

Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

4 October 2019

Subject:	National Cases
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer - Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Trisha Newton Trisha_newton@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee:

1. note the contents of the report and the case at Appendix 1 and consider any issues for the Council.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Within its terms of reference, the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee has a duty to promote high ethical standards amongst Members. As well as complying with legislation and guidance, the Committee will need to demonstrate learning from issues arising from local investigations and case law. Furthermore it is advisable for the Committee to be kept informed of any particularly notable cases which are publicised as they may also add to learning at the local level.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 High standards of conduct are an essential part of good corporate governance and this in turn has a direct relationship with the delivery of high quality services.

3 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

4 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 By considering national cases of significance the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee will be better informed and placed to discharge its duty to promote high ethical standards.

Surjit Tour

Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

A Harrow councillor for Pinner who has been censured said he accepts the decision.

The Standards Working Group at Harrow Civic Centre considered reports from a female resident that Stephen Wright had breached the Code of Conduct for Councillors and Members.

He was accused of inappropriate physical contact with the woman whose complaint led to him being censured.

She alleged that he used information to exaggerate his influence as a powerful decision maker to form an inappropriate personal relationship with her.

After hearing evidence from the complainant, the investigating officer, witnesses and the councillor the group unanimously concluded that Councillor Wright had breached that Code.

A public notice issued by Harrow Council gave more detail on exactly how Cllr Wright breached the code.

The group found that Councillor Wright had made some inappropriate physical contact with the woman and contacted her more frequently than was justified. The group also ruled that he had exceeded the normal professional boundaries of a councillor-resident relationship and questioned his choice of meeting venues.

The group also found that Cllr Wright described council officers as liars trying to whitewash events, and tried to get an officer suspended or dismissed. He also tried to get the complainant to undermine the council's case, tried to secure meetings for her with senior officers, retained confidential court papers and inappropriately demanded an independent investigation.

In view of the breaches the Working Group unanimously recommended to the Monitoring Officer that Councillor Wright be censured and offered training on the representational role of councillors so that the boundaries in carrying out this role can be clearly understood and respected in future.

Taken from www.mynewsmag.co.uk – Pinner News