

**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