

**STANDARDS HEARINGS SUB-COMMITTEE – 29 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**Executive Summary**

This report advises Council of a decision made by the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee on 29 September 2021.

**Recommendations**

The Council is requested to:

**RESOLVE That** the findings of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee on 29 September 2021 be noted.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

**Background Papers:** None.

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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report advises Council of a decision of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee, on 29 September 2021, in respect of a complaint against David Bittleston during his time as a Councillor.

## **2.0 The Complaint**

- 2.1 On 12 October 2020, Councillor Hughes submitted a complaint against Councillor Bittleston regarding the proceedings at the meeting of the Executive on 16 July 2020 and discourtesy towards the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and herself as Chairman of the Committee. The complaint was contained in an email to the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.2 In accordance with the Council's "Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011" ("Arrangements"), on 26 October 2020, the Monitoring Officer considered that there was an arguable case that David Bittleston had breached the Members' Code of Conduct insofar as the proceedings at the meeting of the Executive on 16 July 2020 are concerned.
- 2.3 The Monitoring Officer considered that the "breach" merited a formal investigation under the Arrangements. The Monitoring Officer appointed Mr John Austin, an external investigator, to carry out the investigation.
- 2.4 Mr Austin concluded that David Bittleston had breached the Members' Code of Conduct.

## **3.0 Standards Hearings Sub-Committee**

- 3.1 On 29 September 2021, the Council's Standards Hearings Sub-Committee conducted a local hearing to determine whether David Bittleston had breached the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 3.2 The Sub-Committee concluded that David Bittleston had failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct. The Sub-Committee decided to report its findings, for information, to Council at its meeting on 14 October 2021 and publish a notice in a local newspaper. The notice would read as follows:

"Following a complaint made by Councillor Hughes and a subsequent independent investigation, former leader of Woking Borough Council, David Bittleston was found at a local hearing of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee to have breached the Council's Members Code of Conduct during a meeting of the Executive held on 16 July 2020 in that he failed to treat Councillor Hughes and the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with respect contrary to paragraph 2.1 of the Code, and failed to maintain the high standards of conduct as set out in paragraph 1.3 of the Code in relation to integrity and leadership contrary to paragraph 2.2 of the Code.

Woking Borough Council takes breaches of the Code of Conduct seriously and in the interests of transparency the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee will report their findings to full Council."

REPORT ENDS