

**DECISION: COMPLAINT REFERRED TO THE MONITORING OFFICER FOR
INVESTIGATION**

THE COMPLAINT

Three complaints were received alleging that Councillor Priestley (the “Subject Member”) breached the Member’s Code of Conduct of Milton Keynes Council.

Complaint 1 stated a breach of the Code of Conduct had occurred due to the Subject Member introducing the Complainant to an investment company which resulted in the Complainant being a victim of fraud.

Complaint 2 also related to the investment company but made further allegations that the Subject Member did not adhere to a Joint Venture Agreement between their respective companies and that the Subject Member failed to enter on to the Register of Member’s Interests her Directorship.

Complaint 3, made by the same Complainant in complaint 2, relates to a telephone call made by a member of the Subject Member’s family, to the Complainant prior to the formal receipt of Complaint 2. The Complainant alleges “intimidation” by the Subject Member and their family member.

STANDARDS ASSESSMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

On 23rd July 2020, the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee considered the issues surrounding these particular complaints.

Complaint 1

The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee found the Subject Member was not an elected Councillor in the later part of 2015 and therefore the complaint was rejected in line with established Council procedures whereby the Code only applies to serving members.

Complaint 2

The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee found that the Subject Member was not an elected Councillor in the later part of 2015 and therefore part of the complaint was rejected in line with established Council procedures whereby the Code only applies to serving members.

In respect of the Subject Member’s use of the title Councillor during business arrangements, the Standards Assessment Sub-Committee found that the Subject Member may have been acting as a Councillor due to the use of her title. The Committee was concerned at the use and risks of use of this title in business communications and documents, including a Joint Venture agreement.

The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee considered that the Subject Member may have breached the Code of Conduct by failing to declare their interests on the Member’s Register of Interests in a timely manner. The Standards Sub Committee also considered some further potential errors within the register and therefore, this has been referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation.

Complaint 3

The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee considered that communication between the Subject Member and her relative prior to the telephone call, and the provision of the Complainant’s contact number by the Subject Member to the relative, may have been a

breach of the Code and therefore this has been referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation.

DECISION

The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee has asked that the matter be referred to the Monitoring Officer for informal resolution for the following:

- 1) Discussion and training provided to Councillor Priestley on appropriate use of the Councillor title and separation of private business interests.
- 2) Discussion and training provided to Councillor Priestley on data protection.

The Standards Assessment Sub-Committee has asked the Monitoring Officer to investigate the following:

- 1) Did the Subject Member breach the Code of Conduct by failing to enter their interests correctly on the Member's Register of Interests? This includes consideration of whether the operations of an incorrectly disclosed business within the Council also led to a breach of the Code.
- 2) Did the Subject Member breach the Code of Conduct by allowing a family member to contact the Complainant?

Sharon Bridglalsingh

Monitoring Officer