

18th APRIL 2024



SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

DECISIONS NOTICE

DECISIONS BY THE SUFFOLK JOINT STANDARDS BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 2024

Sub-Committee Members:

Councillor Lucy Elkin
Councillor Lavinia Hadingham
Councillor Adrienne Marriott (Chair)

Subject Member:

Councillor Rolf Beggerow – Hadleigh Town Council

Officers:

T Halliday – Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Service, West Suffolk District Council
J Robinson – Interim Monitoring Officer, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
J Snell – Deputy Monitoring Officer, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
A Norman – Lead Officer – Monitoring Office, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
C Philpot – Lead Officer – Planning, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils (Clerk)

On the 18th April 2024, the Suffolk Joint Standards Sub-Committee met to consider whether Councillor R. Beggerow of Hadleigh Town Council continued to breach the code of conduct through non-declaration of interests at Hadleigh Town Council meetings and what sanctions, if any, were appropriate to impose.

The Interim Monitoring Officer outlined the code of conduct complaints made against Councillor Beggerow, ranging from September 2022 to January 2024, and the sanctions imposed on him by the BMSDC Monitoring Office. The Interim Monitoring Officer clarified that Councillor Beggerow had complied with the sanctions imposed on him throughout the process but had failed to appropriately adjust his behaviour in accordance with the advice provided to him concerning declarations of interests. Alternative advice about declarations of interest had been sought by the Clerk of Hadleigh Town Council after the conclusion of the complaints made against Councillor Beggerow which obscured matters.

In January 2024, the Interim Monitoring Officer, alongside the Deputy Monitoring Officer, met with Councillor Beggerow to discuss the complaints and issued Councillor Beggerow with final advice on when to declare interests which must be followed at all times. The Interim Monitoring Officer informed the Sub-Committee that since this meeting, Councillor Beggerow had declared interests where appropriate and had left the room and not participated in the debate and vote as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Councillor R. Beggerow put forward his reasonings for not appropriately declaring interests in items considered by Hadleigh Town Council and set out his misinterpretation of the Code of Conduct, specifically regarding the nature of what a “close associate” entailed, which was further confused by the alternative advice received. Councillor Beggerow expressed that the meeting with the Interim Monitoring Officer in January 2024 had provided him with clarity as to when to declare interests and confirmed that he had done so accordingly at meetings of Hadleigh Town Council since this discussion.

Councillor R. Beggerow stated that his main issues with the handling of the Code of Conduct complaints made against him were the time elapsed to reach decisions and the lack of alignment between the handling procedure and the new Code of Conduct adopted in March 2022.

The Sub-Committee considered the statements made by the two complainants regarding their grievances with the handling of their Code of Conduct complaints.

Decision:

We have considered the information provided by the Interim Monitoring Officer and Councillor Beggerow this afternoon and we are pleased that the advice received from the Interim Monitoring Officer regarding declarations of interest has been accepted by Councillor Beggerow without challenge.

We are satisfied that appropriate training, as sanctioned by the Interim Monitoring Officer at the conclusion of a previous complaint, has been undertaken and that Councillor Beggerow is keen to ensure he now has a full understanding of the Code of Conduct.

In these circumstances, we will not be imposing any further sanctions upon Councillor Beggerow.

The Sub-Committee has assessed the process followed when coming to a determination on these Code of Conduct complaints, considering the representations made by Councillor Beggerow as well as the two complainants regarding their grievances with the handling procedure.

We will be referring the Code of Conduct complaints handling procedure to the Joint Audit and Standards Committee for a full review.

Cllr Marriott (Chair)

Cllr Elkin

Cllr Hadingham

Suffolk Joint Standards Sub-Committee