

**REPORT FROM THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Chairman of the Standards Committee: Councillor Brackenbury

**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Council that an elected Member of Milton Keynes Council has been found to have breached the Code of Conduct applicable to Members and Co-Opted Members.

**1. Recommendation(s)**

1.1 That the report be noted.

**2. Issues**

2.1 On 11 May 2016 Councillor C Williams sent an email to a member of the public concerning the organisation of a public event. The recipient of the email complained to the Monitoring Officer that Councillor C Williams' email was disrespectful and rude and that he had failed to observe the Council's the Code of Conduct.

2.2 In accordance with the Council's procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints, the Monitoring Officer sought informal resolution and, as this was not successful, took the matter to formal resolution stage. This involved consultation with an Independent Person. Following consultation with the Independent Person the Monitoring Officer's decision was to refer the matter to an Assessment Sub Committee.

2.3 The Assessment Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee met on 2 December 2016 to consider the matter and decided that the matter should be further investigated by the Monitoring Officer with a view to a resolution being explored. The Monitoring Officer was to be assisted by a Monitoring Officer from another Council. The Assessment Sub Committee was chaired by the, Councillor Miles, Chair of the Standards Committee 2016/17. The other Sub-Committee members were Councillors McDonald and Alexander.

2.4 In pursuance of this decision, the Council's Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer of Bedford Borough Council met with Councillor C Williams on 3 March 2017. Councillor Williams was prepared to apologise for the final sentence of his email, which was typed in bold and read "I cannot wait to meet you face to face!!". Councillor Williams was unrepentant about the content and tone of the remainder of his email and therefore with it not being possible to reach an informal resolution the matter was referred back to the Standards Sub-Committee.

2.5 This was reported to the meeting of the Assessment Sub Committee of the Standards Committee on 10 May 2017. The Sub Committee was chaired by Councillor Miles as Chair of Standards Committee 2016/17 and comprised of Councillors McPake and McDonald. The Sub-Committee heard representations from Councillor C Williams, the Deputy Monitoring Officer of Bedford Borough Council and the Independent Person. The Complainant was not in attendance at this meeting.

- 2.6 After considering the evidence, the Sub-Committee found that Councillor C Williams had breached Paragraphs 2 and 6 of the Code of Conduct, namely that Milton Keynes Councillors should:
- “(2) Respect others and not bully any person
  - (6) Not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or the Authority into disrepute.”
- 2.7 The Sub-Committee decided that the following sanctions should be applied to Councillor C Williams in respect of the breach:
- The Councillor be censured,
  - The Sub-Committee’s findings in respect of the conduct be published,
  - The findings be reported to Council for information, and
  - The Monitoring Officer be instructed to arrange tailored training in respect of the Code of Conduct for the Subject Member.
- 2.8 A letter of censure, dated 29 June 2017, was sent to Councillor C Williams by Councillor Brackenbury, the current Chair of the Standards Committee.
- 2.9 Further the findings of the Sub-Committee will be published on the Council’s website following the noting of this matter by Council on 20 September 2017.
- 2.10 A training session has been arranged for Councillor C Williams with a very experienced lawyer from LGSS. When this session has taken place the outcome will be reported to the Standards Committee.

### 3. **Conclusion**

- 3.1 The Standards Committee is content that the sanctions imposed by the Sub-Committee following the Hearing which took place on 10 May 2017 have been progressed, and implementation will be complete following the remaining publication and the training which is expected to take place in the coming month.
- 3.2 The Minutes of the Hearing are attached to this report as an Annex.

### 4. **Implications**

#### 4.1 Policy

N/A

#### 4.2 Resources and Risk

The publication of a finding that a councillor is in breach of the code of conduct can present a reputational risk to the named councillor and, possibly all ward councillors. This is because the public expect a certain level of conduct from their elected representatives when acting in their position as a councillor. The complaint process is one way of holding them to account, public scrutiny is another.

Annex and Background Paper: Annex – Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee held on 10 May 2017