

COMMENTS ON DRAFT INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT RECEIVED FROM CLLR FUHRMANN

- The text in black is taken by Cllr Fuhrmann from the draft report
- The text in red is Cllr Fuhrmann's comments on that text
- The text in green is the Investigating Officer's comments on Cllr Fuhrmann's comments

'As regards the 5 December post I conclude that by adding the words 'I continue to find a better uses of my time at Dorset Full Council meetings, while the party politics seems the chief purpose' accompanied by an emoji showing a face with rolling eyes (the conventional meaning of which is to indicate sarcasm, frustration or boredom) to an image of himself sitting in the Council chamber at County Hall and 6sharing it on social media, Councillor Fuhrmann could reasonably be taken to be suggesting that some at any rate of the time he spends at Full Council meetings of Dorset Council is time wasted. In my view he thereby showed a lack of respect for all his fellow Councillors including the complainants and for the officers (local authority employees) who were present at the meeting, and a lack of leadership. I further conclude that making such an image available for public view is an action that is inconsistent with the requirement of the Code that councillors should act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.'

Party politics is the subject not Dorset Council, DC is referenced as location. I am entitled to share my experiences. No was one named, and DC was not the subject of the sentence. For purposes, it was a reference to a waste of time by political decisions made cross party so the above is not accurate - or should all political posts from all members now be pulled in for complaints?

Much more worryingly - There is no complaint about this in appendix A. I would like a full explanation of why I am being investigated for something that has not been made in a complaint.

I do not accept Cllr Fuhrmann's contention that his reference to Dorset Council in the 5 December post, is purely to the location in which it was made, nor that the Full Council meeting was not the subject of it; the text shown in the screenshot at Appendix D.1 states '...my time at Dorset Full Council meetings...'. As to the second part of the comment, the screenshot of the 5 December post as reposted by Cllr Somper (the 7 December post) was attached to the complaint received from her as is clear from the text in the third bullet-point in the section of the draft report headed 'Introduction'.

Having considered Cllr Fuhrmann's comments I remain of the view that the part of the report from which he has quoted (paragraph 1 of the section headed 'Conclusion'), remains a fair conclusion.

‘...respect for the service provided by the Council’s waste operatives and Councillor Beddow’s championing of it.’

Does not suggest lack of respect for DC or waste services, it makes no reference at all about the service, level of service or anything beyond, it does not even mention DC. You are making that connection based on Cllr Beddow’s feelings not the public perception. Giving cllrs the green light to tell elected members to stand down is a higher risk to DC, but I do not believe you are giving this the objectivity it requires.

Based on my interviews with Cllr Beddow (Appendix G) and Cllr Fuhrmann (Appendix I) I do not accept that the comment ‘get back on the bin lorry Beddow’ made as part of the exchange of comments on the 7 December post was not intended to reference the involvement of Cllr Beddow in the work of the waste service. Nor do I accept that the comment was not dismissive both of Cllr Beddow and the waste service. In his comment Cllr Fuhrmann has offered no explanation of what he was intending to convey by his choice of words, and why he chose to refer to a bin lorry rather than any other sort of vehicle. Cllr Beddow did not tell Cllr Fuhrmann to stand down; her comment stated, ‘Just stand down if it’s that bad, dude’. Having considered Cllr Fuhrmann’s comments I remain of the opinion that the conclusion I drew in the third paragraph of the paragraph numbered 1 in the section of the report headed ‘Conclusion’, is a reasonable one.

‘...‘jolly’ and ‘jumped-up’ to describe Councillor Somper, gave the post (story) the dimension of a personal attack.’

How would anyone know it was about Cllr Somper, no reference to her or her page in making it “personal”. Yet Somper named and shamed myself on a permanent post, though mine was a story. That is your connection made, as you are within the joined context, yet it is very reasonable that the public could make no connection, again lack of objectivity.

I have considered Cllr Fuhrmann’s comments. The screenshot at Appendix D.4 shows that the 18 December post was made at the same time as the comments were being added to the 7 December post, and as it incorporated part of the 7 December post showing the text Cllr Somper had applied when making the 7 December post, I remain of the view that it would be unreasonable not to have concluded that Cllr Fuhrmann’s reference to a ‘jolly, jumped up north dorset tory cllr’, was anything other than a reference to Cllr Somper. Furthermore, Cllr Fuhrmann’s comment offers no explanation of what he intended to convey by the wording of the 18 December post, if not that suggested in my report.

‘...Councillor Fuhrmann did not attend the councillor induction day on 15 May 2024 at which Code training was provided (see paragraph 5 in the section headed ‘Findings’ above), nor has he requested sight of the training materials from the Member Development & Support...’

Dear New Councillors,

For this evening, we have a special session just for new councillors. You are welcome to join online or in-person.

If you are attending in-person, please come to Committee Room 1 by the glass doors on the right hand side of County Hall if you are looking directly at the front. The main reception doors will be shut.

For online attendees [please click on this link to join the meeting](#). (Please feel free to leave your cameras on during the session if you would like to.)

Kind regards
Hayley

Session for New Councillors

An opportunity for new councillors to ask any questions they may have. The session will include specific details on:

- **Democracy**
Information on working with the democratic structures within the council such as how to raise a motion, ask a question at full council or address a committee. There will also be an overview of how the committees work.
- **Hybrid and webcasted committee meetings**
The difference between these and what this means for you as a councillor.
- **Register of interests**
Details on what you should include in this register and how to keep it up to date.
- **Councillor support – learning and development**
More details on the support that is available to you and how to access this support including how to find key contacts to help with your ward work.
- **Q&A with the Chief Executive**

Organiser

 Hayley Caves
Sent on Wednesday, 2024-05-1 at 8:35 AM

Attendees

You responded "Accept"

 Cllr. Neil Eysenck
Required

 Cllr. Scott Florek
Required

 Cllr. Alex Fuhrmann
Required

 Cllr. Sally Holland
Required

 Cllr. Craig Monks
Required

 Cllr. Steve Robinson
Required

 Cllr. Andy Todd
Required

 Cllr. Claudia Webb
Required

1) See above, shows I attended, and if for whatever reason I was not connected to the meeting, the description made no reference to “MUST ATTEND” or referenced the COC.

2) If it is the case that meeting did cover COC (MUST ATTEND) - if any cllr did not attend or ask for material, can I assume that all those cllrs are in breach of the COC and will be pulled up across all members?

3) You have referenced the LGA model agreement as a way to imply my breach of the COC. Can you please provide the signed document where I have agreed to “model COC”, as I am not aware of a DC policy that you are holding me against? A model agreement, is only that.

It would be appropriate that as you are including this in the report, then all above evidence should be included in the appendix.

As a result of my consideration of Cllr Fuhrmann’s comments I made further enquiries and it has transpired that the induction day was held on 9 May 2024 and not on 15 May 2024. I have apologised to Cllr Fuhrmann for the error and I have explained to him that references to the ‘Model’ Code are to the LGA model on which Dorset Council’s Code is based. The seventh line of text in paragraph 5 of the section of the report headed ‘Findings’ has been corrected and the text of paragraph 3 of the section of the report headed ‘Conclusion’ has been amended to read as below, and Cllr Fuhrmann has been given the amended text:-

‘Although not part of the complaint, during the course of my investigation I checked the training record maintained by the Council in respect of all Members of the Council and which is publicly available on the Council’s website. The training record relating to Cllr Fuhrmann indicates that he did not attend the councillor induction day (getting started session) on 9 May 2024 at which (amongst other things) Code training was provided (see paragraph 5 in the section headed ‘Findings’ above). I have been advised by the Member Development & Support Officer that to the best of her knowledge Cllr Fuhrmann has not at the date of this report requested sight of the training materials relating to the Code training. In the absence of any evidence that Cllr Fuhrmann has undertaken Code training I conclude that it is likely that he has not and that he is thus in breach of paragraph 8.1 of the Code.’

‘...once something is published it is ‘out there’ for everyone to see, and describes the risks that can thereby arise, including that it can be taken out of context. The LGA Guide to the role of councillors on social media offers another piece of useful advice when posting on social media ‘Follow the golden rule – do as you would be done by. It is never pleasant to be on the receiving end of negative posts or abusive comments.’

I have followed this. You might need to speak to Cllr Somper for naming me specifically, or am I required to make my own stand-alone complaint about this with a lack of objectivity as mentioned above.

I have considered Cllr Fuhrmann’s comment and I do not consider it necessary to alter the report; I have nothing to add.

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