

Report to the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

5 March 2024

Subject:	National Cases
Director:	Assistant Director Legal and Assurance and Monitoring Officer – Mike Jones
Contact Officer:	Connor Robinson Connor1_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk Democratic Services Officer


1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee considers the contents of the report and the cases in Appendix 1.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Officers will inform the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee about issues arising from local investigations and case law to add to learning at the local level and enhance understanding of ethical standards.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>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.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 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.

5 Implications

Resources:	There are no resource implications arising from this report.
Legal and Governance:	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.
Risk:	Awareness of national cases will enhance the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee's understanding of promoting high ethical standards within its duties.
Equality:	There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no direct implications for health and wellbeing from this report.
Social Value	There are no social value implications arising from this report.
Climate Change:	There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no specific corporate parenting implications arising from this report.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Extract taken from

<https://www.bournemouthecho.co.uk/news/24045175.dorset-councillor-bill-pipe-breached-code-conduct/> - Dated 12 January 2024.

Appendix 2 – Extract taken from



7. Background Papers

No background papers.



Bournemouth Echo – 12 January 2024

Dorset councillor Bill Pipe 'breached code of conduct'

A DORSET councillor has been admonished for his behaviour towards a senior, female, officer.

Councillor Bill Pipe, who represents Lytchett Matravers and Upton, has been told to send a letter of apology and to undertake diversity and inclusion training.

He will also be offered a mentor to provide ongoing guidance and support.

Cllr Pipe admits mimicking the accent of the officer and said he was astonished that she had been offended and intimidated by what he saw as “merely jovial banter.”

He denied telling a homophobic joke, making a comment about a visible party line and saying he wanted to know where the officer parked so he could ‘nick the parking space. The investigating officer agreed that these allegations could not be substantiated.

A panel of three decided that Cllr Pipe had breached the council’s Code of Conduct and protocols for dealing with officers, bringing the council into disrepute.

Chair Cllr Susan Cocking said the panel had been appalled at the lack of respect shown, which she said, amounted to harassment and bullying.

“This was offensive and not acceptable under any circumstances – no one should be subject to such treatment,” she said.

Cllr Pipe, who had his council pass withdrawn in the summer when the investigation started, and is only allowed in council buildings when accompanied, said after the hearing that he was genuinely remorseful and had not realised his actions would cause offence, having gone on for what he said was eight or nine years, without complaint.

He said he failed to understand why the officer had not raised it with him, the chief executive or her line manager, at the earliest opportunity if she was offended.



“Had I known my doing this would offend, or belittle her, I would have stopped immediately and apologised... had she come to me and said not to do it I wouldn't have carried on,” said Cllr Pipe.

“I thought she was taking it in the spirit it was meant – a happy, jovial way. It's pretty sad it's got to this state.”

He revealed that he is now being treated for depression, but said after the hearing that it was unlikely the finding would alter his decision to stand for council again at the May elections.

The council has no powers to bar any councillor found to breach code of conduct rules from office, apart from for proven criminal activity.

Dorset Council said: "Cllr Pipe remains a councillor. He is entitled to attend council meetings and has access to do so.

"Standards committees have no ability to suspend or dis-bar councillors."



BBC News – 11 February 2024

Councillors off committee after SEND remarks

Three councillors accused of making offensive comments about children with special educational needs are “coming off” a committee, a council leader has said.

Warwickshire county councillors Jeff Morgan, Brian Hammersley and Clare Golby have faced calls to resign following remarks during a meeting of the children and young people scrutiny committee in January.

The comments included the claim that children were “just really badly behaved” and parents were swapping diagnosis tips on social media.

The three councillors have since apologised.

Despite the calls for them to step down, Warwickshire County Council's leader Isobel Seccombe said she would not be removing the whip “at this moment in time”.

She told BBC Politics Midlands that inquiries were being carried out and she was keen to hear “all voices”, confirming that hundreds of complaints have been received.

“I’m also going to add that they [the councillors] are coming off the scrutiny panel and I’m putting a programme in of training, development and education,” she said.

“I’m a believer that the way you try to engage people in your argument is by including them, engaging them, educating them. Excluding them – you would not win hearts and minds.”

She repeated the “heartfelt” apology from the authority and said what happened was not characteristic of her administration.

At a meeting about the rising cost of council support on 25 January, Mr Morgan had questioned whether some children receiving funding were “just really badly behaved.”

Mr Hammersley asked if “something in the water” was increasing special needs cases, with Mrs Golby having questioned whether the increase could be linked to social media sites where families were “swapping tips on how to get their children diagnosed.”



Ellie Costello, co-ordinator for SEND Crisis Warwickshire, said it had been a “desperately sad” time for parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities.

“It’s just been an enormous shock but unfortunately not a surprise. I think parents feel that they have been facing these types of stereotypical views for a long time,” she said to BBC Politics Midlands.

“It’s very difficult to feel heard or to access support, and the narratives that were given that criteria is too low and that it’s too easy to get support is far from it.”

She said removing the whip from the councillors would help to draw a line under the saga.

