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AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (HEARING) SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 17 AUGUST 2026

Present: Cllrs Ray Bryan, Beryl Ezzard and Andy Todd

Apologies: None

Also present: Mike Powell (Independent Person), Cllr A Hollingshead (Complainant)

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Grace Evans (Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mary Dolley (Investigating Officer) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer) and Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer)

OPENING THE MEETING

The Senior Democratic and Governance Officer opened the meeting and introduced the sub-committee members, the Deputy Monitoring Officer as advisor to the sub-committee and herself as clerk to the sub-committee.

1. Election of Chair

It was proposed by R Bryan seconded by B Ezzard

Decision

That A Todd be elected Chair of the Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-committee for this meeting.

2. Apologies

The Chair confirmed that all members of the sub-committee were present.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Exempt Business

The sub-committee agreed that the meeting would be held in public.

5. Code of Conduct Complaint 1

The Chair introduced all parties relevant to the complaint.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised the sub-committee that the Subject Member, Councillor P Yeo was not in attendance at the meeting and asked that the sub-committee consider if they wished to continue the hearing in his absence. Reference was made to Local Government Association (LGA) guidance on code of conduct complaints, which stated that if a subject member was unable to attend the hearing on a specified date, the sub-committee could agree to hold the hearing on a different date, provided they were satisfied that the Subject Member had given an acceptable reason. Where an acceptable reason was not given or no reply provided within a specified time, the hearing should proceed and the sub-committee should consider the report in the Subject Members' absence. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Subject Member had been made aware of the hearing date on 23 June 2026. On 24 July 2026, the Subject Member had requested the hearing to be postponed due to work commitments and personal circumstances. The Deputy Monitoring Officer had responded to the Subject Member on 29 July 2026 to confirm that the sub-committee were minded, after discussion, to proceed with the hearing date. The sub-committee felt the Subject Member had been provided with sufficient time to make other arrangements or provide earlier notification that he was unable to attend. In response to a question, it was confirmed that an email had been received at 12.35pm today advising that the Subject Member would not be in attendance due to work commitments and personal circumstances.

The sub-committee agreed that the hearing would continue.

M Dolley, Investigating Officer presented her report in respect of complaints made against Shaftesbury Town Council Councillor Yeo (the Subject Member) by Shaftesbury Town Council Councillor Hollingshead (the Complainant).

The Investigating Officer provided detail of the complaints received which alleged a breach of paragraphs 5 (disrepute), 6 (use of position) and 9 (registration and declaration of specified interests) of the Shaftesbury Town Council code of conduct. The complaints had been investigated in accordance with Dorset Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints.

To investigate the complaints, the Investigating Officer had taken into consideration the following evidence:

- The complaints and various screenshots that accompanied them
- Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct and Standing Orders
- Agendas and minutes of the two relevant town council meetings
- The notice given by the Subject Member to Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer of the interests required to be registered under s.30 of the Localism Act 2011
- Various emails as referred to in the report
- The guidance issued by the Local Government Association which supported the model code of conduct on which the town council's code was closely modelled and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights

- Interviews with the complainant and the subject member (statements contained within the report) and further statements made by the Subject Member.

The complaints were set out in full in the report and the Investigating Officer took the sub-committee through the main points arising.

The complaints related to Shaftesbury Town Council meetings held on 17 December 2024 and 11 March 2025 and the discussions that took place in relation to aspects of the development by the town council of a parcel of land at Mampitts Lane, Shaftesbury, using developer funding contributions made in connection with residential and associated development of that part of the town.

The Investigating Officer noted that the complaints as originally made, referred to breaches of the code relating to a failure to disclose a pecuniary interest. It was noted that Dorset Council could not investigate a complaint relating to a disclosable pecuniary interest due to s34 of the Localism Act 2011. The matter had been referred to the Monitoring Officer who, in consultation with the Independent Person, had decided that the investigation should proceed on the basis of a possible breach of the code relating to the disclosure of a registrable other interest.

The findings section of the report set out the interests registered by the Subject Member when elected to the town council and described the relevant provisions of Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011. In addition, it referred to the code and the ancillary provisions in the town council's standing orders related to the disclosure of interests and the obtaining of dispensations and to the Nolan Principles of Public Life relating to integrity and openness. The remainder of the section gave a detailed account of the discussion of the Mampitts Lane project at the two town council meetings that gave rise to the complaints and a description of the extensive correspondence that took place between the Subject Member, the town clerk at the time and Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer, about the registration and declaration of interests.

The Investigating Officer provided an overview of the conclusions set out in the report, which included her comments on the comments made by the Subject Member, both in response to the draft report and on the statement submitted by him in advance of this meeting. The Investigating Officer had concluded that the Subject Member had brought Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute and was therefore in breach of paragraph 5 of the town council's code of conduct. In respect of the other aspects of the complaints, the Investigating Officer had concluded that the Subject Member had not acted in breach of paragraph 6 of the town council's code of conduct. In respect of the complaint relating to paragraph 9 of the town council code of conduct, the Investigating Officer had concluded that the Subject Member's conduct amounted to a breach of paragraph 9 of the town council's code of conduct and provided her reasoning for this conclusion.

The Investigating Officer confirmed that she had taken the Subject Member's Article 10 enhanced protection of freedom of expression into account in

reaching her conclusions noting the right was subject to formalities, conditions and restrictions as prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society for the protection of the reputation or rights of others. The Investigating Officer acknowledged the case law referred to in the Subject Member's responses and referred to the case of *Dennehy* where the Council's finding of breach was effectively upheld. [*R (Dennehy) v London Borough of Ealing* 2013 EWHC 4102 (Admin)]. Despite a broad interpretation of "political speech" the Investigating Officer did not consider the Subject Member's comments during the town council meetings were political or acceptable and remained of the view that in finding breach, the Subject Member's right to freedom of expression would not be unlawfully interfered with.

The Chair asked the Investigating Officer if she was calling any witnesses.

In response, the Investigating Officer asked the Complainant that if, having seen the report and the comments made on behalf of the Subject Member about the report, he wished to change or clarify anything in the statement made when he was interviewed by the Investigating Officer. The Complainant confirmed that there was no reason for him to alter or change anything that he was aware of. He noted that if there was any error or discrepancy, this could be flagged with him.

The Chair opened the meeting up for questions.

In response to a question from R Bryan, the Investigating Officer stated that, as far as she was aware, no dispensation had been sought from the Subject Member.

In response to a question from R Bryan, the Investigating Officer provided her understanding on the role of the community trust, which had changed to a charitable incorporated organisation, as referred to in the report.

In response to a question from A Todd, the Complainant noted the issues that the town council had had and the numerous challenges, including the Mampitts community hub which had been the major focus of the Subject Member's debate at full council meetings. He noted that the majority of councillors followed the code of conduct and that he found it abnormal that councillors didn't follow rules when they were clearly set out and also mapped out by both the previous and current town clerks and monitoring officer. In response to a follow-up question from A Todd, the Complainant confirmed that each May, the code of conduct was passed round for councillors to sign as well as the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils statement of values. In addition, a statement of the code of conduct and Nolan Principles was included on agenda packs and stated by chairs at the beginning of meetings.

In response to a question from B Ezzard, the Complainant noted that he was not aware of the Subject Member making an apology at any time to anyone.

The Investigating Officer referred the sub-committee to statements made by the Subject Member, included in the report, and noted her recollection that the Subject Member had reiterated in these that he had done nothing wrong.

In response to a question from R Bryan, the Complainant noted that he was not aware that a dispensation had been sought in respect of the matters referred to in the complaints or at any other time, and that the most action taken by the Subject Member was to declare that he was a director trustee, as at the time.

The Independent Person confirmed that he had no questions at this point.

In response to a question from A Todd, the Deputy Monitoring Officer provided detail of a deviation in wording from the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct within the Shaftesbury Town Council code of conduct relating to the section on declarations of interest. The slightly different wording included in the Shaftesbury Town Council code of conduct had led to some comments and responses made on behalf of the Subject Member. The LGA model wording required Other Registrable Interests to be declared and a councillor to leave for debate and vote unless they had a dispensation to stay and take part for agenda items which directly related to or which affected their Other Registrable Interests. The Shaftesbury Town Council Code required only for Other Registrable Interests to be declared and for the councillor to leave unless they had a dispensation for agenda items which directly related to their Other Registrable Interests. The wider context of the Code still applied, which required councillors to consider declaring interests, including where they had a greater interest than a member of the public.

In response to a question from A Todd, the Deputy Monitoring Officer noted that due to the Subject Member's position as a trustee, he was required to prioritise his duties to the trust, whose purpose was to promote, develop and manage a hall or hub for the community. This conflict with his councillor duties was referred to in the investigation report, and the Investigating Officer's reference to progress in one project meaning that the other project would not progress. This could have been resolved by seeking a dispensation. For each occasion where there was an item on an agenda relating to the Mampitts project, it would be for the Subject Member to make a decision as to whether he had a sufficient interest to declare and what action to take.

In response to a question from A Todd, the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the duty to disclose an interest or seek a dispensation was a decision for the councillor. The councillor could take advice from the Monitoring Officer but there could be no instruction, direction or order from the Monitoring Officer.

In response to a question from A Todd relating to a position where there was a direct conflict, the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that on matters related to the trust, as a trustee, this would take precedence for the Subject Member, as he owed a duty to the trust that he chaired.

In response to a question from A Todd, the Independent Person confirmed that a councillor's first duty was to their role as a councillor, in this case to Shaftesbury Town Council, and should operate in accordance with standing orders that apply to the position.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2.44pm. Members of the sub-committee, the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Independent Person and the Senior Democratic and Governance Officer left the room in order for the sub-committee to make a decision on breach in private.

(During the deliberation, the Deputy Monitoring Officer provided the sub-committee with the following information:

A recap of the Code of Conduct wording for paragraph 5; disrepute and recap of the main points of LGA guidance on that paragraph.

A recap of Article 10 European Convention on Human Rights, which protect rights to freedom of expression and information, the right to hold opinions, receive and impart information and ideas. It protects popular and unpopular expression including speech, what is said and the form it is expressed in. These rights are enhanced for elected politicians and acceptable levels of criticism are higher for elected politicians. This is not an absolute freedom of expression and restrictions may be imposed to ensure conduct of public life and debate do not fall below a standard that would endanger public confidence in democracy. In the political context, a degree of the immoderate, offensive, shocking, disturbing, exaggerated, provocative, polemical, colourful, emotive, non-rational and aggressive language, misrepresentation or untruth, that would not be acceptable outside that context, is tolerated. Hate speech is not protected, including against personal characteristics. And the enhanced protection does not cover gratuitous personal comment or indulging in offensive abuse. Consideration of Article 10 rights is case specific. Finding of breach or the imposing of a sanction must be sufficiently important to justify limiting a councillor's protected right to freedom of expression. It must be proportionate to the aim of protecting the council or other councillors.

Article 10 case law

- Councillor deliberately misrepresented motivation and intentions of other councillors. Councillor entitled to the enhanced protection which outweighed the need to protect the reputation of other councillors (Robinson)
- Offensive comments about a sector of the community. Committee were entitled to find a failure to treat with respect and that conduct had brought council and office of councillor into disrepute. Breach of Art 10 justified (Dennehy)
- Posted sarcastic and mocking comments about running a council and other councillors on his blog – breach of Art 10 disproportionate (Calver)
- Threatened managers saying a number had been dispensed with and more to go, tried to interfere with housing allocation decision making. Bullying and failure to show respect to others. A finding of code breach attracted Art 10 protection but it was necessary interference (Heesom)

A recap of the Code of Conduct wording for Paragraph 6; Not use or attempt to use position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of councillor or anyone else.

A recap of the Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct wording for Paragraph 9 Appendix B 6; matter directly relating to an Other Registrable Interest and recap of the main points of LGA guidance on that paragraph. The example of RSPB membership was drawn to the sub-committee's attention. Matters at council meetings were unlikely to directly relate to that interest, but they may directly relate if a councillor was actively campaigning on the specific issue being discussed in a council meeting.)

The meeting was reconvened at 5.44pm.

The Chair provided the decision of the sub-committee:

Shortly in advance of this hearing the Subject Member confirmed that he would not be attending the hearing due to work and other personal commitments. The Sub-committee considered whether to proceed with the hearing. The Subject Member had been supplied in advance with details of the hearing, that it could proceed and reach an outcome in his absence. The Sub-Committee considered advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and concluded to continue with the hearing in the Subject Members absence as the Subject Member had not provided an acceptable reason for non-attendance.

Having heard the views of everyone present and considered the contents of the report and presentation by the Investigating Officer and views of the Independent Person and after lengthy deliberation, the Sub-committee has made a unanimous decision about each of the complaints as follows:

1. The Subject Member brought Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute. This is evidenced by comments and behaviour set out in investigating report paragraphs 14.4:

Accusations of a personal nature about councillors who had sat on the previous Mampitts Advisory Committee;

Interrupting Councillor Chase and stating that he did not have the integrity to be Mayor;

Describing the procedure for the construction of an advisory committee as shocking and a disgrace;

Continued interruptions and muttering resulting in the Chair requesting him to stop and sit down;

Accusations of a lack of integrity on the part of some of his fellow councillors that they had turned the town council into a joke;

Report paragraph 15 interrupting members of the public while they were speaking in public section;

Standing for the majority of the meeting, huffing and with hands on hips resulting in a fellow councillor commenting that he thought the subject member was trying to intimidate people;

Alleging councillors were trying to frustrate a scheme that the residents wanted which was an absolute disgrace;

Spoke in a manner that was confrontational, aggressive and disrespectful;

Report paragraph 20.4

email from the Subject Member to the Town Clerk, copied to all councillors, containing allegations of impropriety on the part of the Town Clerk and some of his fellow councillors which was offensive in tone.

These comments and behaviours were made during public meetings, observed by members of the public present. Comments were directed at councillors. Whilst some comments did raise issues for debate, it is the manner of the Subject Member's behaviour and how questions were raised that the sub-committee considers did not comply with standing orders or the code and could have been raised in a compliant way.

The sub-committee noted the Subject Member's behaviour was not a one off outburst but a continued pattern of behaviour for which he received warnings from the chair.

The sub-committee is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the alleged conduct actually occurred and exceeded the threshold for normal expected political discourse.

The sub-committee is not aware of and the Subject Member has not provided an explanation for his behaviour aside from referring to his Article 10 right to freedom of expression.

The sub-committee have considered the Subject Member's Article 10 rights and consider that the finding of breach of code while it may infringe his Article 10 rights, is proportionate to the aim of protecting the reputation of the council and other councillors and their ability to take part in political debate. The sub-committee were particularly mindful that standing orders allow councillors to express their opinions, give constructive criticism, challenge and scrutinise. This can be done in a manner which does not disrupt meetings or prevent the ability of other councillors to take part.

2. The sub-committee accepted the investigating officers' recommendation and find no breach and no improper use of the Subject Member's position and no evidence that the Subject Member's comments and involvement in the meetings was for his personal gain or that of another.

3. The sub-committee noted the difference between appendix b paragraph 8c in the Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct 14 May 2024 and the Local Government Association Model Code wording which has made the consideration of the complaint about an other registrable interest and dispensation more complex than it would otherwise have been. The effect of the difference results in Other Registrable Interests being disclosable in meetings and requiring dispensation for agenda items which directly relate to an Other Registrable Interest only under the Shaftesbury Town Council code whereas they would have been disclosable and dispensation required for both directly related matters and also those which simply effect an Other Registrable Interest under the LGA model code.

While the sub-committee have grave concerns about the involvement of the Subject Member in the discussion on agenda items related to Shaftesbury Town Council Mampitts project, due to the wording of the Shaftesbury Town Council code the sub-committee have no option but to find the Subject Member did not fail to disclose an Other Registrable Interest and did not require a dispensation to take part in the meetings which are the subject of this complaint, as they did not directly relate to the Subject Member's Other Registrable Interest.

(Note - At this point in the meeting, the sub-committee would normally invite representations about aggravating or mitigating factors from the Investigating Officer and the Subject Member. However, as the Subject Member was not in attendance, the sub-committee moved to the matter of sanctions agreed)

The Chair set out the decision on sanctions agreed as follows:

Sanctions

The sub-committee decided that the sanctions set out below were an appropriate and proportionate response to the complaint.

1. Recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk that the Subject Member be removed from any outside bodies to which he has been appointed by Shaftesbury Town Council until he has completed code of conduct training
2. Instruct the Dorset Council Monitoring Officer to recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk to arrange code of conduct training for the Subject Member to be completed within 2 months of the date of this decision.

In accordance with the council's Complaints Process for councillors there is no right of appeal of this decision.

The decision would be confirmed in writing and a decision notice posted on the council website.

6. **Code of Conduct Complaint 2**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the decision taken by the sub-committee at the beginning of the meeting to hold the meeting in public, applied to both code of conduct complaints.

The Chair invited the Investigating Officer to present the complaint.

M Dolley, Investigating Officer presented her report in respect of complaints made against Shaftesbury Town Council Councillor Yeo (the Subject Member) by Shaftesbury Town Council Councillor Hollingshead (the Complainant).

The Investigating Officer provided detail of the complaints received which alleged a breach of paragraphs 1 (requirement to treat councillors and others with respect) and paragraph 5 (Disrepute) of the Shaftesbury Town Council Councillor Code of Conduct. The complaints had been investigated in accordance with Dorset Council's arrangements for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints.

To investigate the complaints, the Investigating Officer had taken into consideration the following evidence:

- The complaints
- Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct
- Video recording of Shaftesbury Town Council meeting of 18 March 2025
- Facebook page maintained by the This is Alfred radio station and the broadcast by This is Alfred of its daily programme on 19 March 2025
- Emails sent to the Subject Member by the Town Clerk at the time
- Interviews with the Complainant and one other member of Shaftesbury Town Council and the Subject Member (statements included within the investigation report)

The complaints were set out in full in the report and the Investigating Officer took the sub-committee through the main points arising.

The complaints related to the conduct of the Subject Member at the Shaftesbury Town Council Full Council meeting on 18 March 2025 and the discussion of agenda item 7 relating to the recruitment of a new town clerk.

The findings section of the report described the relevant part of the meeting, the reporting of the meeting by This is Alfred in its daily broadcast and on its Facebook page, and the email correspondence sent by the town clerk to the Subject Member, which set out the provisions of paragraph 1 of the code and the general principles of councillor conduct stated in the introduction section of the code. Correspondence from the town clerk had urged the Subject Member to undertake code of conduct training.

The Investigating Officer provided an overview of the conclusions set out in the report, which included her comments on the comments made by the

Subject Member, both in response to the draft report and on the statement submitted by him in advance of this meeting. The Investigating Officer had concluded that the Subject Member was in breach of paragraph 1 and paragraph 5 of the code of conduct and set out her reasoning for this conclusion, including her consideration of the application of Article 10 ECHR. In addition, the Investigating Officer noted that the matter relating to the Subject Member's failure to undertake training on the code of conduct had not been included in the original complaint but had been added to the investigation in accordance with paragraph G of the Dorset Council arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints.

There were no questions from the sub-committee or from the Independent Person.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 6.03pm. Members of the sub-committee, the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Independent Person and the Senior Democratic and Governance Officer left the room in order for the sub-committee to make a decision on breach, in private.

(During the deliberation, the Deputy Monitoring Officer provided the sub-committee with the following information:

A recap of the Code of Conduct wording for Paragraph 1; respect and recap of the main points of LGA guidance on that paragraph, including the examples of respectful and disrespectful conduct and recap of earlier advice about Article 10.

A reminder of the earlier recap of Code of Conduct wording for Paragraph 5; disrepute and recap of the main points of LGA guidance on that paragraph and advice about Article 10.)

The meeting reconvened at 7.47pm.

The Chair provided the decision of the sub-committee:

Shortly in advance of this hearing the Subject Member confirmed that he would not be attending the hearing due to work and other personal commitments. The Sub-Committee considered whether to proceed with the hearing. The Subject Member had been supplied in advance with details of the hearing, that it could proceed and reach an outcome in his absence. The Sub-Committee considered advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and concluded to continue with the hearing in the Subject Members absence as the Subject Member had not provided an acceptable reason for non-attendance.

Having heard the views of everyone present and considered the contents of the report and presentation by the Investigating Officer and views of the Independent Person and after lengthy deliberation the Sub-committee has made a unanimous decision about each of the complaints as follows:

1. The Subject Member breached the code of conduct by:

- a) failing to treat councillors with respect;
- b) bringing Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute.

This is evidenced by comments and behaviour set out in the investigating report paragraphs 4 and 5 and the recording of 18 March 2025 meeting:

Without requesting permission to speak, interrupted the complainant and notwithstanding the chair's request for him to be quiet, he objected to the proposed recruitment procedure. The Subject Member's tone was aggressive and confrontational such that Councillor Williams raised a point of order under standing orders which states that no person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. The chair requested the Subject Member moderate his conduct. The Subject Member remained on his feet talking over the chair and making personal comments directed at Councillor Williams;

Standing while others are talking and he is not;

Persistently interrupting and talking over other councillors including when they are raising points of order (which permits interruption) and calling other councillors improper;

On his phone, huffing and pulling faces while others are speaking;

Alleging improper and/or unlawful process during the last recruitment and complaining that he was not on the panel;

Alleging the minutes relating to the previous process were fabricated to make them match the process;

Calling the council a joke and saying this is not the way that council business should be done;

As a councillor leaves and gives his apology, the Subject Member accuses him of being extremely unprofessional, that he is supposed to represent the people of Shaftesbury and that he doesn't live in Shaftesbury;

The Subject Member was asked to moderate his conduct but did not, leading to the motion to exclude him which resulted in the meeting being suspended for 10 minutes;

The Subject Member raised his voice and became confrontational when a councillor raised a point of order;

Calls other councillors highly unprofessional;

The Subject Member described the civility and respect pledge as the “purely voluntary behaviour thing that you don’t have to sign whatsoever”;

The Subject Member said that the recruitment process was improper and that the Chair was unfit to be Mayor;

The Subject Member told the chair that he was extremely unprofessional and all councillors were turning the council into more of a joke than it already is.

These comments and behaviours were made during public meetings, observed by members of the public present and on social media. Comments were directed at councillors. The comments did not raise issues for debate and some were not political but were personal. It is the manner of the Subject Member’s behaviour and how questions were raised that the sub-committee considers did not comply with standing orders or the code and could have been raised in a compliant way.

The sub-committee noted the Subject Member’s behaviour was not a one-off outburst but a continued pattern of behaviour for which he received warnings from the chair and the meeting was suspended for a time. The Subject Member repeated interruption of other councillors who were complying with the code and standing orders, disrupted the transaction of business during the meeting.

The sub-committee is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the alleged conduct actually occurred and exceeded the threshold for normal expected political discourse.

The sub-committee is not aware of and the Subject Member has not provided an explanation for his behaviour aside from referring to his Article 10 right to freedom of expression.

The sub-committee consider the Subject Member displayed disruptive and bad behaviour, unreasonable and demeaning behaviour towards other councillors including Councillors Williams, Dibben and Chase, angry outbursts during the meeting, ignoring other councillors who were attempting to contribute to discussion.

The guidance issued by the Local Government Association on its model councillor code of conduct on which the Shaftesbury Town Council code is closely based, states that showing respect to others is fundamental to a civil society and that rude, offensive and disrespectful behaviour lowers the public expectations and confidence in its elected representatives. It gives examples of both respectful and disrespectful behaviour.

The sub-committee notes that no apology has been given and no remorse shown.

The sub-committee have considered the Subject Member’s Article 10 rights and consider that the finding of breach of code while it may infringe

Article 10 rights, is proportionate to the aim of protecting the reputation of the council and other councillors and their ability to take part in political debate. The sub-committee were particularly mindful that standing orders allow councillors to express their opinions, give constructive criticism, challenge and scrutinise. This can be done in a manner which does not disrupt meetings or prevent the ability of other councillors to take part.

2. The sub-committee found the Subject Member had breached the code by failing to complete code of conduct training.

The sub-committee note that the Subject Member has, as a matter of fact, not completed code of conduct training.

The sub-committee also note the volume of communication from Shaftesbury Town Council town clerk to the Subject Member, making him aware of his duty to complete code of conduct training, offering and making training available to him, found at appendix B5 of the investigation report.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer Dorset Council informed the sub-committee of a previous complaint finding about the Subject Member dating from February 2021 which is in the public domain and which required the Subject Member to complete code of conduct training within 4 months. As a matter of fact, this was not completed.

The sub-committee found that his claim not to have been aware of his duty to complete code of conduct training was entirely uncredible and that he had wilfully disregarded previous instruction and offer of training.

The sub-committee noted that the Subject Member in his response, alleges the correct procedure was not followed when adding this allegation about training to the investigation. It was not part of the original complaint. The Deputy Monitoring Officer Dorset Council advised the sub-committee that while the Complaint Process was not technically followed, a decision was taken by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person to agree to add the allegation, and the Subject Member has not been prejudiced by this decision being made late. The Subject Member was informed. The Subject Member responded to the allegation at interview and in his responses to his statement, the report and for this hearing.

(Note - At this point in the meeting, the sub-committee would normally invite representations about aggravating or mitigating factors from the Investigating Officer and the Subject Member. However, as the Subject Member was not in attendance, the sub-committee moved to the matter of sanctions agreed)

The Chair set out the decision on sanctions agreed as follows:

Sanctions

The Sub-committee decided that the sanctions set out below were an appropriate and proportionate response to the complaint:

1. Recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council a formal censure
2. Recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk that the Subject Member be removed from any outside bodies to which he has been appointed by Shaftesbury Town Council until he has completed code of conduct training
3. Instruct the Dorset Council Monitoring Officer recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk to arrange code of conduct training for the Subject Member to be completed within 2 months of the date of this decision.

In accordance with the Council's Complaints Process for Councillors there is no right of appeal of this decision.

This decision will be confirmed in writing and a decision notice posted on the council website.

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.57pm.

Appendix - Decision notice - Code of Conduct Complaint 1
Appendix - Decision notice - Code of Conduct Complaint 2

Chairman

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DORSET COUNCIL AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (HEARING) SUB-COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT

DECISION NOTICE

Subject Member: Councillor Peter Yeo
Council: Shaftesbury Town Council
Date of Hearing/Decision: 17 August 2026
Complaint Number(s): COM8299 and COM8319
Decision: Complaint partially upheld
Summary Sanction: recommendation to Shaftesbury Town Council to remove Councillor Yeo from outside bodies until he has completed Code of Conduct training

1. Summary of Complaint 1 - COM8299 and COM8319

Complaints were made on 18 December 2024 and 19 March 2025 by Councillor Andy Hollingshead alleging a failure by Councillor Peter Yeo to declare Disclosable Pecuniary Interests at meetings of Shaftesbury Town Council held on 17 December 2024 and 11 March 2025 and to seek dispensations before taking part in debate and voting on matters relating to the development of a site at Mampitts Lane in breach of the Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct for Councillors.

Dorset Council cannot investigate a complaint relating to a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. In July 2025 the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person, decided that the investigation should proceed on the basis of a possible breach of the code relating to the disclosure of an Other Registrable Interest rather than Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. Councillor Yeo was informed of the amendment.

2. Parts of the Code of Conduct alleged to have been breached

In respect of both complaints it was alleged that Councillor Yeo breached the following sections of Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct;

- Paragraph 5 disrepute (As a councillor I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute)
- Paragraph 6 Use of Position (As a councillor I do not use or attempt to use my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else)
- Paragraph 9 Registration and Declaration of Interests (As a councillor I register and declare my interests)

The Complainant did not seek an apology.

3. Hearing Sub-Committee

The complaint was considered by the Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-Committee on 17 August 2026.

The Complainant Councillor Andy Hollingshead attended the hearing and answered questions from the Investigating Officer and the Sub-Committee.

The Subject Member Councillor Peter Yeo did not attend. Councillor Yeo's legal representative contacted Dorset Council shortly before the hearing to inform the Sub-Committee that Councillor Yeo was unable to attend due to unavoidable work and

personal commitments. The Sub-Committee noted that Councillor Yeo had been supplied with details of the hearing on 23 June 2026 and was aware the hearing would likely proceed in his absence. The Sub-Committee considered advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and concluded to continue with the hearing in the Subject Members absence as the Subject Member had not provided an acceptable reason for non-attendance.

A recording and full minutes of the hearing, including the decision read out during the hearing, are available on the Dorset Council website: [Agenda for Audit and Governance \(Hearing\) Sub-Committee on Monday, 17th August, 2026, 2.00 pm - Dorset Council](#)

4. The Hearing Sub-Committee's Decisions

Having reviewed the report, papers in the agenda pack and presentation by the Investigating Officer and received advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and views of the Independent Person the Sub-Committee unanimously found:

1. **Paragraph 5 disrepute – Breach.** Councillor Yeo by his comments and behaviour had brought Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute
2. **Paragraph 6 Use of Position – No breach** and no improper use of position in the meetings
3. **Paragraph 9 Registration and Declaration of Interests – No breach.** Due to the wording of the Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct, Councillor Yeo had not breached paragraph 9 of the Code, had not failed to disclose an Other Registrable Interest in the meetings and did not require a dispensation to take part in those meetings.
4. Complaints relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interest were not within the scope of Dorset Council or the Sub-Committee.

5. Reasons for Decisions

- **Paragraph 5 disrepute – Breach – bringing Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute**

The Sub-Committee considered that breach was evidenced by Councillor Yeo's comments and behaviour described in the Investigation Report and meeting recordings:

Report paragraph 14.4:

- Accusations of a personal nature about councillors who had sat on the previous Mampitts Advisory Committee;
- Interrupting Councillor Chase and stating that he did not have the integrity to be Mayor;
- Describing the procedure for the construction of an advisory committee as shocking and a disgrace;
- Continued interruptions and muttering resulting in the Chair requesting him to stop and sit down;
- Accusations of a lack of integrity on the part of some of his fellow councillors that they had turned the town council into a joke;

Report paragraph 15

- interrupting members of the public while they were speaking in public section;

- Standing for the majority of the meeting, huffing and with hands on hips resulting in a fellow councillor commenting that he thought the subject member was trying to intimidate people;
- Alleging councillors were trying to frustrate a scheme that the residents wanted which was an absolute disgrace;
- Spoke in a manner that was confrontational, aggressive and disrespectful;

Report paragraph 20.4

- email from Councillor Yeo to Town Clerk, copied to all councillors, containing allegations of impropriety on the part of the Town Clerk and some of his fellow councillors which was offensive in tone.

The Sub-Committee noted these comments and behaviours were made during public meetings and observed by members of the public who were present. Comments were directed at councillors. Whilst some comments raised issues for political debate, it was the manner of Councillor Yeo's behaviour and how he raised questions that the Sub-Committee considered did not comply with Shaftesbury Town Council Standing Orders or Councillor Code of Conduct and could have been raised in a compliant way.

The Sub-Committee noted that Councillor Yeo's behaviour was not a one-off outburst during a meeting but a continued pattern of behaviour for which Councillor Yeo received warnings from both meeting Chairs.

The Sub-Committee is satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the alleged conduct actually occurred and exceeded the threshold for normal expected political discourse.

The Sub-Committee is not aware of and noted that Councillor Yeo had not provided an explanation for his behaviour aside from referring to his Article 10 ECHR enhanced right to freedom of expression.

The Sub-Committee considered Councillor Yeo's Article 10 rights and decided that while a finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct may infringe Councillor Yeo's Article 10 rights, that was proportionate to the aim of protecting the reputation of Shaftesbury Town Council and other town councillors and their ability to take part in political debate. The Sub-Committee were particularly mindful that Shaftesbury Town Council Standing Orders allow its councillors to express their opinions, give constructive criticism, challenge and scrutinise. This can be done in a manner which does not disrupt meetings or prevent other councillors from take part in meetings and debate.

- **Paragraph 6 Use of Position – No breach**

The sub-committee accepted the Investigating Officers' recommendation and found no breach, that Councillor Yeo had not improperly used his position and there was no evidence that Councillor Yeo's comments and involvement in the meetings was for his personal gain or that of another.

- **Paragraph 9 Registration and Declaration of Interests – No breach**

The Sub-Committee noted the difference between the wording of Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct 14 May 2024 Appendix B paragraph 8c and the

Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code wording on which the Local Government Association Code Guidance is based. This made the consideration of the complaint about an Other Registrable Interest and dispensation more complex than it would otherwise have been.

The effect of the difference results in Other Registrable Interests being disclosable in meetings and requiring dispensation for agenda items which directly relate to an Other Registrable Interest only under the Shaftesbury Town Council Code, whereas they would have been disclosable and dispensation required for both directly related matters and also those which simply affect an Other Registrable Interest under the LGA model code.

While the Sub-Committee had grave concerns about Councillor Yeo's involvement in the discussion of agenda items related to Shaftesbury Town Council Mampitts project, due to the wording of the Shaftesbury Town Council Code, the Sub-Committee had no option but to find Councillor Yeo did not fail to disclose an Other Registrable Interest and did not require a dispensation to take part in the meetings which are the subject of this complaint as they did not directly relate to his Other Registrable Interest.

The complaint relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interest are not within the scope of Dorset Council or the Sub-Committee.

6. Sanctions

The Sub-committee decided that the sanctions set out below were an appropriate and proportionate response to the complaint:

1. Recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk that Councillor Yeo be removed from any outside bodies to which he has been appointed by Shaftesbury Town Council until he has completed Code of Conduct training.
2. Instruct the Dorset Council Monitoring Officer to recommend the Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk arrange Code of Conduct training for Councillor Yeo to be completed within 2 months of the date of this decision.

7. Appeal

There is no right of appeal against this decision.

8. Action

This Decision Notice has been sent to the Shaftesbury Town Council Clerk for reporting to the next Town Council meeting for consideration and decision on the recommended sanctions.

Jonathan Mair
Monitoring Officer
Dorset Council
21 August 2026

DORSET COUNCIL AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE (HEARING) SUB-COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR CODE OF CONDUCT

DECISION NOTICE

Subject Member: Councillor Peter Yeo
Council: Shaftesbury Town Council
Date of Hearing/Decision: 17 August 2026
Complaint Number(s): COM8330
Decision: Complaint fully upheld
Summary Sanction: recommendation to Shaftesbury Town Council to censure Councillor Yeo, for Councillor Yeo to complete Code of Conduct training and be removed from outside bodies until he has completed the training

1. Summary of Complaint 2 - COM8330

The complaint was made on 19 March 2025 by Councillor Andy Hollingshead alleging that at a meeting of Shaftesbury Town Council held on 18 March 2025 Councillor Yeo's conduct led to the meeting being suspended, which was publicised on social media.

The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person, decided that the complaint should be amended to include a possible breach of the code relating to requirement for councillors to complete code of conduct training. Councillor Yeo was informed of the amendment and responded to the allegation.

2. Parts of the Code of Conduct alleged to have been breached

It was alleged that Councillor Yeo breached the following sections of Shaftesbury Town Council Code of Conduct;

- Paragraph 1 respect (As a councillor I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect)
- Paragraph 5 disrepute (As a councillor I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute)
- Paragraph 8.1 training (As a councillor I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority)

The Complainant did not seek an apology.

3. Hearing Sub-Committee

The complaint was considered by the Audit and Governance (Hearing) Sub-Committee on 17 August 2026.

The Complainant Councillor Andy Hollingshead attended the hearing.

The Subject Member Councillor Peter Yeo did not attend. Councillor Yeo's legal representative contacted Dorset Council shortly before the hearing to inform the Sub-Committee that Councillor Yeo was unable to attend due to unavoidable work and personal commitments. The Sub-Committee noted that Councillor Yeo had been supplied with details of the hearing on 23 June 2026 and was aware the hearing would likely proceed in his absence. The Sub-Committee considered advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and concluded to continue with the hearing in the Subject

Members absence as the Subject Member had not provided an acceptable reason for non-attendance.

A recording and full minutes of the hearing, including the decision read out during the hearing, are available on the Council website: [Agenda for Audit and Governance \(Hearing\) Sub-Committee on Monday, 17th August, 2026, 2.00 pm - Dorset Council](#)

4. The Hearing Sub-Committee's Decisions

Having reviewed the report, papers in the agenda pack and presentation by the Investigating Officer and received advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer and views of the Independent Person the Sub-Committee unanimously found:

1. **Paragraph 1 respect - Breach.** Councillor Yeo by his comments and behaviour had showed a lack of respect to other councillors.
2. **Paragraph 5 disrepute – Breach.** Councillor Yeo by his comments and behaviour had brought Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute.
3. **Paragraph 8.1 Training – Breach.** Councillor Yeo had failed to complete Code of Conduct training made available to him by Shaftesbury Town Council.

5. Reasons for Decisions

- **Paragraph 1 respect – Breach for showing a lack of respect to other councillors.**

And

- **Paragraph 5 disrepute – Breach for bringing Shaftesbury Town Council into disrepute**

The Sub-Committee considered that breach of both paragraphs was evidenced by Councillor Yeo's comments and behaviour described in the Investigation Report and meeting recordings:

Report paragraphs 4 and 5:

- Without requesting permission to speak, interrupted the complainant and after the Chair requested him to be quiet, he objected to the proposed recruitment procedure. Councillor Yeo's tone was aggressive and confrontational such that Councillor Williams raised a point of order under Standing Orders which states that no person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. The Chair requested Councillor Yeo moderate his conduct but he remained on his feet talking over the Chair and making personal comments directed at Councillor Williams;
- Standing while others are talking and he is not;
- Persistently interrupting and talking over other councillors including when they are raising points of order (which permits interruption) and calling other councillors improper;
- On his phone, huffing and pulling faces while others were speaking;
- alleging improper and/or unlawful process during the last recruitment and complaining that he was not on the panel;
- alleging the minutes relating to the previous process were fabricated to make them match the process;
- Calling the council a joke and saying this is not the way that council business should be done;

- As Councillor Dibben leaves and gives his apology, Councillor Yeo accuses him of being extremely unprofessional, that he is supposed to represent the people of Shaftesbury and that he doesn't live in Shaftesbury;
- Councillor Yeo was asked to moderate his conduct but did not, leading to a motion to exclude him from the meeting which resulted in the meeting being suspended for 10 minutes;
- Councillor Yeo raised his voice and became confrontational when a councillor raised a point of order;
- Councillor Yeo called other councillors highly unprofessional;
- Councillor Yeo described the Civility and Respect Pledge as the "purely voluntary behaviour thing that you don't have to sign whatsoever";
- He said that the recruitment process was improper and that the Chair was unfit to be Mayor;
- He told the Chair that he was extremely unprofessional and all councillors were turning the council into more of a joke than it already is.

The Sub-Committee noted these comments and behaviours were made during public meetings and observed by members of the public who were present and seen by members of the public on social media. Comments were directed at councillors. The comments did not raise issues for debate and some were not political but personal. It was the manner of Councillor Yeo's behaviour and how he raised questions that the Sub-Committee considered did not comply with Shaftesbury Town Council Standing Orders or Councillor Code of Conduct and could have been raised in a compliant way.

The Sub-Committee noted that Councillor Yeo's behaviour was not a one-off outburst during a meeting but a continued pattern of behaviour for which Councillor Yeo received warnings from both the Chair and led to the meeting being suspended for a time. Councillor Yeo's repeated interruption of other councillors who were complying with the code and standing orders, disrupted the transaction of business during the meeting.

The Sub-Committee was satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the alleged conduct actually occurred and exceeded the threshold for normal expected political discourse.

The Sub-Committee was not aware of and noted that Councillor Yeo had not provided an explanation for his behaviour aside from referring to his Article 10 ECHR enhanced right to freedom of expression.

The Sub-Committee considered that Councillor Yeo displayed disruptive and bad, unreasonable and demeaning behaviour towards other councillors including Councillors Williams, Dibben and Chase, angry outbursts during the meeting, ignoring other councillors who were attempting to contribute to discussion.

The guidance issued by the Local Government Association on its model councillor code of conduct on which the Shaftesbury Town Council code is closely based, states that showing respect to others is fundamental to a civil society and that rude, offensive and disrespectful behaviour lowers the public expectations and confidence in its elected representatives. It gives examples of both respectful and disrespectful behaviour.

The sub-committee notes that no apology has been given and no remorse shown.

The Sub-Committee considered Councillor Yeo's Article 10 rights and decided that while a finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct for lack of respect and bringing the Council into disrepute may infringe Councillor Yeo's Article 10 rights, that was proportionate to the aim of protecting the reputation of Shaftesbury Town Council and other town councillors and their ability to take part in political debate. The Sub-Committee were particularly mindful that Shaftesbury Town Council Standing Orders allow its councillors to express their opinions, give constructive criticism, challenge and scrutinise. This can be done in a manner which does not disrupt meetings or prevent other councillors from take part in meetings and debate.

- **Paragraph 8.1 Training – Breach for failing to complete Code of Conduct training.**

The Sub-Committee noted that Councillor Yeo had as a matter of fact, not completed code of conduct training.

The Sub-Committee noted the volume of communication from Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk to Councillor Yeo, making him aware of his duty to complete code of conduct training, offering and making training available to him, found at appendix B5 of the Investigation Report.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer Dorset Council informed the sub-committee of a previous complaint finding about Councillor Yeo dating from February 2021 which is in the public domain and which required Councillor Yeo to complete code of conduct training within 4 months. As a matter of fact, this was not completed.

The Sub-Committee found that Councillor Yeo's claim not to have been aware of his duty to complete code of conduct training was entirely unbelievable and that he had wilfully disregarded previous instruction and offer of training.

The sub-committee noted that Councillor Yeo in his response, alleges the correct procedure was not followed when adding this allegation about training to the investigation. It was not part of the original complaint. The Deputy Monitoring Officer of Dorset Council advised the sub-committee that while the Complaint Process was not technically followed, a decision was taken by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person to agree to add the allegation, and Councillor Yeo has not been prejudiced by this decision being made late. Councillor Yeo was informed. Councillor Yeo responded to the allegation at interview and in his responses to his statement, the report and for this hearing.

6. Sanctions

The Sub-committee decided that the sanctions set out below were an appropriate and proportionate response to the complaint:

1. Recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council a formal censure to Councillor Yeo.

2. Recommend to Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk that Councillor Yeo be removed from any outside bodies to which he has been appointed by Shaftesbury Town Council until he has completed Code of Conduct training.
3. Instruct the Dorset Council Monitoring Officer to recommend the Shaftesbury Town Council Town Clerk to arrange Code of Conduct training for Councillor Yeo to be completed within 2 months of the date of this decision.

7. Appeal

There is no right of appeal against this decision.

8. Action

This Decision Notice has been sent to the Shaftesbury Town Council Clerk for reporting to the next Town Council meeting for consideration and decision on the recommended sanctions.

Jonathan Mair
Monitoring Officer
Dorset Council

21 August 2026

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