

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
STANDARDS SUB COMMITTEE

7 AUGUST 2023

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| Report Title | Code of Conduct Complaint – Councillor Nicholas Housden |
| Purpose of Report | A report for the standards sub-committee to determine whether Councillor Nicholas Housden has breached the Members Code of Conduct. |
| Report Author | Claire Hughes, Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer Email: claire.hughes@stroud.gov.uk |
| Appendices | Appendix A - Report of Investigating Officer Appendix B - Process |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 By letter dated 13 April 2023 the Monitoring Officer received a complaint regarding the conduct of District Councillor Nicholas Housden
- 1.2 The complaint centres around an email sent by Councillor Housden to the complainants on 20 March 2023.
- 1.3 Following an initial review of the complaint by the Monitoring Officer it was deemed appropriate for a full investigation to be conducted. Kate Seeley of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit was appointed to conduct the investigation.

2. INVESTIGATION

- 2.1 A full investigation into the allegations has now concluded. A copy of the final report is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.2 After reviewing the report, the Monitoring Officer attempted to resolve the matter by way of requesting that Councillor Housden apologise to the complainants. An email to that effect was sent to Councillor Housden on 26 June requesting that the apology be issued by 30 June.
- 2.3 Alongside the request to Councillor Housden the Monitoring Officer consulted with the Independent Person, who agreed that the matter should proceed to a hearing of the Standards Sub-Committee should the apology not be forthcoming.
- 2.4 Upon returning from a period of annual leave the Monitoring Officer was disappointed to note that no apology had been made. A further email was sent to Councillor Housden on 14 July to advise that as he had not taken up the offer of resolving the matter by issuing an apology the matter would now proceed to a hearing.
- 2.5 By way of a response dated Monday 17 July, Councillor Housden stated “What is this regarding? Let me know who I need to apologise to, for what and when and Ill fire something off”. Considering this response Councillor Housden was given a further period (until Friday 21 July) to issue the apologies. As at the 25 July the apologies have still not been forthcoming and therefore the matter must now proceed to a hearing.

3. PROCESS

- 3.1 Following the process set out in Appendix B, the Sub-Committee are now asked to consider this case and determine whether, on the balance of probabilities a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred.
- 3.2 If the Sub-committee determines that a breach has occurred, they are then asked to consider what, if any, sanctions should be applied.
- 3.3 As the Sub-Committee is aware, the sanctions that may be imposed in respect of breaches of the Code of Conduct cannot include anything that would prevent a Councillor performing their duties as a Councillor and therefore do not extend to either suspension or disqualification from the role.
- 3.4 The current available sanctions are one or more of the following: -
 - a) Issue a formal Censure or Reprimand to the Member
 - b) Report its findings to Full Council
 - c) Remove the Member from appointments to Committees or Sub-Committees
 - d) Remove the Member from appointments to outside bodies
 - e) Recommend that the Member attend training
 - f) Exclude the Member from the Councils offices or other premises for a specified period, with the exception of meeting rooms as necessary for attending Council or Committee meetings.