honesty** as set out in the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct definition, was breached
- Reason: there is no evidence that former Ware Town Councillor Taylor took steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protected the public interest. There is no sufficient correspondence or evidence that she sought to clarify that she was acting solely as a private citizen.
- The principle of **leadership** as set out in the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct definition, was breached
- Reason: Former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor did not provide leadership because if leading by example, she should not have sought or accepted an arrangement which meant that by her actions in not declaring that she was acting in a private capacity and utilised her Councillor status, she gained an advantage in terms of not paying any of the required costs in a way that was not available to a member of the public.
- **Bullying:** the Investigator did not find evidence of bullying. However, the Standards Sub Committee found that there had been a failure to treat people with respect contrary to the principles of selflessness, honesty and leadership, which amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct. On the evidence presented, former Ware Town Councillor Jeanette Taylor's manner towards officers was at times not as respectful as is required in a professional or personal capacity.

SANCTIONS AGREED

The sanctions that the Standards Sub Committee recommends are as follows:

- 1 The above findings be reported to Ware Town Council
- 2 Former Ware Town Councillor Mrs Taylor be censured by motion by Ware Town Council
- 3 That the Standards Sub Committee publish its findings that former Ware Town Councillor Mrs Taylor has breached Ware Town Council's Code of Conduct as

Ware Town Council

1. The underlying situation in this matter played out in the context of Ware Town Council. Ware Town Council is strongly encouraged to:
 - provide training to ensure that all its present and future councillors are fully aware of the Ware Town Council Code of Conduct and why it is important for all councillors at all times to meet those standards.
 - undergo an independent review of its governance arrangements generally including in respect of (a) the relationship between members and officers (b) having and implementing an effective complaints procedure (c) placing items on agendas for committee and other council meetings (d) managing conflicts of interest between councillors' personal interests and those as a councillor and (e) the relationship between Ware Town Council, councillors and Ware Priory Trading.

Subject member's right to appeal

The subject member does not have a right of appeal to this decision within the East Herts Council Councillor Complaints Procedure but has alternative methods of redress.

Chairman