

The Panel carefully considered all evidence before it, and were of the view that Councillor A appeared to have breached the Code of Conduct and acted in a way which was not compatible with the seven principles of public life.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Interim Monitoring Officer should write a letter to Councillor A requesting that she should apologise for her actions – the wording of the apology should be agreed by the Monitoring Officer.

The apology should be sent to all Councillors by Councillor A.

The apology from Councillor A will be read at the next full Council meeting by the Interim Monitoring Officer.

Councillor A should agree to undertake training.

If no positive response is received from Councillor A after a reasonable period of time, the complaint will be referred back to the Panel for further consideration.

14 Initial Assessment Hearing

The Panel considered a report and background information relating to two complaints made against Councillor B. The complaints both centred on retweet made by Councillor B in September 2018.

The Interim Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person had tried to resolve the complaints informally with Councillor B by asking him to attend training and to submit a full apology by email to all Councillors. However, Councillor B had failed to confirm that he would do this. Members of the Panel expressed disappointment at the lack of response from Councillor B. However, the Panel were informed by the Independent Person that some kind of apology had been submitted by Councillor B to the Lancashire Evening Post.

The Panel were advised that a complaint had also been submitted to Lancashire County Council about the same matter as Councillor B is also a Lancashire County Councillor.

The Interim Monitoring Officer was informed by the County Council that they had concluded that Councillor B was not acting in his official capacity when he posted the tweet. The Interim Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person carefully considered the position in light of the conclusion that Lancashire County Council had reached and in the context of the South Ribble Code of Conduct and relevant policies and concluded that Councillor B was acting in his official capacity as a councillor.

The Panel were of the view that Councillor B was indeed acting in an official capacity, given that his status as a Councillor and a South Ribble Borough Councillor were clearly advertised on his public twitter account. The Panel felt that the complaint needed to be fully dealt with due to the need to make new members aware that behaviour of this standard is not acceptable.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the Interim Monitoring Officer write a strongly worded letter to Councillor B emphasising that the complaint had now gone to a Panel consisting of cross party membership who were of the view that a full apology should be given to all Councillors and that Councillor B would need to attend the relevant training.

The Interim Monitoring Officer will advise that wording for the apology will need to be submitted within 14 days, at which point if no response has been received consideration will be given to referring the complaint back to the Panel for formal investigation.

Chair

Date