



Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-Committee

Date: Thursday, 11 January 2024
Time: 9.30 am
Venue: Room N2.14 - County Hall

Members (Quorum: 3)

Pauline Batstone, Susan Cocking and David Gray

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services Meeting Contact 01305 224213 - chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting, apart from any items listed in the exempt part of this agenda.

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Agenda

Item	Pages
1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN	
To elect a Chairman for the meeting.	
2. APOLOGIES	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their decision councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.	
If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer	

in advance of the meeting.

4. HEARING SUB-COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DORSET COUNCIL MEMBER COMPLAINT PROCESS

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To note the Sub-Committee's terms of reference:-

Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-Committees for the consideration of Code of Conduct Issues

- (a) The Audit and Governance Committee shall arrange that, to the extent it is called upon to determine any allegation relating to a Member Code of Code (including that of a Town Council or a Parish Council), the determination shall be made by a Sub-Committee of the Audit and Governance Committee. An Audit and Governance Sub-Committee with such responsibility may include non-Members. An Audit and Governance Sub-Committee that has non-Members forming part of it shall not have any power relating to the regulation and/or control of the finances of the Council.
- (b) Substitutes may only be appointed to an Audit and Governance Sub-Committee from the membership of the Audit and Governance Committee. There shall be no power to appoint non Member substitutes.

To note the Dorset Council Member Complaint Process (attached).

5. URGENT ITEMS

To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for urgency shall be recorded in the minutes.

6. EXEMPT BUSINESS

To consider passing the following recommendation:

Recommendation

That in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in item(s) No 7 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph(s) 1 and 2 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered. (Any live streaming will end at this

junction).

Reason for taking the item in private:

Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual.

Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal identity of an individual.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINT

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To consider the report.

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Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors

What is a Code of Conduct complaint?

Dorset Council has adopted a code of conduct for its Councillors (also known as Members) and Co-opted Members, which is available for inspection on the council's website and on request from the Monitoring Officer.

Each of the parish and town councils in Dorset have adopted a Code of Conduct for their Councillors and Co-opted Members which they publish on their own website.

A Code of Conduct complaint is one that alleges that a Dorset Council or Dorset parish or town Councillor or Co-opted Member has failed to comply with their council's code of conduct.

Dorset Council is required to have arrangements in place to investigate and reach decisions about Code of Conduct complaints.

These arrangements set out:

1. who you can complain about
2. what you can complain about
3. what cannot be complained about
4. how to make a complaint
5. how Dorset Council will deal with such complaints

1. Who you can complain about?

You can complain about Councillors and Co-opted Members of Dorset Council or any Town or Parish Council in the area of Dorset Council. A co-opted Member is a voting member of a council or one of its committees, who was appointed to their position rather than being elected.

2. What can you complain about?

You can complain about the conduct of current, individual Councillors or Co-opted Members.

The conduct complained of must be covered by the Code of Conduct and must have occurred during the Councillor or Co-opted Members time in office.

The conduct complained of must have happened in the last 20 working days. It could be a one-off incident or the last incident in a series of connected events (if a series of connected events is complained of all the connected events may be considered as

part of the complaint even if some of the events are older than 20 working days). Only in exceptional circumstances will a complaint received outside the timeframe be considered.

Types of complaint alleging breach of Code of Conduct may include:

- unlawfully discriminating against someone
- failing to treat people with respect
- bullying any person
- intimidating any person involved in any investigation or proceedings about someone's misconduct
- doing something to prevent those who work for the authority from being unbiased
- revealing information that was given to them in confidence, or stopping someone getting information they are entitled to by law
- damaging the reputation of their office or authority, where the conduct is linked to their public role and not in their private capacity
- using their position improperly, to their own or someone else's advantage or disadvantage
- misusing their authority's resources
- allowing their authority's resources to be misused for the activities of a registered political party
- failing to register an appropriate interest correctly
- failing to register any gifts or hospitality (including its source) that they have received in their role as a member worth over £50.00.

3. What cannot be complained about under these arrangements?

The following types of complaint cannot be considered under these arrangements:

- Complaints about a Councillor or Co-opted Member who is no longer in office cannot be considered.
- Complaints about the conduct which happened before a Councillor or Co-opted member were elected, co-opted or appointed to their council, or after they have resigned or otherwise ceased to be in office cannot be considered.
- Complaints about a council as a whole or people employed by it cannot be considered under these arrangements.
- Complaints about dissatisfaction with a decision or action of a Council, one of its committees or employees, a service provided by a Council or a Council's procedures, cannot be considered under these arrangements.
- Complaints which relate to conduct (one-off incident or the last in a series of connected events) which happened over 20 working days ago, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- Where the complaint alleges criminal conduct (including failure to register or declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or voting at a council meeting where such an interest exists), this is a matter for the police and cannot be dealt with under the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer will consider whether it is appropriate to refer to the Police. No further action will be taken in relation to



such complaints until any related criminal/regulatory investigation, proceedings or processes have been concluded. Complainants may refer criminal allegations directly to the Police.

4. How to make a complaint

Complaints must be submitted in writing to Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer using the [Code of Conduct complaint form](#).

You will need to set out details of your complaint including:

- identify the Councillor(s) or Co-Opted Member(s) complained about
- the conduct that caused you to complain
- what part of the code of conduct do you think has been breached
- when the incident complained of took place
- what remedy you are asking for

It is very important that you set your complaint out fully and clearly and provide all the information at the outset.

For complaints concerning the conduct of a parish or town councillor you will also be asked if you have raised your complaint with the clerk of the council and what attempts have been made to resolve your complaint before submission of a complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

When complete, your form should be sent to the Monitoring Officer:

E-mail: councillorcomplaints@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

The Monitoring Officer will not normally consider a complaint unless it is in writing and a complaint form has been received. This is to ensure that all of the relevant information is provided and, where necessary, consent to share information has been obtained so that the complaint can be processed.

If you do not have access to the internet or have difficulty completing the form, please contact 01305 224181 for assistance.

Where a complaint is made against more than one councillor, a separate complaint form must be completed in respect of each councillor.

If you are making the complaint on behalf of a number of individuals, please nominate one person as the single point of contact to whom all correspondence will be addressed.

Before you complain

Before you send us your complaint, you should be aware that anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated.

You may request that your identity is withheld but this will only be agreed by the Monitoring Officer in exceptional circumstances. The Monitoring Officer has to balance the right of the Councillor complained of to properly understand the complaint against them and respond to it, with your rights as Complainant. This normally means that the Councillor will need to be told who is making the complaint. You will be informed if your complaint cannot be investigated without disclosing your identity and be provided with the opportunity to proceed or withdraw your complaint.

5. How Dorset Council will deal with complaints

Initial Check

The Monitoring Officer will check that your complaint is covered by these arrangements and consult with an Independent Person before making a decision.

(An Independent Person is someone appointed by the Council to give an independent view on complaints about councillors and co-opted members. They are not employed by the council and act voluntarily. An independent person must be consulted by the Council before it makes its decision on an allegation that it has decided to investigate. The Independent person is also available to be consulted by a councillor or co-opted member if their behaviour is the subject of a complaint.)

The initial checks are:

- Is the complaint about a current, individual Councillor or Co-opted Member
- Is the conduct complained of is covered by the council's Code of Conduct?
- Did the conduct complained of occur during the Councillor or Co-opted Members time in office?
- Did the conduct complained of happened in the last 20 working days (one-off incident or the last incident in a series of connected events even if some of them are older than 20 working days) and/or whether there are any exceptional circumstances for considering a complaint received outside this timeframe.
- Is the complaint about criminal conduct.

Within 5 working days of receiving your complaint the Monitoring Officer will write to you to acknowledge receipt of your complaint and confirm if it is covered by the complaint process or not.

If the complaint is covered by the complaint process, then within 5 working days of receiving your complaint the Monitoring Officer will also write to the Councillor or Co-opted Member with details of the complaint. In exceptional circumstances, the Monitoring Officer may keep your identity confidential if considered necessary or may

delay notifying the Councillor or Co-opted Member of the investigation where this may prejudice the investigation.

The Councillor or Co-Opted Member will be invited to respond within 5 working days, or longer at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, including providing details of witnesses and relevant information and documents.

The Councillor or Co-Opted Member will be advised of their right to seek the views of the Independent Person throughout the process and contact details will be provided.

Monitoring Officer Assessment

At this stage the complaint is confidential. You and the Councillor or Co-Opted Member complained of are asked not to disclose information about the complaint to anyone else.

The Monitoring Officer will consider the complaint and after consultation with an Independent Person (either in person or electronically), take a decision:

1. That no further action should be taken, and the complaint is dismissed.

Where a complaint is dismissed the case is closed and a letter will be sent to you and the Councillor or Co-opted Member complained of with an explanation for the decision. (Where the complaint relates to a town or parish Councillor or Co-opted Member the Monitoring Officer will also write to the town or parish clerk with the decision). The Councillor or Co-Opted Member has the option to request that details of the complaint and outcome be published. If not, details of the complaint remain confidential. The decision is final and there is no right of appeal.

Below are some examples of circumstances where no further action may be appropriate:

- The complaint is the same or substantially the same as a complaint previously dealt with and there is nothing further to be gained;
- The complaint is trivial or discloses such a minor or technical breach of the Code that it is not in the public interest to pursue
- The complaint is or appears to be malicious, politically motivated, tit-for-tat or otherwise submitted with an improper motive and the complaint is not considered to disclose sufficiently serious potential breaches of the Code to merit further consideration
- The councillor has provided a satisfactory remedy to the complaint
- There is evidence to suggest a potential breach of the Code, but the circumstances do not warrant further action

2. Refer the complaint for local resolution (which might involve an apology or training or some other form of mediation)

Where the Monitoring Officer considers a potential breach has occurred, they can decide to refer your complaint for informal resolution. This might include councillor training or referral to the political group leaders or the town or parish council or an apology.

Where the Monitoring Officer decides on local resolution you and the Councillor or Co-opted Member complained of will be sent the decision with an explanation. (Where the complaint relates to a town or parish Councillor or Co-opted Member the Monitoring Officer will also write to the town or parish clerk with the decision).

The Councillor or Co-opted Member has the option to request that details of the complaint and outcome be published on the council's website. If not, details of the complaint remain confidential.

If the Councillor or Co-opted Member agrees with the local resolution and carries it out, the decision will be final, will conclude the complaint and there is no right of appeal.

If the Councillor or Co-opted Member does not agree with local resolution or fails to carry it out the Monitoring Officer will refer the complaint for investigation and inform you and the Councillor or Co-opted Member.

Below are some examples where local resolution may be appropriate:

- Less serious complaints where the Councillor or Co-opted Member wishes to put their actions right;
- A general breakdown in relationships at the Council where other action such as mediation might help;
- Complaints where the public interest in conducting an investigation does not justify the costs of such an investigation;
- Where there is a lack of experience or the Councillor or Co-opted Member may benefit from training or mentoring;
- Where the issue appears to be in the political arena and therefore appropriate for referral to a leader(s) of a political group to deal with;
- Where it appears that the town or parish council would be best placed to resolve the issue;
- Where there is the same alleged breach of the Code by many of the council's Councillors or Co-opted Members, indicating a poor understanding of the Code and authority's procedures;

3. Refer the complaint for investigation

Where the complaint has raised a potential breach, that the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person, decides:

- cannot be resolved by local settlement and / or
- is serious enough to warrant investigation,
- or where a Councillor or Co-opted Member has failed to agree or carry out local resolution,

the Monitoring Officer will appoint an investigator.

This could be an appropriately skilled council officer from this or another council, or an external investigator. The investigation will be proportionate and include interviews with everyone the investigator decides will help them assess the complaint and reach a conclusion on whether there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer will write to notify you of the decision to refer your complaint for investigation, with an explanation. (Where the complaint relates to a town or parish Councillor or Co-opted Member the Monitoring Officer will also write to the town or parish clerk with the decision).

In exceptional circumstances, we may keep the identity of the complainant confidential if we agree it is necessary, or we may delay notifying the Councillor or Co-opted Member of the investigation where this may prejudice the investigation.

Investigation Report

The Investigating Officer will prepare a report setting out:

- (a) the agreed facts;
- (b) any facts which are not agreed and the conflicting evidence; and
- (c) their conclusion on whether or not there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The report will be supplied to you, the Independent Person and the Councillor or Co-opted Member for any comments to be provided to the Investigating Officer within 10 working days.

The report will then be finalised and sent to the Monitoring Officer, Independent Person, you and the Councillor or Co-opted Member.

The Monitoring Officer will arrange a meeting of the Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-Committee.

Meeting of the Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-Committee

This will be a public meeting unless the Councillor or Co-opted Member request the hearing takes place in confidential session and the Committee agrees. The Investigating Officer will be invited to present their report. You and the Councillor or Co-opted Member, any representative or witnesses may be asked to attend and be questioned by the Committee. The Independent Person will be invited to attend for the Committee to seek their view before making a decision.

The Committee will decide whether there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct and, if so, what action is appropriate.

Within 5 working days of the hearing the Monitoring Officer will write to notify you and the Councillor or Co-opted Member of the Committee decision with reasons.

Where the Council makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision notice will be published as soon as possible on our website, including a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied

The decision of the Hearings Sub-Committee is final and there is no right of appeal.

6. How Dorset Council will Learn from Complaints

Things do not always happen in the way they should and councillors and co-opted members do not always behave as they should, in accordance with their Code of Conduct.

Dorset Council is a learning organisation. Sometimes a hearing might result in sanctions being imposed upon a councillor but it is also important for all councillors to be able to learn from complaints.

In addition to acting upon individual complaints the Council will, through the Audit and Governance Committee, receive monitoring information about complaints and an annual report on councillor and co-opted member conduct. The focus in doing so will be upon helping individual councillors, Dorset Council as a whole and the 163 Parish and Town Councils in Dorset to maintain high standards of conduct.

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Confidential

Dorset Council – Complaint No. COM/00005980

Investigation in respect of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

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Investigation undertaken by Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director, SWAP
Internal Audit Services.

2023/2024

Investigation Report

Issue Date: 6th December 2023 – updated 2nd January 2024

Agenda Item 7

Executive Summary

1. Background

Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires relevant authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of the authority and, under section 28, to have mechanisms in place to investigate allegations that a member has not complied with the Code of Conduct.

Following an initial review by the Complaints Team and having received the views of Dorset Council's Independent Person, complaint number COM/00005980 was referred for investigation on 5 October 2023.

2. Introduction

In order to be able to carry out a thorough investigation of the complaint raised, I took the opportunity to view, in detail, the following:

- The complaint from the Complainants - Councillors Fry, Sutton and Ireland submitted on, 26th July 2023
- The concern that was raised after the complaint was received in relation to the People and Health Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 September 2023
- The Council Code of Conduct for Dorset Councillors
- Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors.
- Members and Officers Protocol
- Email 3rd August 2023 to Councillor Pipe from Antony Bygrave – Assurance Complaints Manager
- Emails 18-9-23 and 20-10-23 to Councillor Pipe from M Prosser and J Mair re Duty of Care
- Email 15-9-23 from Councillor Flower to Councillor Pipe and Councillor Suttle – draft of apology.
- The video recording of the Full Council meeting on 13 July 2023 and the People and Health Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 September 2023.

To supplement the information provided to me and available in the public domain on the Dorset Council website, I also met virtually with the following people in order to seek their comments on a number of issues:

- Interviewee D – 6th October 2023
- Interview - Councillor Nick Ireland – Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Les Fry – Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Clare Sutton – Leader of the Green Party – 9th October 2023
- Interviewee G – 24th October 2023
- Interview - Interviewee A - 26th October 2023
- Interviewee E – 1st November 2023
- Interview - Interviewee B - 2nd November 2023

- Interview - Interviewee C - 7th November 2023
- Interviewee F - 10 November 2023
- Interview - Councillor Bill Pipe - 13 November 2023 accompanied by Councillor Louie O’Leary

The names of three individuals interviewed have been withheld for reasons of anonymity. I am satisfied that these individuals remaining anonymous, does not impact on the evidence that they provided, or the investigation itself. Their interview records have been anonymised accordingly. All anonymous individuals have been made aware that, certain disclosures which have been made, may identify them from the events or comments which have taken place.

The record of our discussions is attached at Appendix A and supporting documents and emails at Appendix B.

It is not my intention to set out everything said in the interviews, a record of which can be found in the appendices, but I refer to any issues within the main body of the report, that I believe are pertinent to this investigation.

3. Complaint

Complaint No. COM/00005980

A complaint was received jointly from Councillor Nick Ireland – Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Les Fry – Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Clare Sutton – Leader of the Green Party on 26 July 2023 alleging:

We are concerned about the conduct of Cllr Bill Pipe for several reasons.

In October 2020, Cllr Bill Pipe was removed from the police and Crime panel for inappropriate comments about stop and search made during a meeting.

On the 25th of April 2023 we were made aware of a Cabinet Reshuffle <https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2023/04/27/dorset-council-cabinet-reshuffle/only> by way of public press release. Cllr Bill Pipe was appointed as lead member for Education.

A few days after Annual Full Council on the 11th of May 2023 through conversations we heard that Cllr Pipe had resigned. Information then reached us that he had been in a meeting relating to education and had mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a Senior member of Dorset Council, when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused. He had then resigned saying he did not want the role anyway.

An Echo article - <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/23611259.councillor-steps-top-education-role/> - 26.6.23 reported that Cllr Pipe had resigned less than 3 weeks later. This, just weeks after the resignation, was the first members (or most members) had heard about it.

Other than this press report nothing has been made public and no explanation offered to Group leaders about why a member with a history of inappropriate behaviour was appointed in the first place to Education and why subsequently he resigned. We feel that Cllr Pipe has seriously undermined the good working relationship between members and officers and his ongoing behaviour has brought the Council and position of elected member into disrepute.

There is also a story circulating that Cllr Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line during this same meeting.

We do know who the two officers are, but out of interest and respect to them have not approached them.

We appreciate that there is a time lag on this matter, but as the issue has not been formally raised, we have to act with the information that we have.

1. We feel that Cllr Pipe has brought the Council into disrepute and that he should formally be held to account.
2. Information should be provided to Group leaders with an explanation of what action has been taken to redress Cllr Pipe's behaviour

A further matter worthy of investigation is that at Full Council in July, the day after [REDACTED], Cllr Pipe [REDACTED]. Does this matter have a link with his [REDACTED] accent incident, does he have an issue with [REDACTED] people?

Can our complaint, the incident and the outcome or any action taken please be independently investigated and reviewed.

A further concern was raised by Jonathan Mair (Monitoring Officer) on 2 October 2023 since the complaint was received:

- It is alleged that Councillor Bill Pipe said at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A, "Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent."

Following discussion with the Monitoring Officer it was agreed that out of scope of the investigation would be:

- Information should be provided to Group leaders with an explanation of what action has been taken to redress Councillor Pipe's behaviour and Councillor Pipe's removal from the Police and Crime Panel.

4. Undisputed Facts

The undisputed facts relating to the complaint are:

- 4.1 Councillor Pipe did mimic the [REDACTED] accent of a Senior Officer of Dorset Council, at the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting on 10th May 2023. The Senior Officer was Interviewee A.

4.2 At the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A, Councillor Pipe said at the start of the meeting “Good morning, Interviewee A, if you hadn’t noticed that was said in an English accent”. The complaint does refer to an [REDACTED] accent, but Councillor Pipe confirmed at his interview that he used the phrase “Good morning, Interviewee A, if you hadn’t noticed that was said in an English accent.”

4.3 Councillor Pipe was appointed as Lead Member for Education on 1st May 2023 and resigned from the role on 19th May 2023.

4.4 Councillor Pipe did [REDACTED] the Full Council meeting on 13th July 2023.

5. Facts/statements not agreed

The following facts/statements are not agreed.

5.1 Councillor Pipe was asked to apologise after the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting.

5.2 Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line during this same meeting - Children’s Services Extended Leadership Team meeting on 10th May 2023.

5.3 A further matter worthy of investigation is that at Full Council in July, the day [REDACTED], Cllr Pipe [REDACTED]. Does this matter have a link with his [REDACTED] accent incident, does he have an issue with [REDACTED] people? -Note [REDACTED] not disputed.

6. Findings

The Dorset Council Constitution republication date was 23 August 2023.

The Councillor Code of Conduct is Part 4 Code of Protocols – Section 29 of the Constitution. The Code of Conduct is adopted from the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.

The paragraphs that are relevant to this complaint are:

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

2. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

The Member Officer Protocol is Part 3 - Scheme of Delegation - Section 31 of the Dorset Council Constitution.

The paragraph that is relevant to this complaint is:

1.2 The relationship between Members and Officers is based on the following principles:

(d) in everything they do, Members and officers of the Council must act within the law and comply with relevant codes of conduct.

(e) dealings between Members and officers are based on mutual trust and respect.

6.1 Informing Councillor Pipe of the complaint.

The Assurance Complaints Manager sent Councillor Pipe an email on the 3rd of August 2023, informing Councillor Pipe that a complaint has been received against him that alleges a breach of the Code of Conduct. In the email the full complaint from Councillor's Fry, Sutton and Ireland was provided to Councillor Pipe. At interview Councillor Pipe stated that he had not been made aware of the complaint and did not receive the email. The first occasion he was aware of the complaint, was when he was invited to interview. Councillor Pipe was asked if he was happy to continue with the interview and he confirmed that he was.

I can conclude that Councillor Pipe was sent an email informing him of the complaint on 3rd August 2023.

6.2 Mimicry of the [REDACTED] accent to an officer.

There are two occasions reported in the complaint, where Councillor Pipe is alleged to have mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of an officer. The first occasion was at the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting on 10th May 2023, where Councillor Pipe is alleged to have greeted Interviewee A in an [REDACTED] accent. The second occasion was at the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th of September 2023.

At the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting, Interviewee A confirmed that Councillor Pipe had used their name on several occasions stating "Yes, so I walked into the meeting which was quite a busy room, and we just received a call from [REDACTED], and we were trying to get ourselves a little bit settled. As I arrived, he mimicked my accent a couple of times which I duly ignored and sat down and just carried on with the meeting. The meeting was fine, it was ok during the actual content of the meeting and then towards the end of the meeting, he did the same again, mimicked my accent, which I also ignored then ended up leaving the room. When I was outside of the room, I was talking to another colleague, making arrangements and he came over and he did it again. It was three times he (Councillor Bill Pipe) mimicked my accent during the period of that meeting. I didn't really say anything to him, and I was just trying to ignore him and move forward but after he left, a member of my team came over and said, "oh my god, how did you manage to keep your cool?", it was clear it was intentional, during, before, and after that meeting". Interviewee A felt this was intentional and obnoxious as Councillor Pipe kept using their name multiple times in an [REDACTED] accent. From interviews, Interviewee B and Interviewee F, who both attended the meeting, confirmed that they had heard Councillor Pipe address Interviewee A in an [REDACTED] accent. Councillor Pipe stated at interview "I agree to using an [REDACTED] accent, I greeted Interviewee A in an [REDACTED] accent, I have been doing it for 7, 8 or 9 years, Interviewee A, has never complained, or never asked me not to do it, there have never been previous complaints. I have worked with Interviewee A previously in other Councils and nothing was raised, so for me it was a normal day". Councillor Pipe also stated that after the meeting Interviewee F approached him and said I quote "f**k me mate you are in the s**t" (*Full disclosed language provided in interview notes – Note – this is Councillor Pipe's version of what was said*) I said what for, he said speaking in an [REDACTED] accent, I said I have done it for many of years and no one has complained before, and that was it really off he went.

The People and Health Scrutiny Committee on the 11th of September 2023, was a public meeting. At the meeting it is alleged that, Councillor Pipe said at the start of the meeting to the officer “Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn’t say that in an [REDACTED] accent.” From interviews, there is a disagreement on the actual wording with Councillor Pipe and the Interviewee D stating that Councillor Pipe said, “Good morning, Interviewee A, if you hadn’t noticed that was said in an English accent” and Interviewee A confirming that Councillor Pipe said, “Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn’t say that in an [REDACTED] accent”. Although, there are slight discrepancies in the terminology used, the comments made by Councillor Pipe, have still resulted in the same outcome. Councillor Pipe made a point that he has previously addressed Interviewee A using the [REDACTED] accent, and so, in this particular incident by referring to the English accent, Councillor Pipe is making the point that this relates to the previous incident. Interviewee A has stated that when Councillor Pipe spoke to Interviewee A, as Interviewee A entered the meeting, it was “really loud, in high volume and he ignored other people that came in before me as well so the tone of it was intended in my view to intimidate me, it was loud”.

At interview, when I asked Councillor Pipe, if he accepted, based on the allegations that have been made, regarding his conduct, had fallen below the expected conduct of a Councillor, this being in relation to the respect of employees and members of the public, Councillor Pipe stated “I mean to Interviewee A, I feel it’s acceptable in my own mind as it’s got to this far, this stage, clearly in the fact now, I know I shouldn’t be doing it. Yes, but out of 7,8,9 years, I thought it was ok do, yes, I do feel it falls below the conduct “and “In retrospect yes, but not intentionally maliciously”.

On the day, after the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting, during lunch Councillor Pipe asked Interviewee A where do you park your car? At interview Councillor Pipe stated, “I am not aware of that oh yeah, there is a huge shortage of car parking spaces and Interviewee A got a nice little hideaway and no one knows about it, so I asked, “where do you park your car”, that was the end of the conversation, nothing else. I gave the impression I would sneak along and steal her parking space in a bit of a joke. It was only a remark and wasn’t intended to upset or whatever.” Councillor Pipe was asked in interview, if this question could have upset Interviewee A, Councillor Pipe, responded “Well, I don’t know I am not Interviewee A, I don’t have a crystal ball, I didn’t intend to upset Interviewee A, that’s all I can say”. Interviewee A stated, that although at the time she made light of the situation on reflection, the comment has made Interviewee A really uncomfortable, and Interviewee A has since moved where they park their car.

I can conclude that Councillor Pipe mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of Interviewee A at the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team and mocked Interviewee A at the People and Health Scrutiny Committee meeting by making a point to them that he was speaking in an English accent. On both occasions the comments were directed to same person Interviewee A. I can also conclude that Councillor Pipe discussed where Interviewee A parked their car and in joking gave the impression that he would steal the car parking space. Councillor Pipes actions have made Interviewee A feel humiliated and intimidated in his presence.

6.3 Apology

In the complaint, part of the allegation, is that, after Councillor Pipe mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of an Officer at the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting, when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused.

None of the five officers interviewed were aware that Councillor Pipe had been asked to apologise.

Interviewee F states at interview “On that particular occasion, I am not aware he was asked to apologise, what I am aware of is when I become aware this issue was taken forward, I think I recall having a conversation with the Leader of Council who mentioned there may be an issue. Bear in mind there have been other

incidents that the Leader of Council has been made aware of, the Leader of Council informed me he asked Bill Pipe to apologise, so I cannot be 100% on dates. I was led to believe sometime later Cllr Pipe was asked to apologise, a couple of weeks later.”

Councillor Pipe stated, he was not sure if anyone asked him to apologise but did say that he had an apology ready for the Interviewee A, however the apology was never sent due to a misunderstanding. On further discussion with Councillor O’Leary, during the interview with Councillor Pipe it was established that this apology was in fact written after the comment that Councillor Pipe made at the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on the 11th of September 2023. Councillor Pipe informed Councillor Suttle, that he had written an apology and sent the apology to Councillor Suttle to read. Due to a misunderstanding between the two Councillors the email with the apology was never sent.

On 1st December 2023 Jonathan Mair Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) provided a Teams message from Councillor Suttle which stated “yes, he [Cllr Pipe] emailed me an apology and I asked him to send it on, however when Spencer and I discussed it with him he thought we were sending it on? Clearly, we would expect him to.”

On 1st December 2023, the Leader of the Council – Councillor Flower provided an email to Jonathan Mair - Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) with the draft apology that Councillor Pipe had written. The email from Councillor Flower to Councillor Pipe was sent on 15th September 2023 suggesting that the apology was sent to Interviewee A and Interviewee D, however the apology was never sent.

I can conclude that Councillor Pipe did write an apology after the incident at the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on the 11th of September 2023 and this apology was shared with Councillors Suttle and Flower. The apology was not sent to Interviewee A and Interviewee D as suggested by Councillor Flower and therefore Councillor Pipe did not make an apology.

6.4 Full Council Meeting 13 July 2023.

At the Full Council meeting on the 13th of July 2023, [REDACTED], the complainants raised whether this matter has a link with his [REDACTED] accent incident, and does he have an issue with [REDACTED] people? [REDACTED] and remains a controversial topic today in [REDACTED] where some [REDACTED] remember it as the [REDACTED].

It is not disputed that Councillor Pipe [REDACTED]. At the meeting Councillor Pipe also [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Councillor Pipe stated “[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED], why I should be singled out I don't know". Councillor Pipe did not recall asking a question about [REDACTED]

Councillor O'Leary supporting Councillor Pipe at interview stated "[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Interviewee F stated "I personally can't recall [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], I have never personally experienced any racism by Bill towards [REDACTED]. I have not experienced that again as [REDACTED]. I have not personally experienced a racist viewpoint from Bill because of my [REDACTED] heritage".

The Interviewee A who was also in attendance at this meeting stated at interview in relation to the briefcase "Yes, I went to the Full Council meeting and in that meeting, firstly there was a comment made about [REDACTED] but I didn't get too worried. I didn't actually notice the [REDACTED], I have watched the recording back, which is when I noticed that, but I wasn't comfortable about the [REDACTED], I was annoyed about it". "I come from [REDACTED]. There was a period of time where [REDACTED]. Making comments about [REDACTED], I figured it was very much a [REDACTED] comment that was at the start of the meeting and there was absolutely no reason for that comment to be made, [REDACTED] and others and a member of Cabinet responded. In my view it was intentional, drawing attention to [REDACTED]".

I cannot determine conclusively whether the issue with the [REDACTED] were intentional to make Interviewee A feel uncomfortable, or whether this demonstrates that Councillor Pipe, has an issue with [REDACTED] people. I can conclude that the actions at the meeting did make Interviewee A feel uncomfortable even if this was not the intention.

6.5 Lead Member for Education

Councillor Pipe was appointed as Lead Member for Education on the 1st of May 2023 and resigned from the role on the 19th of May 2023. At the time of his resignation the reason given for the resignation was due to family issues/spending more time with his family.

Interviewee A confirmed that the Interviewee D had raised [REDACTED] concerns about Councillors Pipe's behaviour with the Chief Executive, so was not surprised to hear that Councillor Pipe had resigned.

At interview Councillor Pipe stated the reason for his resignation was "Well, apart from this and my diary had gone from that (Hands gesture of small size) to that (hand gesture to large size). I am a single parent with 3 children and looking at diary, filing up with lots of stuff, here at County Hall, Weymouth, and all over the County, I just couldn't give it the time and looking after my children which in the main is a full-time job, so I resigned. This investigation was the straw that broke the camel's back, the diary, no work life balance whatsoever, this complaint isn't the reason. I am single parent with young children, 'redacted text', and my diary, I won't have any time with them, I will need childcare in school holidays which were coming up".

Councillor Pipe also stated that "Interviewee F, who came to my ward, and we had coffee and cakes in a local café, in my constituency, we spoke for about an hour, I could see there was something on his mind, he said sorry mate you're sacked, he lifted and shifted and off he went. He said, it's not me, it's not my decision, it came from Spencer."

When asked at interview "The conversation with Interviewee F, you said came formally prior to your resignation, if you were never in your words "sacked" would you have still resigned"?

Councillor Pipe responded "Yes, regardless of this conversation, I still would have resigned, that meeting with Interviewee F (Believed to be the 19th of May 2023), I would assume it was in May, so I will have it in my diary, it was a planned meeting, it was for a catch up. Which turned out to be anything but, Interviewee F, he said it's to do with this [REDACTED] s**t. (Full disclosed language provided in interview notes - Note – this is Councillor Pipe's version of what was said) I have never spoken to Spencer Flower about it, it's his decision he is the Leader so that's final I wouldn't question his ability".

On the balance of probability, I can conclude, that although not formally stated in the reason for Councillors Pipes resignation, the behaviour of Councillor Pipe at the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team, was a significant factor in Councillor Pipe resigning from the role of Lead Member for Education.

6.6 Visible Panty Line

The allegation that Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line during the Children's Services Extended Leadership Team meeting cannot be substantiated.

6.7 Harassment, Bullying, Racist element

As part of the investigation, I asked all the interviewees whether they felt Councillors Pipes comments and behaviour amounted to bullying or harassment and whether the mimicry of an [REDACTED] accent may suggest a racist element. I also asked interviewees what impact if any Councillor Pipes behaviour and comments had on them.

Interviewee F said it was not fair for him to comment on the racist element but did say that if it was someone else, he did not know had made the comment he may see it as racist. In relation to harassment and bullying Interviewee F again said he could not comment but did say "What he said is ridiculous its not to say he's not a bully. I personally think he's a bit of an idiot and stuck in the past and no there is no justification. I truly think, he thinks he didn't do anything wrong. You can't say things like that now, that's the world we live in, even if you think it, because someone might take it the wrong way, that said, I am absolutely devastated, Interviewee A is a person I have respect for, who is a fantastic officer who has felt this way. Very sad episode, I can't give you a yes or no answer".

Interviewee D, Interviewee A, Interviewee B, and Interviewee C all felt that Councillors Pipes comments and behaviour amounted to bullying and harassment and that his mimicry of the [REDACTED] accent suggested a racist element.

Their views were drawn from the intentional and intimidating nature of Councillor Pipe's behaviour, his undermining way, and the impact of how uncomfortable a position it has created for Interviewee A saying that it felt like harassment and that Interviewee A had been singled out.

I can conclude that Councillor Pipe's comments and behaviour amount to bullying and harassment as Councillor Pipe's actions are directed to one individual making the individual feel intimidated and offended. I can also conclude that although Councillor Pipe does not view his actions in this way there is a perceived racist element to his actions.

6.8 Other matters for consideration not in the original complaint.

During interviews three other concerns were raised about Councillor Pipes behaviour.

1. Use of a homophobic word.

At a meeting to discuss the data around [REDACTED] Interviewee D was explaining about the number of [REDACTED] in HMO's (Houses of Multiple Occupation) and Councillor [REDACTED] asked what an HMO was. Interviewee D stated, "and before I had time to answer Bill said, "oh we use to call them Homo's, Homo's is what we used to call them, we are not allowed to call them Homo's anymore are we Interviewee D?"

Interviewee F recalled at interview "I am not aware of any homophobic jokes, I am aware in a meeting with Interviewee D in a sort of Head of Service and Cabinet member meeting, there was an exchange in which there was talk about a number of issues you would find in a social services type settings to which [REDACTED] who is another Lead member attended, I think, I can't remember exactly what he said in front of Interviewee D, he indicated something to do with identifying people as being gay. Interviewee D took exception to that. I recall that because Interviewee D indicating, he may have called them homos, but again I can't give exact wording, I wasn't really paying attention at that meeting, he may have said something".

Councillor Pipe was asked at interview whether he remembered using the term Homo at this meeting? Councillor Pipe responded "Yes, I was relating it to Cllr [REDACTED], he is the Lead on Safeguarding he was at the same Induction, I said something along the lines of what you say, but it wasn't said as a joke it was fact that we can't say that anymore, its homos and HMO's. I don't deny saying it."

Councillor Pipe confirmed he understood the meaning of Homo and when asked why he used this terminology he stated: "I have no idea, its fact it's that simple. There are areas that do cover multiple occupancy, there see I cannot say it, so it's easier to say Homo, I just use it to describe a word of multiple occupancy and in those earlier days I was just saying that is what it used to be called. I was just saying you can't say it anymore, that's it."

2. Mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a family.

At a practice observation meeting Councillor Pipe is alleged to have mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a family attending the meeting. There are different accounts of this and whether the meeting was attended only by professionals and not a family. One officer who was in attendance has stated "it was an Inclusion oversight meeting, no families attended it was only professionals, uncomfortable about something that was said, but no details or what

actually happened or what was said”. Councillor Pipe when asked if he had mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a family did state: “No, absolutely not, it was alleged that I had said the word traveller in an [REDACTED] accent but that did not happen. I said very little throughout the whole presentation, it was just communicated to me somehow, I am not aware of an [REDACTED] family there.”

3. The use of the phrase ‘Fat Faggot’

I was also made aware of a concern from Councillor Fry that allegedly Councillor Pipe had called the [REDACTED] a Fat Faggot during a Planning Meeting. At interview Interviewee G confirmed that this took place after the Planning meeting while having coffee in the lounge at County Hall Dorchester that Councillor Pipe used the words about [REDACTED]. Interviewee G stated: - “There was me, and a number of other Councillors having a coffee which Councillor Bill Pipe was one of those Councillors, I and another Councillor engaged in a conversation about [REDACTED], as we have regular team’s meetings with him as he represents our area, and that it was good to catch up with [REDACTED] etc. Councillor Pipe came in with “oh he’s nothing but a fat faggot”, to which I commented “I guess you don’t like him then?” to which he (Councillor Pipe) replied “no not really”. That was the only reference at the time. I thought it was inappropriate but that from Councillor Pipe wasn’t unexpected”. Councillor Pipe was not asked about this incident at interview. The Hearing Sub-Committee may wish to question Councillor Pipe further on this allegation or decide not include this in their considerations.

4. Duty of Care to Employees

After the incident at the People and Health Scrutiny Committee meeting the Chief Executive of the Council sent an email to Councillor Pipe on 18th September 2023 stating that “I understand from the Leader of Council that following an incident that occurred last Monday, immediately before the People and Health Scrutiny Committee, you have sent a letter of apology to those colleagues concerned. An apology, whilst welcome, still leaves us in a position where this and other recent incidents, including that which is currently subject to a standards investigation, have led to a sense of some colleagues feeling significantly undermined by you, lacking confidence that you are able to treat them respectfully and fairly and feel unable to interact with you as a result.

The Council owes a duty of care towards all its employees. That duty of care is discharged through me as the Head of Paid Service, and this means that in the circumstances I must take appropriate steps to protect colleagues. In this instance I consider this to mean ensuring that you do not interact with officer colleagues and accordingly I ask:

1. That you do not contact any officer in [REDACTED] other than Interviewee D. The Interviewee D will ensure that you receive a response to any questions or concerns that you raise but contact must be through the Interviewee D only or, in her absence, through me/the monitoring officer.
2. That any meetings with any officers are by appointment only, agreed in advance.
3. That you do not enter County Hall or the Council’s other offices, other than to attend Full Council or committee meetings or to attend a pre-arranged appointment with an officer.
4. On those occasions when you do attend Council or committee meetings or a pre-arranged appointment you should restrict yourself to the Council Chamber, relevant committee room or the arrangements made for the appointment in advance.

To reinforce these points and as part of my duty of care to all staff, your secure area entry card will be deactivated, and you will not be able access staff office areas except by prior appointment. Before taking these steps, I have consulted Jonathan Mair, as Monitoring Officer. Jonathan has advised that the steps I am taking are both lawful and appropriate given the Council’s duty of care owed towards its employees. Specifically, this is not a sanction but a measure to protect staff to whom the Council owes a duty of care”.

The Chief Executive said that a review of the need for the continuation of these steps would take place following the outcome of the elections in May 2024 and in the meantime, asked Councillor Pipe to respect these limitations on his contact with employees and his access to their place of work and that Councillor does not ask other councillors or officers to admit him to secure areas.

On the 19th of October 2023 despite the clear position set out above by the Chief Executive, Councillor Pipe accessed the secure office area at County Hall without any prior appointment and tried to meet with staff. Councillor Pipe gained entry to the secure area by asking another Councillor to admit him and returned later and told a member of staff that his access card was not working, as a result of which the member of staff arranged for his access card to be re-activated by the facilities team.

Following this incident Jonathan Mair - Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) sent an email to Councillor Pipe reinforcing the points in the Chief Executive email and giving the following direct instruction to Councillor Pipe.

“All of the above are in direct contravention of and show no respect for the reasonable measures put in place by the Chief Executive to protect staff to whom he owes a duty of care. More than that, you actively persuaded a member of staff to re-activate an access card that the Chief Executive had expressly told you in his email would be de-activated and why.

As a result of your actions yesterday your access card has again been de-activated and the Facilities Manager has been instructed that it is only to be re-activated at my request, at the request of the Service Manager for Democratic and Elections or that of the Chief Executive. We have respected your privacy by not informing other councillors that they should not admit you to staff areas. If though you persist in gaining entry via other councillors, you will put me in the position of having to consider telling them that they must not use their access cards to admit you.

The Chief Executive phrased his email carefully and respectfully, ending by asking for your co-operation. In view of what happened yesterday he and I have agreed that I must be more direct. As a councillor you are entitled to attend Full Council and committee meetings in the Council Chamber at County Hall and officers are taking no steps to prevent you from doing this. Uncontrolled access to staff and to their offices is not though an entitlement and I must insist that until further notice you comply with the points in the Chief Executive’s email as requirements upon you”.

7. Conclusion

On concluding my investigation, I am of the view that Councillor Pipe is in breach of the Code of Code and the Member Officer Protocol as follows:

Standards of councillor conduct - General Conduct

1. Respect - Councillor Pipe failed to comply with the Code of Conduct

Conclusion: in my opinion, Councillor Pipe was in breach of the Code of Conduct for the reasons set out below.

1.1 treat local authority employees with respect and respect the role they play.

Members and Officers Protocol

1.2 The relationship between Members and Officers is based on the following principles:

(d) in everything they do, Members and officers of the Council must act within the law and comply with relevant codes of conduct.

(e) dealings between Members and officers are based on mutual trust and respect.

Conclusion: in my opinion, Councillor Pipe failed to treat Officers with respect and is therefore in breach of paragraph 1 (1.2) of the Code of Conduct for Councillors and Paragraph 1.2 (d) and (e) of the Members and Officers Protocol. Councillor Pipe confirmed at interview that he mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a Senior Officer – Interviewee A at the [REDACTED] Extended Leadership Team meeting on the 10th of May 2023. Councillor Pipe also confirmed that he said to Interviewee A, at the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on the 11th of September 2023 “Good morning, Interviewee A, if you hadn’t noticed that was said in an English accent”. Both meetings were attended by Officers and Councillors, also recognising that the People and Health Scrutiny Committee, was a public meeting. Both the mimicry and commentary were heard by some Officers and Councillors who attended the meeting.

Whilst Councillor Pipe has stated that he has carried out these actions of greeting Interviewee A in an [REDACTED] accent for the last 7-9 years, he did not take it to be offensive or for Interviewee A to be offended by these actions, there has been a significant impact on the wellbeing of Interviewee A. Interviewee A has felt humiliated, upset, and disappointed that this type of behaviour is allowed within the Council and is uncomfortable to attend meetings whilst Councillor Pipe is in attendance. Ultimately Interviewee A has taken the decision to leave the Council.

The mimicry of the [REDACTED] accent by Councillor Pipe, was disrespectful and I also consider the use of the [REDACTED] accent is personally directed to Interviewee A, as Councillor Pipe is not reported as using an [REDACTED] accent to any other individual from Ireland or Northern Ireland. At interview Councillor Pipe accepted that although he has been doing this for some time, his behaviour has fallen below that expected of a Councillor. Interviewee F confirmed at interview that he felt Councillors Pipe’s behaviour at both meetings was below what he would expect from a Councillor to an officer.

2. Bullying and harassment - Councillor Pipe failed to comply with the Code of Conduct

Conclusion: in my opinion, Councillor Pipe was in breach of the Code of Conduct for the reasons set out below

2.1 do not bully any person.

2.2 not harass any person.

Conclusion: Councillor Pipe behaved in such a way, which could reasonably be regarded as bullying and harassment. His mimicry of the [REDACTED] accent is offensive behaviour and not acceptable in any circumstance which has caused humiliation to an officer of the Council. Councillor Pipe does not accept that his actions amount to bullying or harassment, however the multiple actions by Councillor Pipe including the mimicry of the [REDACTED] accent, asking where Interviewee A parked their car and the wearing of the orange tie at the Full Council meeting were perceived by Interviewee A and by other officers as bullying and harassment.

Overall Conclusion: Councillor Pipe stated at interview that he does not see his actions as offensive but did accept in retrospect that he had breached the Code of Conduct, but this was not intentional or malicious. Councillor Pipe has failed to see how his actions and behaviour have been received, the effect, distress, and humiliation it has caused to one officer as well as the impact to the other officers within the team.

The seriousness of Councillor Pipe's actions and behaviour has resulted in the Chief Executive taking appropriate steps to protect colleagues by restricting Councillors Pipe's access to County Hall and other Council offices.

Both Interviewee F and Councillor O'Leary were of the view that for Councillor Pipe there is a 'generation and cultural gap' but did not think there was any malicious or hurtful intent by Councillor Pipe. Both accepted that what may have seemed in the past to be acceptable to Councillor Pipe was no longer acceptable, if in fact, it was ever acceptable. Interviewee F confirmed at interview that he felt Councillors Pipe's behaviour had fallen below that expected of a Councillor.

Councillor Pipe attended, Code of Conduct training in June 2021 (this was generic training to all Councillors) and attended a specialist coaching intervention in November 2020, following an issue with comments made at a Police and Crime Panel meeting. Despite attempts by the Council to provide training to Councillor Pipe, Councillor Pipe's behaviour has fallen below the minimum standards of conduct required by a Councillor.

On 20th December 2023 Councillor Pipe responded to the investigation report stating, "Prior to tomorrow's noon deadline for me to accept your findings, I reluctantly accept those findings, but should point out that in my opinion, I think the complaints are malicious and politically motivated and that the complainants were encouraged to complain by a third party, an officer of the SLT".

8. Appendices

Appendix A - Interviews

Reference	Description	Agreed
DC 101	Record of interview with Interviewee D – 6 October 2023	Yes

DC 102	Interview with Councillor Nick Ireland – Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Les Fry – Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Clare Sutton – Leader of the Green Party – 9 October 2023	Yes
DC 107	Record of interview with Interviewee G – 24 October 2023	Yes
DC 103	Record of interview with Interviewee A – 26 October 2023	Yes
DC 105	Record of interview with Interviewee E – 1 November 2023	Not Returned
DC 106	Record of Interview with Interviewee B – 2 November 2023	Yes
DC 104	Record of interview with Interviewee C – 7 November 2023	Yes
DC 108	Record of interview with Interviewee F - 10 November 2023	Yes
DC 109	Record of interview with Councillor Bill Pipe - 13 November 2023	Not Returned
Appendix B – Documents, Emails		
Reference	Description	
DC 007	Members Code of Conduct	
DC 008	Members and Officers Protocol	
DC 016	3-8-23 email from Antony Bygrave to Councillor Pipe formal complaint relating to the behaviour of Councillor Bill Pipe	
DC 020	Emails 18-9-23 and 20-10-23 to Councillor Pipe from M Prosser and J Mair re Duty of Care	
DC 021	1-12-23 Email from Councillor S Flower with wording of Councillor Pipe’s draft apology	
DC 109h	20-12-23 Email from Cllr Pipe acceptance of Investigation report findings	

Authors and Distribution

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Report Author

This report was produced and issued by:

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Record of Interview

Council/ Organisation:	Dorset Council
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Investigation Title:	Councillor Code of Conduct Complaint
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Record of interview with:	Councillor Nick Ireland – Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Les Fry – Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Clare Sutton – Leader of the Green Party	Place of interview:	by Microsoft teams
Date:	9 th October 2023	Interview Paper Ref:	DC 102
Interviewing Officer:	Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit services	Others Present:	Laura Davies – Notetaker – SWAP Internal Audit Services

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Interview Commenced:	13:01	Interview Terminated:	14:26
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To be read out at the commencement of the interview	
I have been appointed by Johnathon Mair - Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) to carry out an investigation under the 'Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors' for Dorset Council.	
I understand that you may have information that supports some of the allegations in the complaint that has been made about Councillor Bill Pipe and the purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to provide that information. I am conducting an investigation into the following	

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complaint and a concern that has been raised since the complaint was received:

- In October 2020 Councillor Bill Pipe was removed from the Police and Crime Panel for inappropriate comments about stop and search made during a meeting.
- On the 25th of April 2023 we were made aware of a Cabinet Reshuffle: <https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2023/04/27/dorset-council-cabinet-reshuffle/only> by way of public press release. Councillor Bill Pipe was appointed as lead member for Education.
- A few days after Annual Full Council on the 11th of May 2023 through conversations we heard that Councillor Pipe had resigned. Information then reached us that he had been in a meeting relating to education and had mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a senior member of staff at Dorset Council and when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused. He had then resigned saying he did not want the role anyway.
- An Echo article - <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/23611259.Councillor-steps-top-education-role/> - dated 26.6.23, reported that Councillor Pipe had resigned less than three weeks later. This, just weeks after the resignation, was the first members (or most members) had heard about it.
- Other than this press report nothing has been made public and no explanation was offered to Group leaders about why a member with a history of inappropriate behaviour was appointed in the first place to Education and why subsequently he resigned. We feel that Councillor Pipe has seriously undermined the good working relationship between members and officers and his ongoing behaviour has brought the Council and position of elected member into disrepute.
- There is also a story circulating that Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line during this same meeting.
- A further matter worthy of investigation is that at Full Council in July, the day after the [REDACTED], Councillor Pipe [REDACTED]. Does this matter have a link with his [REDACTED] accent incident, does he have an issue with [REDACTED] people?
- That Councillor Bill Pipe made a comment at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A saying, "Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent".

Out of scope will be Information should be provided to Group leaders with an explanation of what action has been taken to redress Councillor's Pipe's behaviour and Councillor Bill Pipe's removal from the Police and Crime Panel.

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I have prepared a number of questions I would like to ask you, and the answers you give will be recorded in the form of contemporaneous notes by

Laura Davies – Principal Fraud Investigation Officer – SWAP Internal Audit Services

Following the end of the interview we will send you a transcript of the meeting and you will have the opportunity to make any amendments or additions you wish at the end of the notes. I will then ask you to sign the notes signifying your acceptance that they constitute an accurate record of the interview that has taken place. The notes will be sent to you using secure email. If you feel unable to answer any of the questions asked, Laura will simply record that fact in the interview notes.

I need to inform you that should only tell me what to the best of your knowledge and belief you believe to be true.

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Person Speaking	Record of Interview Meeting
	<p>Persons speaking denoted by: JG - Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit Services Cllr Ireland - Councillor Nick Ireland – Leader of the Liberal Democrats Cllr Fry - Councillor Les Fry – Leader of the Independent Group Cllr Sutton - Councillor Clare Sutton – Leader of the Green Party I will ask each question and then give each of you an opportunity to respond so that we can record each response separately.</p>
JG	Q1. Please can you confirm that you have understood the above and are happy to continue?
Cllr Ireland	Yes.
Cllr Fry	Yes, I confirm
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I confirm
JG	Q2. Cllr Ireland Can you confirm you have been appointed to the following Committees - Full Council, Dorset Market Informal Joint Panel, People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Western and Southern Area Planning Committee
Cllr Ireland	Yes, that's some titles of my Committees, I have other responsibilities – Governor of Dorset Healthcare, appointed by Dorset Council I was not elected, I was appointed.
JG	Q3. Cllr Fry Can you confirm you have been appointed to the following Committees -Full Council, Licensing Committee, Northern Area Planning Committee, Places and Resources Overview Committee, Police and Crime Panel, Police and Crime Panel Complaints Sub Committee
Cllr Fry	And there's the Farms panel, Dorset Council Farms panel other than that I am happy with the list.
JG	Q4. Cllr Sutton - Can you confirm you have been appointed to the following Committee – Full Council
Cllr Sutton	That's it yes, in addition I am sure you are aware that we are all leaders of our own groups.
JG	Q5. On the 25th of April 2023 following a Cabinet Reshuffle Councillor Bill Pipe was appointed as Lead Member for Education. How where you informed, and did you have a view on the appointment?
Cllr Ireland	To my recollection it was by email, I can't remember exactly how to be honest other than it was some online method I wasn't informed officially as far as I know. Did I think it was appropriate Councillor Pipe was appointed to children? No, I should probably clarify that I was County Councillor for two years before elected to Dorset Council and I sat on several Committees with Councillor Pipe and looking back I wish I actually raised some flags at the time, but I had ever been elected before and I was just finding my

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	feet, but I did observe him making inappropriate comments to women and also to the general traveller community. In one instance in a meeting never in public though, I was on Health Scrutiny with him that he chaired, and I was also on the appeals panel which is mostly School Transport it was in those he did things which I found uncomfortable, and I will leave it at that.
JG	Q5a. Cllr Ireland, can I ask you, you said when you were a County Councillor, this was prior to Dorset Council Unitary being formed?
Cllr Ireland	Correct so I got elected at Dorset County Council at the elections in 2017, it's the first elected post I have ever held and so I was a County Councillor for two years I also led the Lib Dem group for one year at the end of that because our leader resigned. It was a very small group.
JG	Q5b. At this time was Councillor Bill Pipe also a County Councillor or did he stand for another council?
Cllr Ireland	He was definitely a County Councillor because he was a Chair of on several Committees, he wasn't a member of Cabinet from my recollection he may have been a member of East Dorset District Council, I do not know. Quite a lot of County Councillors had two hats in a way to phrase it.
Cllr Fry	I cannot recall how I heard I suspect it might have been by email or through the grapevine but when I heard I was disappointed and appalled it was like putting a thief in a shop with no store detectives in it. He was the most unsuitable and unsavoury person that you could ever put in education, completely the wrong person to put in there, yes, disappointed, appalled and this is not party political this is the wrong person. I was on the police and crime panel when he made the comments, I was approached by several sources of media for comment which I gave but were not used, it was not professional or the values or behaviour of a Dorset Councillor.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I know we were informed by some form of formal route and the reason I know that as there was some discussion within my group that I can evidence, that actually the Full Council where it was officially announced I wanted to stand up and explain why I thought this was inappropriate but actually my Deputy Councillor Heatley persuaded me not to do that but I can evidence I was intending to do that if helpful. It is virtually self-evidence that it was an absurd appointment, I mean I know one has said alleged racist but if you watch the coverage of that meeting, I think you would form the same opinion as me, Bill Pipe, he had literally walked the line just to stay inside of what's offensive and what is not. I remember him saying for example in the chat bar during covid, him making some comment about young mums it was just awful, he sends emails I am sure I can find some of these where he makes comments about woke behaviour and this kind of things these jokes. In relation to the police and crime thing a lot of us felt it was a cover up. I have waited too long to check out that he would be sent on some training, well we all would be, but that hasn't happened for us anyway, and I don't think it has for him (Bill). I will stop there.
JG	Q5c. Please can you provide those notes, also if you have any evidence of what Councillor Pipe put in the chat bar or emails, they

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	would also be helpful if you could provide these.
Cllr Sutton	I don't think I can find the chat thing. It was a meeting, not sure which one, maybe a Full Council meeting in the chat bar. It was during covid beyond that I cannot remember, I might have sent an email to a member of my group.
Cllr Ireland	I recall the young mum, I suspect It was a Full Council meeting, there was a lot of inappropriate stuff in the chat bar during covid that was inappropriate.
JG	Q6. Do you know the meetings that Councillor Bill Pipe attended in his role as Lead Member for Education, and did you attend any of these meeting with Cllr Pipe?
Cllr Ireland	I am not aware I wasn't in any meetings within him when he was in the role he was in the role briefly I don't think I was at anything other than Full Council, I was at People Health Scrutiny meeting that you referred too, where there is a further allegation being made, I tend to turn up to meetings ten minutes before they start you know I am very busy man. I didn't overhear him say that although he was present, I remember being quite worried and apprehensive because I was sitting in the middle, and he was sitting on the left with Councillor O'Leary and Interviewee A and their boss Interviewee D we were all in the chamber. I remember thinking, this may not go very well. It was after the meeting I did hear about the allegation of what he said to Interviewee A about the [REDACTED] accent, I did ask the chair and the vice chair of the Committee who were in my group and they haven't heard him say that, if a pre meet they would be busy doing other things, this was at the People Health Scrutiny meeting where another one will be held soon.
Cllr Fry	I sit on no Committees at all with him now, I didn't hear anything, and I do not sit on any of the meetings where anything was heard, however the last Full Council meeting in May where I stood as Vice Chair of Dorset following the nomination, where I did not get elected Councillor Pipe shouted out but it's not clear what was shouted out. It was heard by others, but they couldn't make out what it was. I am not clear what was shouted out nor are others I am clear of who I speak to about the matter as the way Pipe is set up in the chamber it would have been difficult to find out what was said by him.
Cllr Sutton	No, however tracking back it seems he was only in that position for three weeks so no, no I was not in any meetings with him in that role.
JG	Q6a. Can I just clarify you did not attend any meetings during that time frame?
Cllr Sutton	No, unless there was Full Council.
JG	Q7. Can we talk about specific concerns raised in the complaint – firstly it is alleged that Councillor Pipe had mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a Senior member of Dorset Council at an Education meeting, when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused. I understand that this was at an Induction meeting for [REDACTED]. Were you in attendance at this meeting and

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	if you were, did you hear what Councillor Pipe said and towards whom it was directed?
Cllr Ireland	No, I wasn't at that meeting.
Cllr Fry	Same applies no I wasn't.
Cllr Sutton	No, I wasn't.
JG	Q8. – I understand that Councillor Pipe was asked to apologise- do you know who asked Cllr Pipe to apologise and do you know whether Cllr Pipe apologised?
Cllr Ireland	No direct knowledge but via third parties I believe it was Interviewee D who asked him to apologise to Interviewee A and I believe he refused to do so.
Cllr Fry	No same applies believe it was Interviewee D also Spencer Flower, he refused at which point he stood down.
Cllr Sutton	I wasn't there either. On the record its difficult when you hear from sources that you consider to be reliable that something took place and thereby you feel very firmly, and also on the basis of previous behaviours, if this had come from other Councillors, I would not have believed this, but because of various things that have happened over the years it rings true, so I have a very strong belief it i true and I am disappointed I wasn't there and I cannot speak in the first person.
JG	Q9. - Did other Officers/Councillors attending the meeting hear Councillor Pipe speak in this way and do you know who may have heard this?
Cllr Ireland	Did not attend the meeting
Cllr Fry	Did not attend the meeting
Cllr Sutton	Did not attend the meeting
JG	Q10. At this meeting it is also alleged that Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line. Are you aware of this?
Cllr Ireland	So, I wasn't there, I am aware of it as Councillor Fry told me.
Cllr Fry	I wasn't at the meeting I didn't hear the comments but there has been a lot of comments from these issues, but I picked it up from there, I cannot remember where it came from.
JG	Q10a. When you say there is a lot of comments circulating do you mean by other members?
Cllr Fry	Yes.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, it was Councillor Fry who told me this, I have worked with Les for two or three years and I trust him implicitly. He has very high standards and he wouldn't pass on information unless he knew it was true.
JG	Q10b. Is there anything else you would like to add about that comment. As none of you were there, so will not be able to give any

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	more information on it, but is there anything else, anybody would like to say about that comment or anything else you want to add?
Cllr Sutton	Only that with other comments it comes as no surprise that he would say something like that.
Cllr Ireland	I would say the mocking of Interviewee A of the [REDACTED] accent was done in an induction meeting I am assuming for his benefit as being appointed as lead member. I am not aware of any members of my group that attended that meeting, and I can't see any reason why they would unless it would have been part of Health Scrutiny in that case it would have been Councillor Gill Taylor or Councillor Molly Rennie. I don't believe they were invited or present as I am sure they would have told me, but I will check but I am sure there are probably minutes of the meeting and who was present.
JG	Q10c. Yes, we haven't seen those meetings yet, but we do know Councillor Pipe was in attendance, we just wanted to check whether any of you three had been in attendance as well.
Cllr Fry	Jacqui, we are very grateful for you doing this investigation but we also understand it puts you in a very difficult position as well and us as leaders to the group who haven't been present of party to the comments made, we have heard them coming back and so it's our duty I strongly feel it's our duty to support officers to uphold the respect and values, behaviours and principles of Dorset Council. And so what I have heard from this saga of this individual does constitute Harassment and a course of conduct that we can come back to later on and had we not made this complaint its possible nothing could have happened and so sometimes you have to put your head above the parapet although we are not privy to certain information and hope that colleagues will step forward that were present otherwise they are complicit in the behaviour that's been happening.
JG	Q10d. Additional question Councillor Sutton you said you were not surprised, could you just provide an explanation to why you were not surprised?
Cllr Sutton	Yes, it's just rumours again, his body language, I wish I could think of examples but so many times over past years Bill has said something, and I thought, hang on a minute, that's not acceptable but it's never been quite bad enough, but its isolated incidents. It seems like he thinks he's very clever, he's walking this line, it's just in the line of acceptability. We are just to evidence it.
Cllr Fry	To Support what Councillor Sutton said about his behaviour a while ago a meeting I was not at but Councillor A who was at the meeting with Bill Pipe and he came in and said what rubbish have we got before us today, no sanctions are going to come out of this meeting which was inappropriate in front of the people there and I know Councillor A almost resigned and then Councillor Pipe was taken off the Licensing Committee and removed because of inappropriate comments he made and that will be on the record or speak with Councillor A.
JG	Q10e. Do you know how recent that was?

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Cllr Fry	That wasn't recent that would have been the earlier days I can find a date for you, but I know Councillor A was seething at that meeting and her hands were tied about actions that could be taken due to that meeting because of comments he made.
JG	It would be helpful to have the date of that meeting.
Cllr Fry	I will look now to see if I can find it.
LD	Q10f. Do you know Councillor Fry who would have instructed Councillor Pipe to step down from the Licensing Committee?
Cllr Fry	That would have been Spencer Flower leader of the party that would have removed him.
Cllr Ireland	It would be easy to find that day as the members of the Committees are listed. So, I am just reflecting back of my two years as a county Councillor so I had the misfortune of being on the Committee with Bill Pipe and there was an officer called Helen Coombes was the one for adults and Councillor Pipe made what I would have taken if I was a female offensive, I think. Comments he made to her before meetings he probably thought they were funny they weren't, there was an incident where there was a mention of travellers and he used terms like "pikeys" and [REDACTED] and other things. A) my wife is [REDACTED] b) my sister-in-law works as a traveller liaison officer for a council as much as my regret I didn't pick him up on that and I didn't, I wish I did more, and I will leave it as that.
Cllr Sutton	I am wondering if Nick can actually remember any comments he made to Helen Combes?
Cllr Ireland	I cannot it was constant it's not behaviour you should have. I think he was trying to chat her up half the time.
Cllr Fry	Are you aware I have made a couple of complaints about Bill Pipe in the past? It's about inappropriate and disrespectful behaviour whilst on a meeting online where he allows his cat to walk across the front of a screen in front of him.
JG	Q10g. Do you have any record of those complaints?
Cllr Fry	I do but I will try and get them off my computer in this call without logging out. I was not on the meeting it is on YouTube, but it was complained to me by someone who was on the meeting.
JG	Q10h. You said there were a couple of complaints?
Cllr Fry	I will have to look at my records on that but that's probably the main one.
Cllr Sutton	Can I just ask a question are you Laura recording everything verbatim? Just so I can check what's being recorded.
JG	This has been carried out for the Code of Conduct complaint and it will be readily available so I am understanding, if there is a hearing it will be made public, however I have discussed with the Monitoring Officer some of the sensitivities around information that may be given to me in the interviews that take place, not just today's but any interview that takes place as part of this investigation and there will have to be a decision made if certain information is redacted or not, due to the personal interest of a certain officer potentially, but as Councillors, I would guess it would be going public if there was a hearing in relation to this complaint.

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Cllr Sutton	Ok, just to reassure you I wouldn't open my mouth to say anything which is not true, but sometimes I am free and relaxed with my expression and the other question is who else are you interviewing and what are the times for these interviewees?
JG	Ok, so I cannot tell you the full list of interviewees as that may change as we progress. We will interview TL as you mentioned this afternoon, there are others, but some people are on annual leave, and it will depend on whether other officers are willing to be interviewed as you can imagine its quite a sensitive area.
Cllr Sutton	Thank you.
JG	Q11. Do you know whether this comment (in Q10) was made to a particular officer or was it a general comment?
Cllr Ireland	Covered above
Cllr Fry	Covered above
Cllr Sutton	Covered above
JG	Q12. If this were made to a particular officer would that officer be able to corroborate this?
Cllr Ireland	Covered above
Cllr Fry	Covered above
Cllr Sutton	Covered above
JG	Q13. Did other Officers/Councillors attending the meeting hear Councillor Pipe make this comment about a Visible Panty Line and do you know who may have heard this?
Cllr Ireland	Covered above
Cllr Fry	Covered above
Cllr Sutton	Covered above
JG	Q14. I understand that at the Annual Full Council on the 11th of May 2023 through conversations you heard that Councillor Pipe had resigned from his role as Lead Member for Education. What information did you have in relation to his resignation and who did you hear from that Cllr Pipe had resigned?
Cllr Ireland	I don't recall anything at Full Council in May in terms of that but the way I found out was a meeting I would have to check which meeting, but it was Councillor O'Leary who is a conservative member for Littlemore and Preston, he told us, as Councillor Pipe wasn't there and told us he was no longer a lead member and didn't want to elaborate anymore.
Cllr Fry	I cannot remember how I heard to be honest I got a feeling it might have been through Councillor A who I do a lot with through

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	licensing through a WhatsApp chat that the conservatives had.
JG	Q14a. Just to clarify that was a WhatsApp chat for conservative members.
Cllr Fry	Yes, and we are not privy to that funnily enough and there were conversations it was an unusually quiet move that he was taken off it was all hush hush.
Cllr Ireland	It does confirm from my previous response there was no official email out to all Councillors saying Councillor Pipe is no longer lead member, when Councillor O’Leary told me he was no longer a lead member I went to the Dorset Council web pages and went under Committees and the list of members were there and he was no longer listed. I’m actually sure there was not a replacement, I think I did it that day or a day after to my knowledge there still hasn’t been an official communication about it all we have seen were things in the Dorset echo. I was approached by Trevor Bevins the Dorset Echo reporter for a comment which I did provide but it wasn’t used.
Cllr Sutton	I am not entirely sure. I think heard if from Les, I think I saw it before in the Echo. I emailed Spencer when I found out. I cannot remember the exact nature of my enquiry, but I can find his response and I know one of the things that I was following up was the idea that it was for personal reasons, but that didn’t feel plausible given he had only done the position for three weeks. You think you would have come to that conclusion prior to that and at that point I heard some allegations had been made, but not sure what, but I did challenge it with Spencer, I think there were four exchanges which I will find and send to you. Don’t know if relevant at this point on the basis of this but I think I had also questioned why it hadn’t been released, so I raised this at the Full Council meeting in July, but you are probably aware of that.
JG	Yes, I am but thank you for informing us and if you could provide us with the email trail that would be very helpful.
JG	Q15. In the complaint you have stated: ‘A further matter worthy of investigation is that at Full Council in July, the day after the after the ██████████, Councillor Pipe ██████████. Does this matter have a link with his ██████ accent incident, does he have an issue with ██████ people?’ Can you explain to me why you have included this in the complaint and was Cllr Pipe the only Councillor to ██████████?
Cllr Ireland	I wasn’t at that meeting, it’s the first one I missed I wasn’t present. I have watched the meeting back I have watched Councillor Sutton’s part; I can’t remember if anyone else was wearing an ██████████ to be honest. I will add after the meeting I was contacted by some members of my group who basically witnessed events after Councillor Sutton made her question basically Interviewee A was in the chamber, Interviewee A was sitting at the back and two of my members independently told me that Johnathan Mair

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	mouthed to Interviewee A are you alright? Then at the adjournment he went over to Interviewee A, so for me this provided the evidence that Bill has criticised their [REDACTED] accent, you know it's probably true that cemented it for me.
Cllr Fry	Yes, I was at that meeting, I try to avoid Councillor Pipe as much as possible I think the feeling is mutual. I didn't see the [REDACTED] or hear comments about the [REDACTED] as I did as much as I could to stay away from him.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I have nothing to offer on this. It was Les that drafted the submission that the three of us put in. As with various things, we thought that's plausible.
Cllr Ireland	The meeting is recorded, a lot of my group don't wear ties.
JG	Q16. Cllr Sutton, I understand you asked a question at the meeting about the resignation of Cllr Pipe – why did you ask the question and how was your question responded to?
Cllr Sutton	Despite having no categorical evidence of what had taken place in terms of the mocking of the [REDACTED] accent and visible party line, it seemed to me it was almost certainly true given that people I highly respect had commented on this, and I would like to think people feel the same as me really, were these allegations true, they are unacceptable, therefore they need to be addressed. I tried to address them with my email exchange with Spencer Flower, but it got absolutely nowhere and therefore I thought this is the only avenue left to me, actually, to insure someone takes a look at this. I had assumed Councillor Flower would be announcing a new lead member at least, so I anticipated asking my question about new lead member, so my question would have been why we need a new lead member, however Spencer Flower did not mention a new lead member in his report, but there was something about Ofsted so, as there was something about [REDACTED], I will go in off that. I wasn't sure if it would be ruled in or ruled out as a legitimate question but of course that was for the Monitoring Officer to decide, and I managed almost to complete the question.
Cllr Fry	I have the question at that meeting that Clare asked at that meeting "there is something missing from your speech which I actually wanted to ask about which is I was hoping you were going to be announcing a new leader for education and I do have a question why we need one if that is acceptable. As the leader knows I was surprised that a member appointed to the role, resigned within 3 weeks and that members have only heard about via local media several weeks later, where the reason given was personal commitments since then sources who I consider trustworthy have indicated that Councillor Pipe mocked the accent of a member of one of our staff and then declined to apologise. So, my simple question is, is that true if so, given this behaviour that appears consistent with the behaviour of being removed from the police and crime panel and our response is to uphold high standards" at this point Clare was told she was out of order. The remainder of the question was "of public office, will any further action be taken."

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JG	Can I just clarify Councillor Sutton did you say what the response was from the leader?
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I can't remember but it was something like, "I think I've already answered that question" which I think was a reference to the email exchange.
JG	Q17. It is alleged that Councillor Bill Pipe made a comment at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A saying, "Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent". I see from the attendance sheet that Councillor Ireland you were in attendance for this meeting and Cllrs Fry and Sutton were not in attendance? Can you confirm whether you heard Cllr Pipe make this comment?
Cllr Ireland	I said earlier I arrive just before the start of the meetings; I didn't hear him say that and I did check with the Chair and the Vice Chairman of my group, and they didn't hear it either that's a response I got from them from a WhatsApp.
JG	Q18. In your opinion Councillor Ireland was the comment directed towards Interviewee A?
Cllr Ireland	Not asked
JG	Q19. Did other Officers/Councillors attending the meeting hear Councillor Pipe say the above to Interviewee A?
Cllr Ireland	Not asked
JG	Q20. Do you know who these Officers/Councillors are, and would any be able to corroborate that Councillor Pipe made this comment to Interviewee A?
Cllr Ireland	Not asked.
JG	Q21. Cllr Fry and Cllr Sutton do you have anything to add in relation to People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023
Cllr Fry	No, I was not there but it was not a surprise of it being said and it confirms what was said the first time, so it was confirmed by this comment if that makes sense.
Cllr Sutton	Given these two alleged behaviours, are so closely related, unless there is something very Machiavellian going on by somebody here, you know the matter these two comments literally corroborate one another, it makes sense to come to that conclusion, but whether that can be 100% proven or not is another matter. There is something else I heard, not sure where from, but something about asking Interviewee A where they park their car, and that he (Bill Pipe) will park beside them. I am not sure if that's true but if so, that would seem to me that potentially that is Harassment or Stalking or Intimidating behaviour. As the Chief Executive confirmed in my 121 meeting with him last week. The fact that Councillor Pipe's access to the building, has been removed and he can only access public parts of the building, and I think that's the car park as well, when I heard that, I thought immediately, I suppose I was thinking about being in Interviewee A's shoes you know when I finish my work at the end of the day, will someone

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	be stood by my car actually, and I don't know if gender matters in this, but I actually found that quite scary and a chilling prospect. Also, the fact which we will come onto, which has been confirmed by the Chief executive and I think to Councillor Fry also, that members of Interviewee D's team were not willing to attend the budget café that we recently had, as they thought that Bill Pipe might be there, corroborated my feeling that this is quite intimidating and scary.
JG	Q22. Are you aware of any other meetings that Councillor Pipe has attended during his time as Lead Member for Education in relation to this role as a Councillor and do you know whether Councillor Pipe has mimicked the [REDACTED] accents of officers/ parents or told a homophobic joke.
Cllr Ireland	No nothing springs to mind, No.
Cllr Fry	I was made aware of a comment he made in a non-council environment possibly as a school governor in a playground in a school in Upton, I will have to find information about that he made an inappropriate comment and was asked to stand down as a School Governor, I have tried to research that but cannot find anything about it. Unfortunately, he is quite popular in his area and people seem to be closing ranks on his behaviour.
Cllr Sutton	No, I am not aware of the homophobic joke or the mimicking in another environment.
JG	Q22a. Before I continue with another set of questions, I just wish to go back to the comment you made Cllr Sutton, in relation to the Budget Café meeting as I wasn't aware of this, an additional question. Cllr Sutton could you explain the detail around this meeting that you mentioned earlier?
Cllr Sutton	Before I do that, I want to ask the advice from my colleagues Councillor Ireland and Councillor Fry, given that this formed part of a 121 with the Chief Executive is that something I should be treating as confidential?
Cllr Fry	I am comfortable for you to discuss that I think its relevant to the investigation and I had the same comments as well discussed of the nonattendance of senior staff at the Budget Café and that they did not attend, and it was raised because they were fearful, he may be present.
Cllr Sutton	So, you and I will be saying the same thing?
Cllr Fry	Yes.
Cllr Sutton	In that case yes, I am happy.
Cllr Ireland	I haven't met with Matt Prosser since the Budget Café, it was only a week and a half ago so yes, I haven't met with them since.
JG	Q22b. Cllr Sutton can you first tell me when the Budget Café was?
Cllr Sutton	I am not sure a Friday, I think.

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Cllr Ireland	Friday the 29 th
JG	Q22c. Firstly did you attend that meeting?
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I did.
JG	Was It obvious to you that there should have been officers who should have attended and did not?
Cllr Sutton	I wouldn't put it as strongly as that, but for instance in the adult services presentation there was a team of people from across various departments and in [REDACTED] Interviewee D is normally very inclusive of sharing roles and responsibilities, and on the platform it was her and two other member of her team that I did not recognise, so I was slightly surprised by that but I didn't think anything of it, but then Councillor Fry told me the following week - Les?
Cllr Fry	I have my meeting there and I spoke to Interviewee D at the meeting, it was the first opportunity I had to personally support her with what we are doing. I am aware making this complaint the three of us we are putting her out on a limb a little bit and Interviewee A as well and I just wanted to offer my support to her and their team to make sure they felt valued and we supported them and we would not accept behaviour that was below par which I feel Councillor Pipes behaviour has been and at that point she said that Interviewee A did not attend this meeting and the team as they wouldn't have felt comfortable being there if Councillor Pipe had been present. Now this was a budget setting meeting with various departments of the council that were telling us about their budgets and what they were doing, also about the pitfalls and problems that were arising, and it was usually portfolio holder and Senior officer supported by their leadership team in each department, so Interviewee D was there alone, and her team was not with her, does that help answer the question?
JG	Q22d. Yes, it does, Cllr Sutton, is there anything else you wanted to add?
Cllr Sutton	Yes so on the basis of what Les had told me and that it all stacked up, I needed to put this to the Chief Executive, not ask if it happened but just talk to him on the assumption it had happened and yes in effect he confirmed that's exactly what had happened because he said amongst other things he and the Senior Monitoring officer had made Interviewee D aware of the attendance or otherwise of Bill Pipe at that meeting to provide them with reassurance should the members of Interviewee D's team wish to attend, and they still decided not to. They also touched on that his pass (to the offices in the building) had been removed, which the Chief Executive confirmed, yes.
JG	Q23. Do you feel that the comments made by Councillor Pipe in particular the mimicry of an [REDACTED] accent may suggest a racist element?
Cllr Ireland	Absolutely yes, I think I mentioned before my wife is [REDACTED], most people wouldn't know that as she doesn't have a strong accent and she would be appalled if that was done to her, I am appalled that Councillor Pipe did that to Interviewee A. For quite a few years

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	now I find Interviewee A a very competent officer, I worked with Interviewee A in the County Council as well and Interviewee A does a good job, and it appals me that Councillor Pipe could do this to someone like Interviewee A. You know it's unacceptable to do that to anybody to be honest the sooner he stops being a Councillor the better you know I can't see how someone being a racist and he was removed from police and crime for a similar thing, so he is not suitable or fit to be in office to be honest and this isn't party political. I wish Councillor Flower could have seen that and done more.
Cllr Fry	I think his behaviour is unacceptable he is not fit to be a Councillor in my opinion, I believe his comments are racist and misogynistic, I wonder if there is a course of conduct there for Harassment has been carried out against female officers in the Council particularly Interviewee A and I wonder if its verging on criminal if you look at the course of conduct. This is not party political as I have worked with some very, very good members with good relationships across the chamber and I am just frustrated for the lack of sanctions for any misdemeanour that is proven.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I concur with everything others have said. Certainly, if it is true, its racist. Also, it seems misogynistic. I have a high regard for Interviewee D and Interviewee A who are top of my pile for integrity and competence. anything they said I would believe and that's why it's particularly upsetting. I think my gender does add a dimension to this actually, and what it might feel like to be put in that position. I feel really sad. I hope our collective action from the three of us is not making life more difficult for members of staff, because we really don't want that, but if we don't try to call out this behaviour, then we are not acting with integrity, because if this is true and it goes un-noted, everything we have seen suggests the behaviour will continue, and we have to do something about that if we possibly can.
JG	Q24. Do you feel that this may amount to bullying?
Cllr Ireland	Yes, I would say so he has a history of doing these sorts of things.
Cllr Fry	Yes, I believe the course of conduct is bullying behaviour.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I agree I am not a HR specialist, so I don't know correct definition of bullying but to a person like me it looks like bullying, yes.
JG	Q25. Do you feel any actions by Cllr Pipe may amount to harassment?
Cllr Ireland	I think so, mocking someone's accent is harassment, I think officers sometimes find it difficult to push back against Councillors, I think it would take a quite a strong personality and I think Interviewee D is a person who does have a strong personality and it doesn't surprise me that it would have been Interviewee D who asked for an apology from Councillor Pipe. I think there is a lot of pressure on officers, they are almost submissive sometimes because we are the people in power we have been elected, we've got a mandate and it's not quite there, it takes quite a strong officer to push back, we lobby officers to do various things, quite a lot of them won't respond because they don't want to say no, they kind of ghost you which is worst, it's the officer who says we can't do

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	that and we say why, so I think part of the protocol between officers and members, benefits members more.
Cllr Fry	Yes, I do believe its harassment and I apologise if I am teaching you to suck eggs but the definition of harassment, harassment is unwanted conduct relating to a relevant, protected characteristic that has a purpose or is an effect to violate a person's dignity or creating and intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person, the unwanted conduct can be physical, verbal or non-physical, non-verbal, so I believe with what we have heard he has been harassing her with the conduct he has carried out.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, based on the definition Les has just provided I come to the same conclusion.
JG	Q26. Is there anything else you would like to add or raise at this time?
Cllr Ireland	No, I don't think so. I think, as per Les's concerns the actuals sanctions at the end of the process if found guilty are very limited. I have been involved in this process and on the other end, nothing to do with this sort of thing, I was also actually found guilty and then had to break the rules of conduct again but obviously but I wouldn't apologise as that would be telling the untruth, the sanctions are limited I just wish Councillor Flower would have done more, I would have if he had been a member of my group.
Cllr Fry	I am grateful for you Jacqui and Laura so thank you for carrying out this review it's a difficult situation we want to respect and support our officers. I don't know what else we can do, it's our job to raise these issues, support the investigation and do all that we can to help you, the outcome is out of our hands here. I would have preferred that Spencer Flower would have acted more and been more publicly open, telling people what's going on, as its secret behind the parties that doesn't help and as we have seen nationally it doesn't help any of us to serve the public as that's what we are here to do serve the public so thank you for what you are doing. Sorry if we have made it difficult if we have not been first hand but sometimes people are afraid to raise issues and I know from my past people are afraid to stand up and be counted sometimes so I am grateful for Clare and Nick and the three of us working together to present this and hopefully some good will come out of it, so thank you for your time.
Cllr Sutton	Yes, I think it takes a bit of courage for us to do this, it's much easier to hide, and you know we know we haven't got a cast iron evidence base here but we have circumstantial evidence we believe, and a pattern of behaviours, so we don't feel we have any choice but to do this. It really isn't personal or party political but it's just unacceptable, and what Les said, thank you for doing this in such a professional manner. It really is appreciated that you and Laura are part of this process so thank you.
Cllr Fry	Councillor Pipe has come to my house for a coffee and to work and to discuss some matters to get a view on, so on that this is not intent to be personal against him, it's the way he is acting and behaving that I find unacceptable.

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Cllr Sutton	If I find something I regret, am I allowed to retract it?				
JG	We can look at it and see if it's important to the investigation or not.				
Cllr Fry	I think what we are worried about Jacqui, and everybody is where there is a different situation being with a female that the intimidation alternates direction from where it's been going to others and I have seen that happen in the past, I think for any of us when you put your head above the parapet it's a risk you take.				
Cllr Sutton	I am scared of seeing him, I am. I don't want to see him in the Council Chamber as I was the one that outed him.				
	JG thanked the Councillors for their time and explained that the interview notes would be sent using secure email.				
	Addendum				
	I confirm that the interview notes constitute a fair and accurate record of the interview that has taken place.				
	I confirm that the interview notes constitute a fair and accurate record of the interview that has taken place.	Interviewee Signature:	Councillor N Ireland confirmed by email.	Date:	12-10-23
			Councillor L Fry confirmed by email.	Date:	12-10-23
			Councillor C Sutton confirmed by email.	Date:	16-10-23
		Interviewer Signature:	J Gooding	Date:	16-10-23

Record of Interview

Council/ Organisation:	Dorset Council
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Investigation Title:	Councillor Code of Conduct Complaint
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Record of interview with:	Interviewee G	Place of interview:	by Microsoft teams
Date:	24 th October 2023	Interview Paper Ref:	DC 107
Interviewing Officer:	Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit services	Others Present:	Laura Davies – Notetaker – SWAP Internal Audit Services

Interview Commenced:	14:00	Interview Terminated:	14:19
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To be read out at the commencement of the interview
I have been appointed by Johnathon Mair - Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) to carry out an investigation under the ‘Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors’ for Dorset Council.
I understand that you may have information that supports a concern that I have been made aware of during my investigation of the Code of Conduct complaint. This concern has been raised by Councillor L Fry and relates to a comment made by Councillor Bill Pipe. The concern is that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that Councillor Bill Pipe allegedly called the █████, █████ █████ a Fat Faggot during a Planning Meeting.

Record of Interview

I have prepared a number of questions I would like to ask you, and the answers you give will be recorded in the form of contemporaneous notes by

Laura Davies – Principal Fraud Investigation Officer – SWAP Internal Audit Services

Following the end of the interview we will send you a transcript of the meeting and you will have the opportunity to make any amendments or additions you wish at the end of the notes. I will then ask you to sign the notes signifying your acceptance that they constitute an accurate record of the interview that has taken place. The notes will be sent to you using secure email. If you feel unable to answer any of the questions asked, Laura will simply record that fact in the interview notes.

I need to inform you that should only tell me what to the best of your knowledge and belief you believe to be true and that this interview should be treated with confidentiality and not discussed with Councillors or Officers outside of this interview

Record of Interview

Person Speaking	Record of Interview Meeting
	Persons speaking denoted by: JG - Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit Services Interviewee G LD- Laura Davies - Principal Fraud Investigation Officer - SWAP Internal Audit Services
JG	Q1. Please can you confirm that you have understood the above and are happy to continue?
Interviewee G	Yes. I fully understand and I am quite happy to continue.
JG	Q2. Interviewee G, can you confirm you have been appointed to the following Committees -Full Council, Appeals Committee, Dorchester Markets Informal Joint Panel, Eastern Area Planning Committee, the Vice Chairman for the Strategic and Technical Planning Committee and the Western and Southern Area Planning Committee?
Interviewee G	Yes, I am on all of those committees.
JG	Q3. As previously mentioned, it's been alleged by you, that Cllr Bill Pipe called the [REDACTED] a Fat Faggot at a planning meeting, first of all can you please confirm the date and full name of that planning meeting?
Interviewee G	No, it was after a planning meeting where a number of us met for a coffee at the lounge in County Hall Dorchester, and it was there that those words were used.
JG	Q4. Interviewee G, can you please explain in your words, what took place and the comments made at that planning meeting?
Interviewee G	There was me, and a number of other councillors having a coffee which Councillor Bill Pipe was one of those Councillors, I and another Councillor engaged in a conversation about [REDACTED], as we have regular team's meetings with him as he represents our area, and that it was good to catch up with [REDACTED] etc. Cllr Pipe came in with "oh he's nothing but a fat faggot", to which I commented "I guess you don't like him then?" to which he (Cllr Pipe) replied "no not really". That was the only reference at the time. I thought it was inappropriate but that from Cllr Pipe wasn't unexpected.
JG	Q5. Interviewee G, was there anything that prompted Cllr Pipe to makes these comments?

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Interviewee G	No, I think just the fact that I and the other Cllr mentioned his name (██████████), he wasn't actually involved in the conversation, anytime you sit around the table there is more than one conversation going on. He (Cllr Pipe) just came out with that comment. He wasn't asked for an opinion or involved in that section of the conversation.
JG	Q6. You mentioned another councillor, where there any other officers or Councillors at the coffee meeting who would have heard Councillor Pipe speak in this way?
Interviewee G	It was Cllr Jean Dunseith; she was the Cllr I was having the conversation with and Cllr David Shortell who was the Chairman of that planning committee. There may be another present, but I am not 100% sure, so I wouldn't like to say.
JG	Q7. Have there been any other incidents or meetings that you are aware of, that you feel Cllr Pipe's behaviour has been unprofessional or inappropriate?
Interviewee G	Yes, I can't say the specific meeting that it occurred at, but I do remember, I was on an Appeals Committee with him (Cllr Pipe) and he was the Chairman of that Appeals Committee, and he made a comment about the appearance of a female officer. Subsequent conversations had gone on because he's no longer part of that committee. The officer who actually referred back to that comment, who thought it was inappropriate, it was one of two officers, but I cannot remember who it was.
JG	Q8. Can you remember what the comment was?
Interviewee G	It was something to do about her appearance or her hair style or that fact she looked so much younger. 20 years ago, you probably wouldn't have battered an eyelid about it, but now it's not appropriate, we have all grown up to understand comments that were deemed to be funny 20 years ago although they weren't, but nobody made a fuss about it, but now it's not appropriate. It just stood out to me; I thought I wouldn't have said that just because its no longer deemed appropriate. I am sure there are other incidents, but I would not be able to give you those specific incidents.
JG	Q9. The planning meeting where you went for coffee afterwards, can you remember when that was?
Interviewee G	It could have been the April, May meeting, because after the full council meeting in May, he ceased to be Chairman of that committee, as he went on to be a Lead Member. Probably more than likely April but wouldn't swear to it. (JG researched the meeting -Cllr Bill Pipe was Chairman for March and April 2023 but not May 2023)
JG	Q10. I just wanted to clarify its this year?
Interviewee G	Yes, definitely this year.
JG	Q11. You mention Cllr Pipe went on to be a Lead member of Education, did you have any involvement with him in that role or not?

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Interviewee G	No, I just know it was a very short-lived appointment			
JG	Q12. is there anything else, you would like to make us aware of with Cllr Pipe?			
Interviewee G	No, I mean the only thing I would say that during covid, we had lots of zoom meetings where he made quite a few inappropriate comments during those again, but again you don't think about it until after that event. I think a number of complaints were raised at that time but not taking any further forward, not by me, but others were offended by what was said.			
JG	Q13. The two councillors you referred to that heard what Cllr Pipe said, do you think they will speak to us?			
Interviewee G	Possibly not for the simple reason as they are members of the same political party.			
LD	Q14. You stated the Lead member of Education role was short-lived by Cllr Pipe, do you know reasons why it was short-lived?			
Interviewee G	I believe it's due to inappropriate comments and behaviour at a meeting he was at, where he was a Lead member.			
LD	Q15. How were you notified of Cllr Pipes resignation from that role?			
Interviewee G	It sort of leaked out, there was no official announcement that he had left that role.			
JG	Explained how the interview notes would be sent using secure email.			
	Addendum			
	I confirm that the interview notes constitute a fair and accurate record of the interview that has taken place.	Interviewee Signature:	Interviewee G	Date: 21-11-23
		Interviewer Signature:	J Gooding	Date: 25-10-23

Record of Interview

Council/ Organisation:	Dorset Council
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Investigation Title:	Councillor Code of Conduct Complaint
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Record of interview with:	Interviewee F	Place of interview:	Dorset Council; County Hall; Colliton Park; Dorchester; Dorset; DT1 1XJ
Date:	10 th November 2023	Interview Paper Ref:	DC 108
Interviewing Officer:	Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit services	Others Present:	Laura Davies – Notetaker – SWAP Internal Audit Services

Interview Commenced:	14:31	Interview Terminated:	15:31
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To be read out at the commencement of the interview
I have been appointed by Johnathon Mair - Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) to carry out an investigation under the 'Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors' for Dorset Council.
I understand that you may have information that supports some of the allegations in the complaint that has been made about Councillor Bill Pipe and the purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to provide that information. I am conducting an investigation into the following complaint and a concern that has been raised since the complaint was received:

Record of Interview

- On the 25th of April 2023 there was a Cabinet Reshuffle: And Councillor Bill Pipe was appointed as lead member for Education.
- A few days after Annual Full Council on the 11th of May 2023, Councillor Pipe had resigned. Information then reached the complainant that he had been in a meeting relating to education and had mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a senior member of staff at Dorset Council and when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused. He had then resigned saying he did not want the role anyway.
- There is also a story circulating that Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line during this same meeting.
- At Full Council in July, the day after the after [REDACTED], Councillor Pipe [REDACTED] which may link to the [REDACTED] accent incident, and whether Councillor Pipe has an issue with [REDACTED] people?
- That Councillor Bill Pipe made a comment at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A saying, "Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent".

You have chosen not to have anyone with you.

who is present at the interview as a 'friend.' The role of such a friend is as a witness to fair play in the conduct of the interview and to support you during the interview. The role is not that of a representative, and, therefore, your friend will not participate in the interview as it proceeds.

I have prepared a number of questions I would like to ask you, and the answers you give will be recorded in the form of contemporaneous notes by Laura Davies – Principal Fraud Investigation Officer – SWAP Internal Audit Services

Following the end of the interview we will send you a transcript of the meeting and you will have the opportunity to make any amendments or additions you wish at the end of the notes. I will then ask you to sign the notes signifying your acceptance that they constitute an accurate record of the interview that has taken place. The notes will be sent to you using secure email. If you feel unable to answer any of the questions asked, Laura will simply record that fact in the interview notes.

I need to inform you that you should only tell me what to the best of your knowledge and belief you believe to be true and that this interview should be treated with confidentiality and not discussed with Councillors or Officers outside of this interview.

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Person Speaking	
	Persons speaking denoted by: JG - Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit Services Interviewee F LD – Laura Davies - Principal Fraud Investigation Officer - SWAP Internal Audit Services
JG	Q1. Please can you confirm that you have understood the above and are happy to continue?
Interviewee F	Yes. I am happy to continue.
JG	Q2. Can you confirm you have been appointed to the following Committees - Full Council, Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board, Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd, the Vice Chairman for The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence.
Interviewee F	Yes, that's sounds about right.
JG	Q3. On the 25th of April 2023 following a Cabinet Reshuffle Councillor Bill Pipe was appointed as Lead Member for Education. How where you informed, and did you have a view on the appointment?
Interviewee F	I was informed via the Leader of Council, as it was at the same time which he told me he would be offering me the cabinet position. Yes, I had a view on this appointment and no, I would not like to make you aware of it, I do not recall expressing that with anyone.
JG	Q4. Do you know which meetings Cllr Pipe attended while he was Lead member for Education and if so, did you attend any of those meetings with Cllr Pipe?
Interviewee F	I can't say what meetings Councillor Pipe may have arranged or attended under his responsibilities, he may have held a few meetings with Interviewee C as he was going to work directly with Interviewee C. I was involved in a number of meetings which myself and two other Lead Members who work under me attended. We were invited to a number of Induction meetings, and I believe there was one, I cannot recall what the meeting was called but it was sort of a Heads of Department meeting, with all Heads of Department Service

Record of Interview

	managers etc. I am not sure what the title of that meeting was or if it was part of the Induction meeting, but we were invited with it being a week of taking on the new positions as we were new in the roles.
JG	Q5. There have been specific concerns raised in the complaint, around one in particular, that Cllr Pipe had mimicked an [REDACTED] accent of a senior officer at a meeting in May 2023. I have an understanding that you attended this meeting Interviewee F. If so, would you be able to provide us with your detail of events please?
Interviewee F	Yes 10 th May, I did attend, to my recollection of what was said once Interviewee A began to speak, I recall Cllr Pipe was sat next to me, he did in fact speak with an [REDACTED] accent, I am not sure what he said, I cannot recall exactly what he said but I did note he said it in an [REDACTED] accent.
JG	Q6. Do you know what was mimicked in the [REDACTED] accent? Can you confirm who the comments were directed at?
Interviewee F	I can't recall, my honest recollection as I don't want to speculate on what he may have or may not have said. What I know that is factual, is that it was said in an [REDACTED] accent. Who it was directed at I can't say for certain or if they are just words that he said. A member who is [REDACTED] spoke and then he spoke in an [REDACTED] accent, so one would presume they were directing at them, but I can't say for certain.
JG	Q7. I understand that Councillor Pipe was asked to apologise, do you know who asked Cllr Pipe to apologise and did he apologise?
Interviewee F	On that particular occasion, I am not aware he was asked to apologise, what I am aware of is when I become aware this issue was taken forward, I think I recall having a conversation with the Leader of Council who mentioned there may be an issue. Bear in mind there have been other incidents that the Leader of council has been made aware of, the Leader of Council informed me he asked Bill Pipe to apologise, so I cannot be 100% on dates. I was led to believe sometime later Cllr Pipe was asked to apologise, a couple of weeks later.
JG	Q8. Did you or anyone discuss this incident with Cllr Pipe afterwards?
Interviewee F	This particular incident, I believe I was approached directly by Interviewee D, who informed me that there were a number of issues and part of those issues, she was relating to, this was part of it she approached me and mentioned, in her words that it was unacceptable, but at that stage I don't believe a formal complaint was put towards against Cllr Pipe. No conversation about this particular incident no.
JG	Q9. Did Interviewee D discuss a number of issues with you related to Cllr Bill Pipe and his behaviour or other issues?
Interviewee F	We discussed Children's services issues, and she also raised the concern about Bills 's behaviour. No official complaint had been put forward.
JG	Q10. As the [REDACTED] do you think that the mimicry of an [REDACTED] accent to an officer from [REDACTED] is acceptable behaviour by a Councillor and in particular the Lead Member for Education?
Interviewee F	No, I don't.

Record of Interview

JG	Q11. It's also been alleged that Councillor Pipe made a comment at this time about where Interviewee A parked her car, are you aware of this incident?
Interviewee F	No, I am not aware or have any recollection where she parked her car, and this is the first time I have heard of it.
JG	Q12. It is also alleged that Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line. Are you aware of this?
Interviewee F	No, it's the first time I've heard of that issue.
JG	Q13. (If Q12 is yes) Do you know whether this comment was made to a particular officer or was it a general comment?
Interviewee F	Not asked, as not aware of Q12.
JG	Q14. I understand that at the Annual Full Council on the 11th of May 2023 through conversations that some Councillors heard Councillor Pipe had resigned from his role as Lead Member for Education. What information did you have in relation to his resignation and who did you hear it from, that Cllr Pipe had resigned?
Interviewee F	I heard before receiving the official email from the Leader of the Council that, Cllr Pipe was going to resign and then I received the official email from Cllr Pipe that he was standing down for family issues.
JG	Q14a. Do you know what the email stated, or could we have a copy of the email?
Interviewee F	I can't remember if it was an email or text, there have been a few, but if I recall correctly, it was something like Bill will resign from his position of Lead Member, there was not too much detail in it.
JG	Q15. In the complaint it's been stated: 'A further matter worthy of investigation is that at Full Council in July, the day after [REDACTED], Councillor Pipe [REDACTED] Does this matter have a link with his [REDACTED] accent incident, does he have an issue with [REDACTED] people?' . My understanding is that the meeting was on the 13 th of July 2023, Can I please confirm first of all that you did attend the Full Council meeting on that day?
Interviewee F	I did yes.
JG	Q16. Please can you explain what happened on that day in your own words?
Interviewee F	I personally can't recall what [REDACTED], if you are saying he did, then he probably did, I am not aware its illegal or classed as hate to [REDACTED]. I would also like to point out that I am a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] it was not deemed back in the day not fitting for anything, so as [REDACTED] [REDACTED], I have never personally experienced any racism by Bill towards [REDACTED]. I have not experienced that again as a [REDACTED], so if as a [REDACTED] I believe it's a holiday of some sort to celebrate the [REDACTED] history. I have not personally experienced a racist viewpoint from Bill because of my [REDACTED] heritage.

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JG	Q17. I understand that near the beginning of the meeting Cllr Pipe raised an issue with the Chair about [REDACTED]. Can you explain your understanding of this?
Interviewee F	No, this is the first time I have heard this.
JG	Q18. Why do you think Cllr Pipe asked about [REDACTED]? Do you feel that Cllr Pipe may have been implying a different meaning when making this comment to make an officer feel uncomfortable?
Interviewee F	No not aware.
JG	Q19. At the meeting two Councillors – Cllr Pipe and Cllr O’Leary both [REDACTED] – in your view do you think there was a reason for that? Do you think it was linked to [REDACTED]?
Interviewee F	Not asked, as above.
JG	Q20. At this meeting Cllr Sutton asked a question to the Leader Cllr Flower about the resignation of Cllr Pipe and that she had heard that the resignation was due to personal circumstances. She had also heard that Cllr Pipe had allegedly mocked the accent of an officer of the Council prior to his resignation. Can you explain in your own words why you think this question was asked?
Interviewee F	I can’t speak for Councillor Sutton; I was in attendance and yes, I didn’t hear it.
JG	Q21. Has Interviewee A, ever spoken or made you aware about inappropriate comments that Cllr Pipe has made towards her?
Interviewee F	So, after that, there was a meeting, you mentioned earlier slightly something differently where in your words the “[REDACTED] accent incident” following that meeting, I had a meeting with Interviewee A and at that meeting, I had sat down in the usual place, in the meeting, Bill Pipe chose to sit to next to me. There was exchange earlier, after that incident, Interviewee D called me to the side and explained that it was out of order. I then went back to my place where I sat, following that meeting it was deemed by Interviewee D and Interviewee A, that with me going back and sitting next to Cllr Pipe, that it was perceived, I was supporting Bill. I was devastated to be blamed for something I haven’t done. I had an exchange with Interviewee A, to express to her that if she thought sitting where I sat meant I was supporting Bill and not her, that was not the case. So going to your questions having a meeting talking to Interviewee A, does that make sense.
LD	Q21a. Has Interviewee A ever discussed anything with you regarding current or previous incidents about Cllr Pipe?
Interviewee F	At that meeting, after the first episode we were at that board meeting and he used the [REDACTED] accent, I mentioned I spoke to Interviewee D, I also mentioned to Interviewee A and if there was an issue, or in fact wanted to deal with it or what would she like to do and she said no, hence there was no official complaint at that stage. I spoke to her then, I said and explained Bill is ex-military, I am ex-military, we come from a similar service, I don’t think Bill meant it in a malicious way , I think Bill talks as if he is back in the military, I use to be called Zulu as I was brought up in South Africa, I used to be called the bog rat in the military which I didn’t take offence to, but it is offensive in

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	today's society, so when Interviewee A expressed he had been doing stuff in the past, previous to Dorset Council days, it may have been something he said in the past and she was concerned about Bill. I said to her I don't think Bill had maliciously intended to degrade her, but I can see why it can be taken as that, she expressed there was some concern as he may target her or go out of his way to target her. I didn't want her to feel that she had to walk around with someone else there. That was the exchange we had prior to that if that makes sense.
JG	Q21b Have you ever discussed these matters between Interviewee A and Cllr Pipe with anyone else, other than Interviewee A or Cllr Pipe?
Interviewee F	No asked as above.
JG	Q22. Do you feel the mimicking of the [REDACTED] accent and that Cllr Pipe wore [REDACTED], are connected in anyway?
Interviewee F	Honestly, I can't answer that, because I don't know that if Bill Pipe wanted to celebrate or if he had an issue bear in mind being from [REDACTED], I don't have an issue, I can't understand if Bill thought that way. I cannot make the connection, I cannot, I have no evidence to give to it, if that makes sense.
JG	Q23. It is alleged that Councillor Bill Pipe made a comment at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A saying, "Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent"? Can you confirm that you attended this meeting?
Interviewee F	I did attend yes, I actually had a different recollection to that, prior to this meeting, I was going to say I was engrossed in my note as I had reports coming up, Bill Pipe was next to me, I wasn't paying attention, I wasn't sure what was said, to my recollection it is different to what you mentioned, I thought what was said, and again I didn't hear what he said but speaking to other people at the time, I can't be 100% accurate, so I need to make that clear, I thought what had been said was "Good morning or hello Interviewee A" I've said that in a English accent, so I can't be accused of being racist". I want to be clear I didn't not hear 100% I spoke to Interviewee D after that she commented on what he said, so I don't know, if I am filling in the gaps, it's the gist of what he said was something along those lines, he wasn't making note of her [REDACTED] accent from my point of view.
JG	Q24. Can you explain in your words what took place at the meeting and what was said?
Interviewee F	As above
JG	Q25. After Cllr Pipe had made this comment did Interviewee D speak to you and ask you to ask Cllr Pipe to leave the meeting?
Interviewee F	Yes and no, Interviewee D did come up to me and I think she expressed what he said was unacceptable in her words. I think I said what did he say? I think that's when she said something about an English accent there was a slight difference to what he actually said. She made it very clear that was unacceptable, I think she also said, he should leave the meeting, she was very angry, she left and sat back

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	down. I went back to my seat where Bill sat next to and I asked him if we could talk, we went outside. I think I said, "Bill what on earth have you said there will be a complaint now." I can't recall his reply, he wasn't overly courteous, and he stormed back into the council Chambers and that was the end of our exchange.
JG	Q26. Can you explain what you did following the request from Interviewee D? So, just to clarify, you went out of the meeting with Cllr Pipe, did you ask him what he had said?
Interviewee F	No because before I finished my sentence, I explained there would be a complaint, I can't recall, he wasn't happy, and he stormed back into the meeting, so we were unable to finish that conversation.
JG	Q27. I understand that after the meeting you went to speak with Interviewee A. Can you explain why and what the conversation with Interviewee A was about?
Interviewee F	After the meeting, the Cllr's and Officers left for Full Council. Interviewee A, Interviewee D, and I think Interviewee C these were our Senior Officers, they were slightly ahead of me and as we got through the main security doors to get into the main Council building, there is the Council Leader's office and the Cabinet's office, I tried to catch up to Interviewee D. I didn't think it was resolved. I didn't really know what was said, although I have the gist of it, I didn't know fully what had happened. To say it was a one-way conversation, the way it was said to me, Interviewee D expressed how unhappy she was at me. Interviewee A had presumed and had taken it, that where I went to sit back down next to Bill, as that's where my laptop was, she said that the officers had taken it as if I was supporting Bill. It was a heated one-way conversation. Interviewee D left the room, I then gave it 5 minutes I sent her a text as Interviewee A was very upset. I have reflected over those 5 minutes. I texted, if appropriate, I would like to speak to Interviewee A, which she spoke to Interviewee A who said she was happy to speak to me. We went off to a separate office and that stage I effectively apologised that if she presumed, I sat with Bill Pipe, if it anyway indicated I was in support of Bill Pipes behaviour or anything he may or may not have done. I think at that meeting, Interviewee A mentioned there were a number issues from meetings in a previous council, so before my time, I expressed again, I don't think Bill Pipe is racist to [REDACTED] people, being [REDACTED] myself, I just thought, Bill was a bit of a dinosaur and although not appropriate, I didn't believe there was malicious intent, I just thought he was a good guy and it was a stupid thing to do. I don't think Interviewee D believed that was the case, that's why Interviewee A mentioned the previous issues of which I was unaware. I changed the conversation back to me to why I sat where I was sat and that it was a bad call, you know a learning experience. I said to Interviewee A, if she had any inkling of me supporting Bill, I would happily give my resignation to the Leader of Council and that she would need to let me know, and I would do that, she has not come to me and asked me to do that, so I presume she has accepted my position on that.

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JG	Q28. Interviewee F can ask you do you think the comment made by Cllr Pipe is behaviour you would expect from a Councillor to an officer?
Interviewee F	No, it's not.
JG	Q29. Did you and Cllr Pipe discuss this matter after that incident?
Interviewee F	That particular incident no, I have spoken to him since then, but I have deliberately not spoken on these issues, once I knew about a complaint was on its way or a complaint has been lodged. I haven't spoken on these issues because, I thought we would be exactly in the place we are today, I have distanced myself, and also my officers certainly at that stage, thought I was some way supportive of Cllr Pipe, so I have distanced myself from him.
JG	Q30. Are you aware of any other meetings that Councillor Pipe has attended during his time as Lead Member for Education in relation to this role as a Councillor and do you know whether Councillor Pipe has mimicked the [REDACTED] accents of parents/families or told a homophobic joke?
Interviewee F	I am not aware of any homophobic jokes, I am aware in a meeting with Interviewee D in a sort of Head of Service and Cabinet member meeting, there was an exchange in which there was talk about a number of issues you would find in a social services type settings to which Mark Roberts who is another Lead member attended, I think, I can't remember exactly what he said in front of, he indicated something to do with identifying people as being gay. Interviewee D took exception to that. I recall that because Interviewee D indicating, he may have called them homos, but again I can't give exact wording, I wasn't really paying attention at that meeting, he may have said something. In another meeting with Interviewee D and Interviewee A, it was mentioned that it was not the first time he said something indecent. I don't know if there was a family in the meeting, I think it may have been a traveller family and it was said to me he used an [REDACTED] accent again. I don't know what was said, I heard that from Interviewee D or Interviewee A or both. They can confirm they said that to me.
JG	Q31. Before we continue, are there any other incidents or comments made by Cllr Pipe or anyone else regarding Interviewee A or anyone else that you would like to make me aware of?
Interviewee F	No, not that I can recall or heard like I said Interviewee A mentioned but I don't know what comments they are.
JG	Q32. Do you feel that the comments made by Councillor Pipe in particular the mimicry of an [REDACTED] accent may suggest a racist element?
Interviewee F	I am not going to comment, I don't feel that is fair. If I could make a point, you are guilty by association now days that's not to say he isn't, he may very well be, I have never had a conversation with Councillor Pipe. Bill Pipe does a lot of work in Africa, charity work, I grew up in South Africa, I cannot comment on what he said, he's never expressed that to me, and I am not going to comment on my opinion.
JG	Q33. Do you feel any actions by Cllr Pipe may amount to harassment or bullying?

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Interviewee F	It's such a difficult thing, if I had to see this in black and white and knowing Bill Pipe, if it was a person that I didn't know from Adam, who said this to a person and said this, who is from [REDACTED] etc, I would probably say, oh the guy is probably racist, but I do know Councillor Pipe. I find this incredibly difficult; I have never expressed it but if I thought he was intentionally trying to bully Interviewee A, I wouldn't tolerate it. What he said is ridiculous its not to say he's not a bully. I personally think he's a bit of an idiot and stuck in the past and no there is no justification. I truly think, he thinks he didn't do anything wrong. You can't say things like that now, that's the world we live in, even if you think it, because someone might take it the wrong way, that said, I am absolutely devastated, she is a lady I have respect for, who is a fantastic officer who has felt this way. Very sad episode, I can't give you a yes or no answer.
JG	Q34. Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to discuss today? If another Cllr were to act in this way, and make these comments, do you think that is acceptable coming from a Cllr?
Interviewee F	No, I don't.
JG	Q35. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?
Interviewee F	I am not excusing anyone here, I fundamentally believe in a good healthy work relationship, I was raised by a very strong independent women, I mentioned my family were run out of [REDACTED] because of intolerance and that sort of stuff, and I grew up in south Africa, which ironically, I was asked to leave and go back home at 18. I do feel I am not excusing Bill Pipe FOR what he said if by accident or not I can't make that judgement. It should not have been said and it needs to be made clear, I do feel that a bit of a witch hunt is happening against Bill Pipe, it's not excusing what he said. I do feel whether its right or not, I do feel that the way Dorset Council has handled this and with Bill Pipe, it has put a lot on his mental stress as well. I think information about his complaint hasn't got through to him, so he says. From one or two conversations that there was going to be a complaint, I genuinely saw someone who had been taken back that's why I said, I don't think he had that natural malicious intent, being racist or misogynistic. I just think, he has that look in his eyes when I said that is unacceptable if you have done that. If someone knows they have done something wrong, you can tell, but it doesn't excuse what he did no person should feel bullied or intimidated etc, it's a grey area, people can get tripped up. whatever your investigation may find, I don't think it's fair on her, or the treatment of Bill Pipe. I am very disappointed how Dorset Council has handled this from both sides.
	JG - Explained how the interview notes would be sent using secure email.
	Addendum
	I confirm that the interview notes constitute a fair and accurate record of the interview that has taken place.

Record of Interview

	I confirm that the interview notes constitute a fair and accurate record of the interview that has taken place.	Interviewer	J Gooding	20-11-23	
		Interviewee	Interviewee F	03.12.23	

Record of Interview

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Council/ Organisation:	Dorset Council
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Investigation Title:	Councillor Code of Conduct Complaint
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Record of interview with:	Councillor Bill Pipe – Dorset Council	Place of interview:	Dorset Council; County Hall; Colliton Park; Dorchester; Dorset; DT1 1XJ
Date:	13 th November 2023	Interview Paper Ref:	DC 109
Interviewing Officer:	Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit services	Others Present:	Laura Davies – Notetaker – SWAP Internal Audit Services

Interview Commenced:	12.26	Interview Terminated:	14:04
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To be read out at the commencement of the interview
I have been appointed by Johnathon Mair - Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer) to carry out an investigation under the 'Arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors' for Dorset Council.
A complaint has been made against you, (Councillor Pipe) and the purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to provide information and to discuss the matters which have been raised. As explained to you in the letter of 8 th November 2023 my investigation will include the following taken from allegations from the complaint:

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Concerns raised that during meetings related to children's services you (Councillor Bill Pipe) had:

- Mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a senior officer of Dorset Council and when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position you had refused.
- Mimicked the [REDACTED] accents of parents.
- Told a homophobic joke.
- Made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line.
- The reason for your resignation from the role as Lead Member for Education.
- Whether your decision to [REDACTED] at a Full Council meeting the day after the [REDACTED] suggests that you have an issue with [REDACTED] people

and the concern that was raised since the complaint was received:

- Whether you (Councillor Bill Pipe) said at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee on 11th September 2023 towards Interviewee A, "Good morning, Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent".

The following are the events that were detailed in the complaint which I understand has already been shared with you.

- In October 2020 Councillor Bill Pipe was removed from the police and Crime panel for inappropriate comments about stop and search made during a meeting.
- On the 25th April 2023 we were made aware of a Cabinet Reshuffle <https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2023/04/27/dorset-council-cabinet-reshuffle/only> by way of public press release. Councillor Bill Pipe was appointed as lead member for Education.
- A few days after Annual Full Council on the 11th of May 2023 through conversations we heard that Councillor Pipe had resigned. Information then reached us that he had been in a meeting relating to education and had mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of a Senior member of Dorset Council, when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused. He had then resigned saying he did not want the role anyway.
- An Echo article - <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/23611259.councillor-steps-top-education-role/> - 26.6.23 reported that Councillor Pipe had resigned less than 3 weeks later. This, just weeks after the resignation, was the first members (or most members) had heard about it.

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- Other than this press report nothing has been made public and no explanation offered to Group leaders about why a member with a history of inappropriate behaviour was appointed in the first place to Education and why subsequently he resigned. We feel that Councillor Pipe has seriously undermined the good working relationship between members and officers and his ongoing behaviour has brought the Council and position of elected member into disrepute.
- There is also a story circulating that Councillor Pipe made an inappropriate comment about a Visible Panty Line during this same meeting.
- A further matter worthy of investigation is that at Full Council in July, the day after [REDACTED] [REDACTED], Councillor Pipe [REDACTED]. Does this matter have a link with his [REDACTED] accent incident, does he have an issue with [REDACTED] people?

Out of scope will be Information should be provided to Group leaders with an explanation of what action has been taken to redress Councillor's Pipe's behaviour and Councillor Bill Pipe's removal from the Police and Crime Panel.

You have chosen to be accompanied by:

Councillor Louie O'Leary

who is present at the interview as a 'friend.' The role of such a friend is as a witness to fair play in the conduct of the interview and to support you during the interview. The role is not that of a representative, and, therefore, your friend will not participate in the interview as it proceeds.

I have prepared a number of questions I would like to ask you, and the answers you give will be recorded in the form of contemporaneous notes by
Laura Davies – Principal Fraud Investigation Officer – SWAP Internal Audit Services

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Following the end of the interview I will send you a transcript of the meeting and you will have the opportunity to make any amendments or additions you wish at the end of the notes. I will then ask you to sign the notes signifying your acceptance that they constitute an accurate record of the interview that has taken place. The notes will be sent to you using secure email. If you feel unable to answer any of the questions asked, Laura will simply record that fact in the interview notes.

I need to inform you that you should only tell me what to the best of your knowledge and belief you believe to be true and that this interview should be treated with confidentiality and not discussed with Councillors or Officers outside of this interview.

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Disclaimer made by Cllr Bill Pipe.

I am not aware of the complaint or the detail of the complaint, I did not receive the email, you can have my phone to check if you want. I did not have an email from Democratic services, the first I heard of it was from the email you sent me the other day. I am not aware of the complaint. A number of emails I should have received, but I haven't. I had an email from Spencer Flower at 13:30 on the day of planning (believed to be the 19th of October 2023), attached to that email, was one from the Chief Executive. It said that the complaint had been made but no detail of what the complaint was, I then understood that I had been barred from County Hall on that day as my door pass wasn't working.

Cllr O'Leary stated- the issue was, I allowed Cllr Pipe through the doors as his pass wasn't working. One of the councillors saw Cllr Pipe, one of the main bodies in the hall there, and then I was told not to allow access or allow someone to tailgate behind me. There was a reminder sent out.

Cllr- Pipe – there was then a reminder email sent out, pointing out that I had been barred from County Hall following a complaint. My pass had been revoked but they allowed me into the car park, so it worked at the carpark but not at the door.

Cllr O'Leary- We have had a new pass system recently so sometimes it will allow you in and sometimes it won't.

Cllr Pipe – when I came into planning, nothing was said no issue was raised. When I spoke to the Leader about who will take the vice chairmanship, because the chairman was on holiday and the vice chairman would normally stand up, and as former Vice Chairman I wondered if they would like me to do that, but they said “no, no its all sorted”. They didn't say why are you actually coming into planning, no, no, there was no mention of the complaint.

LD -I will make note of the fact that you have not had any detail of the complaint prior to the email from JG and today's interview.

JG- I will look for the email, which shows the original email sent which I have a copy of, showing the detail of the complaint and update you after this interview. Are you happy to continue if I read the complaint out to you now? Are you happy to continue with today?

Cllr Pipe – Absolutely.

Cllr Pipe- It's like the email from the Chief Executive with the attachment of the original complaint, I have not seen that email either, I have taken my phone down to the tech guy, it was fixed but how do I know until someone mentions they have sent me an email and I have not seen it that there is a problem with my emails, if that makes sense.

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JG- read out the detail of the complaint.

Cllr Pipe – I will tell you the truth on everything and give you my version of the Police and Crime panel, how to lower the numbers of stop and search, I know about the Crime Panel I have been on it for a while and I said for intelligence needs, you need to look at certain parts of the community, where people are committing those types of crimes then so be it. People then started to raise their hands and say that is inappropriate, you can't say that its racist. It's certainly not, I have tons of non-white friends, I sponsor two schools in Africa, I have been doing it for 28 years, I do a lot of charitable work out there. That's my take on it, you can take it or leave it. I was pressured by the crime commissioner about what was said, I wasn't afraid as such.

JG- Thank you letting us know your side of things. Its gives us more of an understanding of your side of things. Laura may ask you go back over this, and you will get an opportunity to amend or make an appropriate change if you need to.

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Person Speaking	Record of Interview Meeting
	Persons speaking denoted by: JG - Jacqui Gooding – Assistant Director – SWAP Internal Audit Services Cllr Pipe - Portfolio Holder for People - Children, Education, Skills, and Early Help LD – Laura Davies - Principal Fraud Investigation Officer - SWAP Internal Audit Services
JG	Q1. Cllr Pipe, please advise if you would like to take a break at any time. Please can you confirm that you have understood the above and feel comfortable to continue?
Cllr Pipe	I am yes, and yes.
JG	Q2. Can you confirm you have been appointed to the following Committees for Dorset Council - Full Council, People and Health Scrutiny Committee and the Western and Southern Area Planning Committee?
Cllr Pipe	Yes, that's correct.

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JG	Q3. On the 25th of April 2023 following a Cabinet Reshuffle Councillor you were appointed as Lead Member for Education. Can you please advise how were you appointed to this position?
Cllr Pipe	I was summoned to the Leader's office, he did send an electronic invitation, but sadly I didn't get that, so when he rang me up, I was campaigning on the ECP Councillor elections, I dropped everything and sped a great legal speed to County Hall, where I was appointed, this was an email off Spencer Flower, which I would like to point out this is another email I didn't get so I think there is a problem with his emails to me.
JG	Q4. If we can now talk about the incident that has been alleged. where it is claimed you mimicked the [REDACTED] accent of Interviewee A. This was at the Extended Children's Services Leadership meeting in May. Can you provide us with your recollection of events please?
Cllr Pipe	I agree to using an [REDACTED] accent, I greeted Interviewee A in an [REDACTED] accent, I have been doing it for 7, 8 or 9 years, Interviewee A has never complained, or never asked me not to do it, there have never been previous complaints. I have worked with Interviewee A previously in other Councils and nothing was raised, so for me it was a normal day.
JG	Q5. Do you think that the mimicry of an [REDACTED] accent to an officer from Northern Ireland is acceptable behaviour by a Councillor and in particular in your role as Lead Member for Education at the time?
Cllr Pipe	With hindsight no, but I am from another background perhaps we do things differently there. I didn't take it to be offensive or for Interviewee A to take it in an offensive way.
Cllr O'Leary	I am from [REDACTED] background, Southern Ireland, [REDACTED] background, Cllr Pipe has never mimicked an [REDACTED] accent to me or offended me or made a remark from my background. Bill has occasionally mimicked my West Country accent but not the [REDACTED] accent.
LD	Q5a. Cllr O'Leary, has Cllr Pipe ever mimicked an [REDACTED] accent of yourself did you say?
Cllr O'Leary	Not that I am aware of, he has mimicked my West Country accent but not an [REDACTED] accent.
Cllr Pipe	Just to make you aware my family lived in [REDACTED] from 1803 to 1922.
JG	Q5b. You said you were in the forces, which force was that and when was that?
Cllr Pipe	I served in the Royal Navy from 4 th January 1973 to 1997.
JG	Q6. Did anyone discuss this incident with you after the meeting?
Cllr Pipe	No, well beg your pardon, actually, Interviewee F approached me and said I quote "fuck me mate you are in the shit" I said what for, he said speaking in an [REDACTED] accent, I said I have done it for many of years and no one has complained before, and that was it really off he went.
JG	Q7. It has also been mentioned that you were asked to apologise to Interviewee A regarding this incident, is this correct and if so, who were you asked to apologise by?

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Cllr Pipe	It's not correct, I don't know who if anyone asked me to apologise, I wasn't asked to at that meeting, although I did have an apology ready from myself to Interviewee A, which was never sent due to a misunderstanding. I said to Gary Suttle, I have an apology here, he said send it to me, I sent it to his council email address, it never got there from my desktop at home, which I did send, he then emailed me back, as he was on holiday in Greece at this time, he emailed me and said I haven't had it yet at this point. I wiped it from my desk top, as I do not like clustered emails on my laptop. I didn't save it, I thought it had gone, I then redid it, but I did send to Gary with 'here are the words of apology in an email', he said yeah fantastic get rid of all the references of me and send it back. So I did send it to him and I was of the understanding that he would forward to Interviewee A, which he didn't as he was under the impression I was going to send to Interviewee A. I wasn't asked to apologise after that meeting.
Cllr O'Leary	Sorry, I was under the impression that you wrote that apology Bill, not with reference to the first complaint but for the subsequent complaint. I thought it was at the Health and Scrutiny meeting?
Cllr Pipe	Oh yes sorry I have that wrong, I am not trying to mislead you, I did not write an apology for the first meeting it was for the second Health and Scrutiny meeting.
LD	Q7a. Ok, so we will move onto the Health and Scrutiny a bit later, and to be clear, you did not make and was not asked for an apology at the Extended Children's Services Leadership meeting in May?
Cllr Pipe	No, Sorry.
JG	Q8 I also understand that there was another conversation on this day, where it is witnessed that you asked Interviewee A where they parked their car? First of all, did you ask Interviewee A this question and if so, why?
Cllr Pipe	I am not aware of that oh yeah, there is a huge shortage of car parking spaces and Interviewee A got a nice little hideaway and no one knows about it, so I asked, "where do you park your car", that was the end of the conversation, nothing else. I gave the impression I would sneak along and steal their parking space in a bit of a joke. It was only a remark and wasn't intended to upset or whatever.
JG	Q8a. Do You think this type of question did or could have upset Interviewee A?
Cllr Pipe	Well, I don't know I am not Interviewee A, I don't have a crystal ball, I didn't intend to upset them, that's all I can say.
JG	Q9. In the Complaint, I have been informed that you resigned from your role as Lead Member for Education. I understand that you held this position for a short period between the 1 st and the 19 th of May 2023. Can you explain why you resigned?
Cllr Pipe	Well, apart from this and my diary had gone from that (Hands gesture of small size) to that (hand gesture to large size). I am a single parent with 3 children and looking at diary, filling up with lots of stuff, here at County Hall, Weymouth and all over the County, I just couldn't give it the time and looking after my children which in the main is a full-time job so I resigned. This investigation was the straw that broke the camel's back, the diary, no work life balance whatsoever, this complaint isn't the reason. I am single parent with young

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	children, with the 'text redacted', and my diary, I won't have any time with them, I will need childcare in school holidays which were coming up.
JG	Q10. What discussions were held around your resignation and who were these discussion with?
Cllr Pipe	With Interviewee F, who came to my ward, and we had coffee and cakes in a local café, in my constituency, we spoke for about an hour, I could see there was something on his mind, he said sorry mate you're sacked, he lifted and shifted and off he went. He said, it's not me, it's not my decision, it came from Spencer.
LD	Q10a. The conversation with Interviewee F, you said came formally prior to your resignation, if you were never in your words "sacked" would you have still resigned?
Cllr	Yes, regardless of this conversation, I still would have resigned, that meeting with Interviewee F (Believed to be the 19 th of May 2023), I would assume it was in May, so I will have it in my diary, it was a planned meeting, it was for a catch up. Which turned out to be anything but, Interviewee F, he said it's to do with this [REDACTED] shit. I have never spoken to Spencer Flower about it, its his decision he is the Leader so that's final I wouldn't question his ability.
JG	Q11. Cllr Pipe there is also an allegation that you made a comment about a visible panty line – can you tell me whether you made this comment and if so when did you make the comment and who was the comment about?
Cllr Pipe	No, I certainly did not.
JG	Q12. A further matter in the complaint, is that at Full Council on the 13th of July, the day after the [REDACTED] [REDACTED], you [REDACTED] at the Council meeting. This has been raised as a concern that this demonstrates a specific link to the previous [REDACTED] accent incident, therefore can you please explain your reasoning for wearing the [REDACTED] tie?
Cllr Pipe	There was not a reason, as you can see, I don't [REDACTED] at the moment, but what I normally do, is keep one in my pocket. On that day I didn't have one, I was aware that the [REDACTED] flag would have some sort of allegiance to the [REDACTED], but that's only after I was given [REDACTED]. I wore an [REDACTED] [REDACTED] that didn't go too well with [REDACTED], may I add, there were four or five other people who wore same colour, why I should be singled out I don't know.
Cllr O'Leary	I gave Cllr Pipe the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] myself and 4 others, including the Vice Chairman of the Council, wore [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I come from an [REDACTED] [REDACTED] background; I don't see the [REDACTED] as an offensive holiday. For many people in [REDACTED], it's a way of a cultural event. Cllr Pipe from my understanding is not a religious person, [REDACTED].
Cllr Pipe	I am actually [REDACTED], which may offend some people now.

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Cllr O’Leary	We did wear it for [REDACTED], I don’t believe it was an offensive, Bill Pipe didn’t [REDACTED], like 4 or 5 others. [REDACTED] is a widely accepted culture for the country. I don’t believe it to be offensive. Half of us are [REDACTED] who wore [REDACTED] and like I said, its widely accepted for them the [REDACTED] culture and half the country.
JG	Q12a. Cllr O’Leary - You say you wore an [REDACTED] and other members did in the chamber and you had a spare one, do you often carry a [REDACTED]?
Cllr O’Leary	Yes, I often carry a spare tie, so I did have a spare [REDACTED].
Cllr Bill Pipe	Cllr O’Leary, I don’t think I have ever seen you without [REDACTED].
JG	Q12b. In relation to wearing an [REDACTED], were they all wearing them for the same reason or not?
Cllr O’Leary	We are conservative councillors, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for many of us its around unionism and around the history of the revolution, it’s not political to us many members on the conservative side we had it on for those reasons yes. I cannot be certain why anyone wore it really. No one raised it with me it was not inappropriate, like I say, there are cultural events, people are o [REDACTED]
JG	Q12c. To clarify Cllr Pipe, you were not wearing the [REDACTED] for any particular reason?
Cllr Bill Pipe	No, I just didn’t have [REDACTED] like you can see I have come armed today [REDACTED].
JG	Q13. I understand that near the beginning of the meeting Cllr Pipe, you raised an issue with the Chairman about an [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?
Cllr Pipe	I don’t recall that. If I raised it as it’s a security alert, it’s because there was a security issue.
Cllr O’Leary	Since around last May, we have had to raise security and things have been put in place because of past incident last May, hence the barriers at the top, security has become a bigger issue recently.
JG	Q14. Did you imply a different meaning with reference to [REDACTED], for e.g., any s [REDACTED] with reference to [REDACTED]?
Cllr Pipe	No.
JG	Q15. Have you ever discussed any incidents or issues regarding Interviewee A with anyone else?
Cllr Pipe	No never apart from my wife, Leader and the Deputy Leader and Interviewee F.
	Break at 13:12- interviewed recommenced at 13:18

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JG	Q16. Moving forward to the 11 th of September 2023, at the start of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee, I have been informed from several witnesses, that you said in a loud tone the following to Interviewee A. "Interviewee A and I hope everyone will see I didn't say that in an [REDACTED] accent"? Can I ask firstly if you said this? And if so, why?
ClIr Pipe	No, it's not, what I said was, "Good morning, Interviewee A, if you hadn't noticed that was said in an English accent", So your peoples quotes are wide to the mark.
ClIr O'Leary	I was sat next to Bill when Interviewee A walked in and as I recall he said something like "Good morning that was in an English accent".
ClIr Pipe	Around 2 to 3 minutes later, Interviewee D came up to the end of my row, forced her face forward to mine and said "Good Morning" in a very angry way.
JG	Q16a. Can I ask why you decided to say that to Interviewee A?
ClIr Pipe	I was angry at the time as the complaint as far as I knew at the time was going to be about the [REDACTED] accent, so I didn't know about any of the other things until your email. I've known Interviewee A for about 7-9 years, I've always greeted Interviewee A in that way, Interviewee A has never said anything. I was angry that the speaking to her in [REDACTED] accent had gone this far, I am assuming there was a complaint when I was relieved of my position. I was told there was a complaint about the [REDACTED] stuff, so I was just a little bit angry that it got that far. In hindsight it wasn't the right thing to do, and I did write an apology for that.
JG	Q17. Did anyone ask you to leave this meeting? If so, who?
ClIr Pipe	No, I never left with anyone I stayed all the way through I can't remember so I no idea.
ClIr O'Leary	Interviewee D came over and spoke to Interviewee F, either outside or the back of chamber and then Interviewee F spoke to Bill Pipe outside and then came back in and Bill remained present at the rest of the meeting.
ClIr Pipe	I can't remember going outside, so that's what I am saying.
JG	Q18. Did Interviewee F provide the reasons why you were asked to leave the meeting?
ClIr Pipe	I don't know as I don't remember it, if he asked me not to go back in, I wouldn't do that.
JG	Q19. The apology to Gary Suttle is this the apology you were referring to?
ClIr Pipe	Yes, it is, not to the previous one, I am sorry.
JG	Q19a. Did someone asked you to apologise?
ClIr Pipe	Yes, Gary Suttle said, you really need to apologise. I said I already got it done, it went backwards and forwards, but it never got sent. Gary Suttle said I will pass it on to Interviewee A and he was under the impression I sent it, but it never got sent. It was a full and a meaningful apology.
JG	Q19b. Do you have a record of that apology?

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ClIr Pipe	If you can get my deleted items, it does exist, I am not good on computers but if you can get it.
JG	Q19c. Would you be comfortable for me to ask Gary for a copy?
ClIr Pipe	Yes absolutely. I ended up sending it to his personal and council one, but he did end up receiving it when I sent it to his personal one.
JG	Q19d. ClIr O’Leary, as ClIr Pipe cannot remember when that meeting took place, do you have any understanding of what happened with the conversation outside of that meeting?
ClIr O’Leary	No, I don’t, no.
JG	Q20. It has also been alleged, that at a Practice Observation meeting, which you attended with a family you mimicked their [REDACTED] accent also. Is this correct?
ClIr Pipe	No, absolutely not, it was alleged that I had said the word traveller in an [REDACTED] accent but that did not happen. I said very little throughout the whole presentation, it was just communicated to me somehow, I am not aware of an [REDACTED] family there.
LD	Q20a. How was it communicated to you and by whom that you said that word?
ClIr Pipe	I don’t know who, it just came to me by someone or somehow.
JG	Q21. The comments you have made ClIr Pipe mimicking the [REDACTED] accent in relation to an officer and a family are not the expected behaviour of a Councillor of Dorset Council. Can you explain why you felt it was acceptable to make these comments using and [REDACTED] accent? Or do you accept that these comments are not within keeping with the behaviour expected of a Councillor under the Councillor Code of Conduct?
ClIr Pipe	I do now.
JG	Q23. ClIr Pipe have you ever considered how the comments you made mimicking the [REDACTED] accent would have made Interviewee A or the [REDACTED] family feel?
ClIr Pipe	Yes, she had never complained to me or asked me to stop or complained to a line manager or anything like that, so I assumed its ok with Interviewee A, so I thought its ok, something I do. Let’s say a random [REDACTED] person, I wouldn’t do it to them, it’s because I do know Interviewee A. I’ve known them for so long.
LD	Q23a. Can I ask, why do you do it?
ClIr Pipe	I know it’s not a funny, it’s more like banter, its friendship, I considered us to be friends as well as colleagues.
JG	Q24. I understand that during a conversation at an Induction Day where the data for care leavers was being discussed, it was explained that the Council has a high number of children in HMO’s (Houses of Multiple Occupation). During that conversation it has been alleged that you stated the following “oh we use to call them HOMO’s, HOMO’s is what we used to call them, we are not allowed to call them HOMO’s anymore” Please can you advise firstly if you are aware of this conversation? And what do you mean by this response?

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Cllr Pipe	Yes, I was relating it to Cllr [REDACTED], he is the Lead on Safeguarding he was at the same Induction, I said something along the lines of what you say, but it wasn't said as a joke it was fact that we can't say that anymore, its homos and hmos. I don't deny saying it.
JG	Q25. Cllr Pipe – do you understand the meaning of using the word HOMO? (an offensive word for a gay man)
Cllr Pipe	I am assuming what you are referring to it's the meaning for a homosexual.
JG	Q25a. Were you using it in that term?
Cllr Pipe	Of course, I wasn't.
JG	Q25b. So why say it? why use that terminology?
Cllr Pipe	I have no idea, its fact it's that simple. There are areas that do cover multiple occupancy, there see I cannot say it, so it's easier to say HOMO, I just use it to describe a word of multiple occupancy and in those earlier days I was just saying that what it used to be called. I was just saying you can't say it anymore, that's it.
JG	Q26. As this statement has been deemed as Homophobic (having or showing a dislike of or prejudice against gay people), do you feel that is a fair judgement, considering the terminology that has been used?
Cllr Pipe	Yes, but I think it was taken out of context, I wasn't talking about homosexual, I was talking about multiple occupancy, anybody listening to that would have known it was about housing of multiple occupancy, they are grabbing anything to beat me with at the moment.
JG	Q27. Have you been present or had any conversations with Interviewee A about her being from [REDACTED]?
Cllr Pipe	No, it may have been in a conversation many years ago I have no reason to know where she comes from.
JG	Q31. As you are aware Cllr Pipe, there are standards expected of a Councillor's conduct in the Councillor Code of Conduct. I understand that you were provided with training on the expectations within the Code of Conduct in June 2021. Within the Code of Conduct there is a section under General Conduct relating to Respect. This sets out that a Councillor should treat other councillors and members of the public with respect and treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play. Do you feel, based on the allegations that have been made about you that your conduct has fallen below that expected of a Councillor in relation to respect of employees and members of the public? (Note: from code Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack)
Cllr Pipe	Yes, I am, I don't recollect the training, but I have had training, that's a very hard question I have been doing it for so long, I will be honest and say yes.

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JG	Q31a. It's a hard question? do you mean the way you have been speaking to officers?
Cllr Pipe	I mean to Interviewee A, I feel it's acceptable in my own mind as it's got to this far, this stage, clearly in the fact now, I know I shouldn't be doing it. Yes, but out of 7,8,9 years, I thought it was ok do, yes, I do feel it falls below the conduct.
JG	Q33. The Councillor Code of Conduct also has a section for. – Bullying, Harassment, and discrimination under General Conduct. , This states that a Councillor : 2.1 I do not bully any person. 2.2 I do not harass any person. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, do you feel that your behaviours and comments amount to bullying? The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person. Do you feel that your behaviour and comments have caused distress in an officer of the Council? Do you feel that your conduct has fallen below that expected of a Councillor in relation to bullying and harassment?
Cllr Pipe	No, because I have not bullied or harassed anybody.
JG	Q35. Under discrimination the Code states - I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any Person. Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Do you feel that your behaviour and comments have discriminated against an employee of the Council. Do you feel that your conduct has fallen below that expected of a Councillor in respect of discrimination?
Cllr Pipe	No, as I have not discriminated against anybody.
JG	Q36. Cllr Pipe, how would you describe the way you have conducted yourself in relation to mimicking of the [REDACTED] accent to an employee of the council if you do not consider this to be bullying, harassment or discrimination?
Cllr Pipe	I don't see me greeting an officer in a mock [REDACTED] accent falls into any of the categories, due to the length of time and years I have been greeting her in that style, that she has never complained about it.
Cllr O'Leary	My personal opinion, Bill Pipe doing the accent, he did not mean it in a malicious or hurtful way, it's a sense of humour, I don't want to say it's his generation, his behaviour, once was acceptable, is no longer acceptable. That hasn't got through to Cllr Pipe in that way, I don't believe it's to do with his intention, like I say he has done a West Country accent to me, it's his way. I have never seen him bully or be nasty to anybody. The "banter" that is no longer culturally acceptable in that regard.

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LD	Q36a. Can you see Cllr Pipe and Cllr O’Leary, why another person that this is s aimed at, or a third party would deem it as discrimination or racist?
Cllr O’Leary	I see from a third-party point of view, I see it’s a generation gap with a cultural gap, what is acceptable, I understand an officer may take that in a different way, it’s from people’s perspective, he didn’t do it in a way to cause offence and harm.
Cllr Pipe	Interviewee A would always take my greeting with a smile, and a how are you sort of thing.
JG	Q37. Cllr Pipe can I confirm you are aware of the Members and Officers Protocol?
Cllr Pipe	I believe so, yes.
JG	Q38. The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another in such a way that ensures that the Council runs smoothly. The relationship between Members and Officers is based a number of principles, one of which is dealings between Members and officers are based on mutual trust and respect. Can you explain how you feel it is acceptable to mimic the [REDACTED] accent of an officer of the Council when one of the principles is that dealings between Members and officers should be based in respect?
Cllr Pipe	I don’t think, I disrespected Interviewee A, I have the greatest respect for Interviewee A, we have work together for years on the same things. I don’t see that at all I am sorry.
JG	Q39. Do you accept Cllr Pipe that you have breached the code of conduct for councillors?
Cllr Pipe	In retrospect yes, but not intentionally maliciously. It is getting too much for me now.
JG	Q39a. Are you ok Cllr Pipe?
Cllr Pipe	It is getting too much for me now.
JG	Q40. Is there anything else Councillor Pipe that you would like to discuss today that we have not covered?
Cllr Pipe	No.
Cllr O’Leary	I think some training learning, the times have change, there are different ways of doing things, he’s already lost his position, he’s barred, it has cause embarrassment, he has paid a price for it, he has learnt his lesson, I’ve never heard the [REDACTED] accent stuff, but I was present in the Health and Scrutiny stuff, Cllr Pipe realised as soon as he said it, which he has learnt from it.
LD	Q40a. Would you like to tell us, how this has affected you Cllr Pipe?
Cllr Pipe	Its affected me a great deal, mentally, physically, reputationally, [REDACTED] for, my relationships which my children, that is suffering. I feel that the complaints process hasn’t been followed, in the fact I have not been informed by anyone or Democratic Services or anybody else about the substance of the complaint, like, I got your email, I also think to be barred from County Hall until next May, which is when it will be reviewed, its ridiculous. It’s like that guilty until proven innocent. Its turning

Record of Interview

	into a witch hunt against me, anyone who wants to jump onto the bandwagon. I am sorry to say that, but it is how it feels. If you see the body of my apology, you will understand a lot more of what I have said to you today.				
JG/LD	JG Explained how the interview notes would be sent using restrict email – LD – due to Cllr Pipe’s issues with email, once the interview notes have been sent, I will contact Cllr Pipe on his mobile, as a way of confirmation that he has received the interview notes.				
	Addendum				
	I confirm that the interview notes constitute a fair and accurate record of the interview that has taken place.	Interviewee Signature:	Not Returned	Date:	
		Interviewer Signature:	J Gooding	Date:	15-11-23

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Local Government Association

Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020

Joint statement

The role of councillor across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviors and responsibilities associated with the role. Our conduct as an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be putting themselves forward to become councillors.

As councillors, we represent local residents, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area; taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.

Importantly, we should be able to undertake our role as a councillor without being intimidated, abused, bullied or threatened by anyone, including the general public.

This Code has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA) has developed this Model Councillor Code of Conduct, in association with key partners and after extensive consultation with the sector, as part of its work on supporting all tiers of local government to continue to aspire to high standards of leadership and performance. It is a template for councils to adopt in whole and/or with local amendments.

All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

The LGA will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, social media and changes in legislation. The LGA can also offer support, training and mediation to councils and councillors on the application of the Code and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the county associations of local councils can offer advice and support to town and parish councils.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a “councillor” means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A “co-opted member” is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as “a person who is not a member of the authority but who

- a) is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
- b) is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;

and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee”.

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, “local authority” includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles.

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor-officer protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

- a. given to me in confidence by anyone**
- b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless**
 - i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;**
 - ii. I am required by law to do so;**
 - iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or**
 - iv. the disclosure is:**
 - 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and**
 - 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and**
 - 3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.**

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in you or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and**
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority .

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in Table 1, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

- 10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.**
- 10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.**
- 10.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.**

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

Appendices

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B Registering

interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable pecuniary interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in Table 2), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it

is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
 - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - b. a financial interest or well-being of a friend, relative, close associate; or
 - c. a body included in those you need to disclose under Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

9. Where a matter **affects** your financial interest or well-being:
 - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

10. Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must make sure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of your interest.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain. [Any unpaid directorship.]
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the

	<p>councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council —</p> <p>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</p> <p>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</p>
Land and Property	<p>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council.</p> <p>'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.</p>
Licenses	<p>Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer</p>
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)—</p> <p>(a) the landlord is the council; and</p> <p>(b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.</p>
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where—</p> <p>(a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and</p> <p>(b) either—</p> <p>(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</p> <p>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were</p>

	spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

* 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registerable Interests

<p>You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) any body of which you are in general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority b) any body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) any body directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)
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Appendix C – the Committee on Standards in Public Life

The LGA has undertaken this review whilst the Government continues to consider the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report on [Local Government Ethical Standards](#). If the Government chooses to implement any of the recommendations, this could require a change to this Code.

The recommendations cover:

- Recommendations for changes to the Localism Act 2011 to clarify in law when the Code of Conduct applies
- The introduction of sanctions
- An appeals process through the Local Government Ombudsman
- Changes to the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012
- Updates to the Local Government Transparency Code
- Changes to the role and responsibilities of the Independent Person
- That the criminal offences in the Localism Act 2011 relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests should be abolished

The Local Government Ethical Standards report also includes Best Practice recommendations. These are:

Best practice 1: Local authorities should include prohibitions on bullying and harassment in codes of conduct. These should include a definition of bullying and harassment, supplemented with a list of examples of the sort of behaviour covered by such a definition.

Best practice 2: Councils should include provisions in their code of conduct requiring councillors to comply with any formal standards investigation and prohibiting trivial or malicious allegations by councillors.

Best practice 3: Principal authorities should review their code of conduct each year and regularly seek, where possible, the views of the public, community organisations and neighbouring authorities.

Best practice 4: An authority's code should be readily accessible to both councillors and the public, in a prominent position on a council's website and available in council premises.

Best practice 5: Local authorities should update their gifts and hospitality register at least once per quarter, and publish it in an accessible format, such as CSV.

Best practice 6: Councils should publish a clear and straightforward public interest test against which allegations are filtered.

Best practice 7: Local authorities should have access to at least two Independent Persons.

Best practice 8: An Independent Person should be consulted as to whether to undertake a formal investigation on an allegation, and should be given the option to

review and comment on allegations which the responsible officer is minded to dismiss as being without merit, vexatious, or trivial.

Best practice 9: Where a local authority makes a decision on an allegation of misconduct following a formal investigation, a decision notice should be published as soon as possible on its website, including a brief statement of facts, the provisions of the code engaged by the allegations, the view of the Independent Person, the reasoning of the decision-maker, and any sanction applied.

Best practice 10: A local authority should have straightforward and accessible guidance on its website on how to make a complaint under the code of conduct, the process for handling complaints, and estimated timescales for investigations and outcomes.

Best practice 11: Formal standards complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor towards a clerk should be made by the chair or by the parish council, rather than the clerk in all but exceptional circumstances.

Best practice 12: Monitoring Officers' roles should include providing advice, support and management of investigations and adjudications on alleged breaches to parish councils within the remit of the principal authority. They should be provided with adequate training, corporate support and resources to undertake this work.

Best practice 13: A local authority should have procedures in place to address any conflicts of interest when undertaking a standards investigation. Possible steps should include asking the Monitoring Officer from a different authority to undertake the investigation.

Best practice 14: Councils should report on separate bodies they have set up or which they own as part of their annual governance statement and give a full picture of their relationship with those bodies. Separate bodies created by local authorities should abide by the Nolan principle of openness and publish their board agendas and minutes and annual reports in an accessible place.

Best practice 15: Senior officers should meet regularly with political group leaders or group whips to discuss standards issues.

The LGA has committed to reviewing the Code on an annual basis to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

MEMBERS AND OFFICERS PROTOCOL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The conduct of both Members and officers is governed by the Codes of Conduct detailed in Part 5 of the Council's Constitution. The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another in such a way that ensures that the Council runs smoothly.
- 1.2 The relationship between Members and Officers is based on the following principles:
- (a) the Council is a democratically-elected local authority delivering a range of services to the people of Dorset;
 - (b) the Council is a single entity;
 - (c) the separate functions of the Council are part of the Council as a corporate body;
 - (d) in everything they do, Members and officers of the Council must act within the law and comply with relevant codes of conduct;
 - (e) dealings between Members and officers are based on mutual trust and respect;
 - (f) the relationship must exist on a professional basis only so that the ability of an officer to deal impartially with Members or political groups cannot be questioned;
 - (g) officers should not approach Members on matters to do with employment matters except as agreed by the Head of Paid Service.
- 1.3 Officers and Members each have their own roles to play in the work of the Council and care should be taken to avoid one encroaching upon the other.

The role of Members

- (a) To provide the political direction and leadership of the Council. Members are accountable through the ballot box for their actions as Members.
- (b) As part of the controlling group to see that services are delivered by officers in accordance with the policies and plans approved by the Council.
- (c) To receive appropriate professional advice from officers and to have that advice recorded, so that all Members are fully aware of the implications of their decisions and have the assurance that their decisions comply with the law.
- (d) To make reasonable comment and ask questions about the Council's decisions and performance both at formal meetings and informally. An officer's seniority and area of responsibility will determine what are reasonable comments and questions.

The role of Officers

- (a) To serve the whole Council as a single corporate body while recognising the differences between the Council's functions.

- (b) To provide wherever practicable, support to all Members in their representational role and act to uphold the rights of Members in law and under this Constitution.
- (c) To take decisions within their area of responsibility which have been delegated and/or nominated to them but recognising that, where functions have not been delegated/nominated to officers, it is the right of Members to take the final decisions in the light of officers' advice.
- (d) To provide factual, honest and objective advice. The advice and the actions officers take should be politically neutral and should serve the interests of the Council as a whole. Officers do not give advice on party political matters.

2. Officer advice to Members and Party Groups

- 2.1 For the proper functioning of the Council as a whole, officers will normally be permitted to share information freely between them.
- 2.2 Where the information has been given on the basis of party political confidentiality:
 - (a) officers will respect that confidentiality unless they believe that any action appears to be in conflict with the law, or would amount to an abuse of the processes of the Council and in those circumstances may share that information with other officers where they believe it to be necessary to check the legality, financial probity or procedural regularity of any action disclosed by that information.
 - (b) The request for party political confidentiality will be honoured by any officers with whom the information is shared.
- 2.3 Where party political confidentiality has been requested, officers may invite those Members requesting confidentiality to agree to the information being shared with the other political groups on the grounds that it would assist the more effective functioning of the Council; however, in the absence of any such agreement to waive confidentially, officers will continue to respect it.
- 2.4 Where there is a change in the controlling party, officers will act in relation to the new controlling party and opposition parties in the same way as they did for the old and will continue to respect any continuing party political confidentiality.
- 2.5 Officers are not required to attend political party group meetings. They will only do so by invitation, with the express authority of the Chief Executive, an Executive Director and/or a Corporate Director. The Chief Executive, Executive Director and/or Corporate Director will have the right to nominate other officers to attend at his sole discretion.
- 2.6 Where it is possible that persons other than Members will be present at a political party group meeting to which an officer has been invited, the Chief Executive, Executive Director and/or Corporate Director will be informed before the meeting, and s/he will take this into account in arriving at his/her decision.

3. Support services to Members and Party Groups

- 3.1 Support services and resources must only be used on Council business and should never be used in connection with any political or campaigning activity or for private purposes.

4. Members' access to information and to Council documents

- 4.1 Members have various statutory and common law rights to access information.

Members may ask the Chief Executive, an Executive Director and/or any Corporate Director or other officers nominated by them for such information, explanation and advice as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as a Member. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent.

- 4.2 A Member does not have a right to "a roving commission" to examine documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient. The crucial question is the determination of the "need to know". This question must initially be determined by Officer holding the document in question. In the event of dispute, the matter shall be determined by the Head of Paid Service, an Executive Director or a Corporate Director,
- 4.3 In addition to the above a Member may request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, and various other legislative provisions including the Local Government Acts of 1972 and 2000 provide a statutory right of access to documents. Any document which is in the Council's possession and contains material relating to any business to be transacted at a meeting of the Council, a Committee or Sub Committee is to be open to inspection by any Member. However, there is no right of inspection where it appears to the Chief Executive that a document discloses certain classes of exempt information as set out in Access to Information Procedure Rules.
- 4.4 The Code of Conduct limits the ability of a Member to disclose confidential information. Further information of rights of access can be found in the Access to Information Procedure Rules – Part 2 of the Constitution.

5. **Correspondence**

- 5.1 Openness and transparency should underpin the work of the Council. Accordingly, blind copies ie correspondence where some of the intended recipients are deliberately hidden from others, should not be sent.
- 5.2 Official letters on behalf of the Council should normally be sent in the name of the appropriate Officer, rather than in the name of a Member. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (eg, representations to a Government Minister) for a letter to appear in the name of a Member, but this should be the exception rather than the norm. Letters which, for example, create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a Member.

6. **Involvement of Ward Members**

- 6.1 Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a local issue, all the Members representing the Ward or Wards affected shall normally, as a matter of course, be invited to attend the meeting. Similarly, whenever the Council undertakes any form of consultative exercise on a local issue, the Ward Members shall normally be notified at the outset of the exercise.

Jacqui Gooding

From: Complaints
Sent: 03 August 2023 16:35
To: Cllr. Bill Pipe
Subject: FW: Formal complaint relating to the behaviour of Cllr Bill Pipe

Dear Cllr Pipe

Firstly my apologies for approaching you on a complaints matter

I regret to advise that we are in receipt of a complaint against you that alleges a breach of the Code of Conduct. This has been passed to an Independent Person and verified as a possible breach that requires investigation.

We will of course let you know the outcome once the investigating officer has completed their interviews and finalised their report

The Monitoring Officer is aware of the complaint (which features below) and will be kept informed of the progress. As this is now in the hands of an external independent investigator there should be no need to challenge this matter directly with the complainants

Yours sincerely

Antony Bygrave
Assurance Complaints Manager
Assurance
Dorset Council

[01305 225076](tel:01305225076)
dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



From: Cllr. Les Fry <cllrles.fry@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2023 8:12 pm
To: Jonathan Mair <Jonathan.Mair@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Cc: Cllr. Nick Ireland <cllrnick.ireland@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>; Cllr. Clare Sutton <cllrclare.sutton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Subject: Formal complaint relating to the behaviour of Cllr Bill Pipe

Dear Jonathan

In October 2020 Cllr Bill Pipe was removed from the police and Crime panel for inappropriate comments about stop and search made during a meeting.

On the 25th April 2023 we were made aware of a Cabinet Reshuffle

<https://news.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/2023/04/27/dorset-council-cabinet-reshuffle/only> by way of public press release. Cllr Bill Pipe was appointed as lead member for Education.

A few days after Annual Full Council on the 11th May 2023 through conversations we heard that Cllr Pipe had resigned. Information then reached us that he had been in a meeting relating to education and had mimicked the Irish accent of a Senior member of Dorset Council, when asked to apologise by an officer of a higher position he had refused. He had then resigned saying he did not want the role anyway.

An Echo article - <https://www.dorsetecho.co.uk/news/23611259.councillor-steps-top-education-role/> - 26.6.23 reported that Cllr Pipe had resigned less than 3 weeks later. This, just weeks after the resignation, was the first members (or most members) had heard about it.

Other than this press report nothing has been made public and no explanation offered to Group leaders about why a member with a history of inappropriate behaviour was appointed in the first place to Education and why subsequently he resigned. We feel that Cllr Pipe has seriously undermined the good working relationship between members and officers and his ongoing behaviour has brought the Council and position of elected member into disrepute.

We do know who the two officers are, but out of interest and respect to them have not approached them.

We appreciate that there is a time lag on this matter, but as the issue has not been formally raised, we have to act with the information that we have.

1. We feel that Cllr Pipe has brought the Council into disrepute and that he should formally be held to account.
2. Information should be provided to Group leaders with an explanation of what action has been taken to redress Cllr Pipe's behaviour

Can our complaint, the incident and the outcome or any action taken please be independently investigated and reviewed.

Submitted Jointly by

Cllr Nick Ireland – Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Cllr Les Fry – Leader of the Independent Group

Cllr Clare Sutton – Leader of the Green party



Jacqui Gooding

Subject: FW: Important; From the Monitoring Officer FW: Duty of Care

From: Jonathan Mair**Sent:** Friday, October 20, 2023 7:23 AM**To:** Cllr. Bill Pipe <cllrbill.pipe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>**Cc:** Matt Prosser <matt.prosser@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>; Cllr. Spencer Flower <cllrspencer.flower@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>**Subject:** Important; From the Monitoring Officer FW: Duty of Care

Dear Cllr Pipe

On 18 September 2023 the Chief Executive sent you the email below setting out steps that he was taking as part of his duty of care towards staff. For the reasons set out in his email the Chief Executive asked the following:

1. *That you do not contact any officer in Children's Services other than the Executive Director, Theresa Leavy. The Executive Director will ensure that you receive a response to any questions or concerns that you raise but contact must be through the Executive Director only or, in her absence, through me/the monitoring officer.*
2. *That any meetings with any officers are by appointment only, agreed in advance.*
3. *That you do not enter County Hall or the Council's other offices, other than to attend Full Council or committee meetings or to attend a pre-arranged appointment with an officer.*
4. *On those occasions when you do attend Council or committee meetings or a pre-arranged appointment you should restrict yourself to the Council Chamber, relevant committee room or the arrangements made for the appointment in advance.*

To reinforce these points and as part of his duty of care to all staff, the Chief Executive informed you that your secure area entry card would be deactivated and that it would not therefore be possible for you to access staff office areas except by prior appointment. He concluded by asking that you respect these limitations on your contact with employees and your access to their place of work and that you do not ask other councillors or officers to admit you to secure areas.

Despite the very clear position set out in the Chief Executive's email I am told that you came to County Hall yesterday and:

- Without any prior appointment entered the secure office area to try to meet with staff
- Gained entry to the secure area by asking another councillor to admit you
- Returned later and told a member of staff that your access card was not working, as a result of which they arranged for your access card to be re-activated by the facilities team.

All of the above are in direct contravention of and show no respect for the reasonable measures put in place by the Chief Executive to protect staff to whom he owes a duty of care. More than that, you actively persuaded a member of staff to re-activate an access card that the Chief Executive had expressly told you in his email would be deactivated and why.

As a result of your actions yesterday your access card has again been de-activated and the Facilities Manager has been instructed that it is only to be re-activated at my request, at the request of the Service Manager for Democratic and Elections or that of the Chief Executive. We have respected your privacy by not informing other councillors that they should not admit you to staff areas. If though you persist in gaining entry via other councillors you will put me in the position of having to consider telling that they must not to use their access cards to admit you.

The Chief Executive phrased his email carefully and respectfully, ending by asking for your co-operation. In view of what happened yesterday he and I have agreed that I must be more direct. As a councillor you are entitled to attend Full Council and committee meetings in the Council Chamber at County Hall and officers are taking no steps to prevent you from doing this. Uncontrolled access to staff and to their offices is not though an entitlement and I must insist that until further notice you comply with the points in the Chief Executive's email as requirements upon you.

Jonathan Mair
Director of Legal & Democratic (Monitoring Officer)
Senior Leadership Team
Dorset Council

[01305 838074](tel:01305838074)
dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



From: Matt Prosser <matt.prosser@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Sent: Monday, September 18, 2023 5:47 pm
To: Cllr. Bill Pipe <cllrbill.pipe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Cc: Jonathan Mair <Jonathan.Mair@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>; Cllr. Spencer Flower <cllrspencer.flower@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Subject: Duty of Care

Dear Cllr Pipe

I understand from the Leader of Council that following an incident that occurred last Monday, immediately before the People and Health Scrutiny Committee, you have sent a letter of apology to those colleagues concerned.

An apology, whilst welcome, still leaves us in a position where this and other recent incidents, including that which is currently subject to a standards investigation, have led to a sense of some colleagues feeling significantly undermined by you, lacking confidence that you are able to treat them respectfully and fairly and feel unable to interact with you as a result.

The Council owes a duty of care towards all its employees. That duty of care is discharged through me as the Head of Paid Service, and this means that in the circumstances I must take appropriate steps to protect colleagues. In this instance I consider this to mean ensuring that you do not interact with officer colleagues and accordingly I ask:

1. That you do not contact any officer in Children's Services other than the Executive Director, Theresa Leavy. The Executive Director will ensure that you receive a response to any questions or concerns that you raise

but contact must be through the Executive Director only or, in her absence, through me/the monitoring officer.

2. That any meetings with any officers are by appointment only, agreed in advance.
3. That you do not enter County Hall or the Council's other offices, other than to attend Full Council or committee meetings or to attend a pre-arranged appointment with an officer.
4. On those occasions when you do attend Council or committee meetings or a pre-arranged appointment you should restrict yourself to the Council Chamber, relevant committee room or the arrangements made for the appointment in advance.

To reinforce these points and as part of my duty of care to all staff, your secure area entry card will be deactivated, and you will not be able access staff office areas except by prior appointment. Before taking these steps, I have consulted Jonathan Mair, as Monitoring Officer. Jonathan has advised that the steps I am taking are both lawful and appropriate given the Council's duty of care owed towards its employees. Specifically, this is not a sanction but a measure to protect staff to whom the Council owes a duty of care.

I will review the need for the continuation of these steps following the outcome of the elections in May 2024. In the meantime, I ask that you respect these limitations on your contact with employees and your access to their place of work and that you do not ask other councillors or officers to admit you to secure areas.

I would appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

Matt
Matt Prosser
Chief Executive
Dorset Council

dorsetcouncil.gov.uk



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Jacqui Gooding

From: Cllr. Spencer Flower <cllrspencer.flower@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2023 12:50 PM
To: Jonathan Mair <Jonathan.Mair@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Interviewee A

Dear Jonthan
The emails I mentioned earlier.
Thanks
Spencer

From: Cllr. Spencer Flower
Sent: Monday, November 6, 2023 6:28 AM
To: Cllr. Bill Pipe <cllrbill.pipe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Cc: Cllr. Gary Suttle <cllrgary.suttle@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Interviewee A

Morning Bill

As mentioned, when you met Gary and I last week here is the email I sent to you back in September

Kind regards
Spencer

From: Cllr. Spencer Flower
Sent: Friday, September 15, 2023 4:42 PM
To: Cllr. Bill Pipe <cllrbill.pipe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Cc: Cllr. Gary Suttle <cllrgary.suttle@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Interviewee A

Hello Bill

I think your words are fine as drafted.

Suggest you write to Interviewee A copy Theresa.

Kind regards
Spencer

Having known you for eight or nine years and worked with you at District, County & Unitary level, I have almost always addressed you in a fake Irish accent; not to belittle you or to offend you, but in a humorous way. As you have never complained to me or to anyone else during that time, I assumed [wrongly as it happens] that you took it in the manner that it was addressed to you and not in an offensive way.

For this, I am genuinely and deeply sorry. I also apologise unreservedly for my comments to you after I greeted you on Monday by pointing out that I was speaking in an English accent.

We have worked successfully together for many years, and I would like this to continue, so can we draw a line under this sorry episode and resume a more professional relationship together?

Yours most sincerely

Jacqui Gooding

Subject: Restrict

From: Bill Pipe [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2023 4:06 PM
To: Jacqui Gooding <jacqui.gooding@swapaudit.co.uk>
Subject: Re: FW: Restrict

Prior to tomorrows noon deadline for me to accept your findings, I reluctantly accept those findings, but should point out that in my opinion, I think the complaints are malicious and politically motivated and that the complainants were encourages to complain by a third party, an officer of the SLT.

Cllr Bill Pipe

On 07/12/2023 18:23, Jacqui Gooding wrote:

Dear Councillor Pipe,

I have been informed by the Monitoring Officer that you are allowed 10 working days to respond. Please could I therefore ask for any response by 21st December 2023.

I apologise for the confusion.

Kind Regards

Jacqui

Jacqui Gooding CMIIA, QIAL, ACFE

Assistant Director – Counter Fraud and Investigations

SWAP Internal Audit Services

Phone: HO: 020 8142 5030

Mobile: 07872 500675

Email: jacqui.gooding@swapaudit.co.uk

Confidential Reporting Line: 020 8142 8462 or

Email: confidential@swapaudit.co.uk



www.swapaudit.co.uk

From: Jacqui Gooding
Sent: Thursday, December 7, 2023 10:31 AM
To: Cllr. Bill Pipe <cllrbill.pipe@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk>
Cc: Bill Pipe - DC - Audit and Governance Committee Member [REDACTED]
Subject: Restrict

CONFIDENTIAL

Dorset Council – Complaint No. COM/00005980

Dear Councillor Pipe,

I am providing you with a copy of my report on conclusion of my investigation of Complaint No. COM/00005980 and the supporting interview records and documents.

This is to give you an opportunity to comment if you feel there are any factual inaccuracies in the report. You are not however able to comment on my findings/conclusions.

Please can you respond to me by 12pm on Monday 11th December 2023. If I do not hear from you by Monday 11th December 12pm I will assume you have no comments to make.

Please can I remind you that the report and supporting documents should be treated confidentially.

Kind Regards

Jacqui

Jacqui Gooding CMIIA, QIAL, ACFE
Assistant Director – Counter Fraud and
Investigations
SWAP Internal Audit Services
Phone: HO: 020 8142 5030
Mobile: 07872 500675
Email: jacqui.gooding@swapaudit.co.uk
Confidential Reporting Line: 020 8142
8462 or
Email: confidential@swapaudit.co.uk



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