

**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