

STANDARDS COMMITTEE



Report subject	Consideration of a Report in Respect of Code of Conduct Complaint TPC-022
Meeting date	7 October 2025
Status	Public Report (Exempt Appendix)
Executive summary	This report provides the Standards Committee with the Conclusion of the investigation following a complaint made about a Councillor of Christchurch Town Council under reference TPC-022. The investigator's report is attached at Exempt Appendix 1. The investigator concludes that there has not been a breach of the Code of Conduct. The Committee is asked to consider this report of the Monitoring Officer and the Investigator's report.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: In relation to complaint TPC-022, the findings of the independent investigator that the subject Christchurch Town Councillor did not breach the Council's Code of Conduct be accepted and no further action be taken.
Reason for recommendations	The investigation was conducted by an experienced independent investigator who undertook interviews with the complainant, the subject councillor and other interested parties before reaching a conclusion. The conclusions are based on the current legal framework which sets out the parameters within which councillors are subject to a Code of Conduct.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable
Corporate Director	Aidan Dunn, Chief Executive
Report Authors	Robin Watson, Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Wards	Not applicable
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. All local authorities, including parish and town councils, are required by the Localism Act 2011 to have in place a Code of Conduct for councillors, and BCP Council is also required to have an adopted process for dealing with complaints under the Code. This report relates to a complaint against a councillor of Christchurch Town Council. The Town Council has adopted the Local Government Association's model code of conduct, which has at its heart the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life (also known as the "Nolan Principles"), although at the time of the complaints referred to in this report, a local Code was in place.
2. The Code demonstrates that the Christchurch Town Council is committed to upholding the highest standards of conduct by its elected councillors. It also protects the public, fellow councillors and local authority officers and the reputation of local government

TPC-022

3. On 8 July 2024, the Council received a complaint from the complainant alleging that the Subject Christchurch Town Councillor failed to comply with the Code. The complainant considered that the subject councillor had breached sections 1, 2, 3 and 12 of the Christchurch Town Council Code of Conduct as follows :
 1. He/she shall behave in such a way that a reasonable person would regard as respectful.
 2. He/she shall not act in a way which a reasonable person would regard as bullying or intimidatory.
 3. He/she shall not seek to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
 4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix B *[of the code]*, the member shall not vote on the matter. She/he may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting.
4. Following consideration of the complaint by the Chair of Standards Committee in consultation with the Independent Persons and Members of the Standards Committee, it was agreed that due to the nature of the allegations, that an independent investigation should be undertaken. The Deputy Monitoring Officer appointed Simon Goacher, Head of Local Government at Weightmans to undertake the independent investigation.

Outcome of the Investigation Report

5. The methodology and evidence considered are set out within the investigator's report, attached at Appendix 1.
6. The report finds that there was no evidence that the Code had been breached.
7. A copy of the investigator's draft report was shared with the complainant, the subject Christchurch Town Councillor and other interested parties, and where applicable their responses are included in full at paragraphs 242-245 of the report.

Options Appraisal

8. The Standards Committee is asked to consider the final report prepared by Mr Goacher at its meeting and the recommendation to accept the findings. However, the Committee may make alternative findings and or determination as it sees fit based on the report and evidence placed before it.

Summary of financial implications

9. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

10. The detailed legal basis for the investigation and reasons for the findings of the investigator are set out in the report at Appendix 1. The Committee is recommended to accept the findings of the independent investigator.

Summary of human resources implications

11. There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

Summary of sustainability impact

12. There are no sustainability impacts arising from the recommendations in this report.

Summary of public health implications

13. There are no public health impacts arising from the recommendations in this report

Summary of equality implications

14. The report provides the Committee with details and recommendations arising from an independent investigation. The independent investigator has to comply with the Council's Equality's Policy when conducting the investigation.

Summary of risk assessment

15. The Council has to act in accordance with the legal framework that exists, and the powers the Council has through its Standards Committee relating to conduct undertaken by councillors when acting in that capacity. Other regulatory regimes may come into play should they be appropriate where councillors are acting in their private capacity. The risk of not following the recommendations is that the Council will be acting contrary to a clear recommendation of an independent investigator who has assessed the evidence, and contrary to the legal advice received.

Background papers

Published works

Evidence pack prepared by the Independent Investigator (Exempt Information - Paragraphs 1 and 2)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – TPC-022 Final Report of Independent Investigator (Exempt Information – Paragraphs 1 and 2)