



PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Case reference: 1076990/1

Report of an investigation by Wilkin Chapman LLP, appointed by the Monitoring Officer for Suffolk Coastal District Council, into allegations concerning Councillor O’Nolan, a Member of Woodbridge Town Council.

Dated: 15 February 2019

APPENDIX A SCHEDULE OF EVIDENCE

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House
26 Chantry Lane
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England no. OC343261,
authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix A

Schedule of evidence taken into account and list of unused material

Page	Number	Description
4	WC 1	Code of Conduct
12	WC 2	Complaint of Councillor Lady Blois
43	WC 3	Statement of Councillor Lady Blois
47	WC 4	Complaint of Councillor Perkins
74	WC 5	Statement of Councillor Perkins
78	WC 6	Complaint of Councillor Mortimer
103	WC 7	Statement of Councillor Mortimer
106	WC 8	Complaint of Councillor Rawlings
132	WC 9	Statement of Councillor Rawlings
135	WC 10	Statement of Kate Lacey
141	WC 11	Interview notes of Councillor O’Nolan
148	WC 12	Press article 16 June 2018
149	WC 13	Press article 28 June 2018
150	WC 14	Press article 6 July 2018

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

151	WC 15	Press release prepared 29 June 2018
-----	-------	-------------------------------------

List of unused material

Investigator's notes, file correspondence and drafts.

Suffolk Local Code of Conduct

In accordance with S 26 to 37 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council resolved to adopt the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct for the purposes of discharging its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within its area.

Until otherwise amended or replaced by a decision of the Council, the Suffolk Local Code of Conduct set out below shall hereafter apply to all elected members and any co-opted members entitled to vote on any decisions of the council or its committees, sub committees or joint committees when acting in their capacity as a member of the Council.

Preamble

The Suffolk Local Code of Conduct shall be interpreted in accordance with the following 7 principles of public life identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life chaired by Lord Nolan:

Selflessness - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity - Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability - Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness - Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty - Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership - Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

SUFFOLK LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT

1. You must treat others with respect.
2. You must not —
 - (1) do anything which may cause your council to breach any of the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010
 - (2) bully any person;
 - (3) intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be—
 - (a) a complainant,
 - (b) a witness, or
 - (c) involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings, in relation to an allegation that a member (including yourself) has failed to comply with his or her council's code of conduct; or
 - (4) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your council.
3. You must not —
 - (1) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where—
 - (a) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;
 - (b) you are required by law to do so;
 - (c) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - (d) the disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the council; or
 - (2) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law
4. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or council into disrepute.
5. You —
 - (1) must not use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage; and
 - (2) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your council—
 - (a) act in accordance with your council's reasonable requirements;
 - (b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
 - (3) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.
6. (1) When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by—
 - (a) your council's chief finance officer; or
 - (b) your council's monitoring officer,where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her statutory duties.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

6. (2) You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your council.

7. Registration of interests

- 7.1. You must register within 28 days of becoming a member of the Council (and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer of any changes within 28 days) any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) you may have for publication in the Register of Members' Interests. (See Appendix A to this Code.)
- 7.2. You may not at any time discharge any function or participate in any Council business or discussions, or vote on any issues that relate to or concern any of your DPIs where you are aware that you have a relevant DPI. You may not remain in the chamber or meeting room or in the public gallery when any matter that relates to any of your DPI is under discussion or debate unless you have requested and obtained a written dispensation from your Council's Monitoring Officer in advance of the relevant meeting.
- 7.3. You must register within 28 days of becoming a member of the Council (and notify your Council's Monitoring Officer of any changes within 28 days) any non statutory Local Non Pecuniary Interests (LNPIs) set out in Appendix A to this code but you may participate in any discussions or debates relating to or concerning any of your LNPIs after the date of registration.
- 7.4. You must declare any DPIs or LNPIs to a meeting where business is relevant to those interests, including those interests that are already registered with the Monitoring Officer or where registration is pending.
- 7.5. You must register, within 28 days, any gifts and hospitality received by you in accordance with the instructions issued within your Council by the Monitoring Officer.
- 7.6. The Council's Register of Interests will be available for inspection at the Council offices during normal office hours, and will be published on the Council's website.

8. Sensitive Interests

You may also apply to your Council's Monitoring officer for non publication of the full details of any of your DPIs or LNPIs where you reasonably believe that publication of the details of a particular DPI or LNPI could result in your being subjected to violence or intimidation. In considering such applications the Monitoring Officer shall have regard to any representations made by you in determining whether he or she considers the relevant DPI or LNPI should be treated as a Sensitive Interest and excluded from the published version of the Register of Members' Interests.

Part 1

Description of categories of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

You have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Council if it is of a description set out in 1 - 7 below and is either:

- (a) An interest of yours
- (b) An interest of your spouse or civil partner
- (c) An interest of a person with whom you are living as husband and wife or as civil partners

and, in the case of paragraphs (b) and (c), you are aware that they have the interest.

In these descriptions the term "relevant person" is used to mean you as member and any such person as set out in paragraphs (b) and (c)

- 1 Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
- 2 Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred in carrying out your duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 other than from a registered political party.
- 3 Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where -
 - (1) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council and
 - (2) either:
 - (a) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - (b) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
- 4 Any contract which is made between the relevant person, or a body in which they have a beneficial interest, and the Council-
 - (1) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
 - (2) which has not been fully discharged.
- 5 Any beneficial interest in any land in the Council's area.
- 6 Any tenancy where to your knowledge (a) the landlord is the Council and (b) the tenant is a body in which a relevant person has a beneficial interest.
- 7 Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the Council's area for a month or longer.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Part 2

Description of categories of Local Non Pecuniary Interests

- (1) Any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by the Council;
- (2) Any body-
 - (a) exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (b) directed to charitable purposes; or
 - (c) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union);of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;
- (3) Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

STANDARDS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE NOTE

1. Introduction

This note sets out the procedure to be followed upon receipt by the Monitoring Officer of a complaint under the Council's Code of Conduct for Members or the Code of Conduct for a parish/town council within the Council's administrative area.

2. Outline Procedure

2.1 The Monitoring Officer receives the complaint, acknowledges receipt and advises the councillor concerned that a complaint has been received. A copy of the complaint is provided to the councillor concerned unless there are extenuating circumstances.

2.2 If the complaint concerns a councillor's conduct in their private capacity then the Monitoring Officer rejects the complaint and notifies the complainant and councillor.

2.3 If the alleged conduct could be covered by the Code of Conduct, the Monitoring Officer secures a copy of the relevant Council's Code of Conduct (if not already obtained) & assesses the complaint against criteria adopted by the Standards Committee.

2.4 The Monitoring Officer consults with an appointed 'independent person' from the county wide pool of independent persons and decides:-

- (1) No action is needed, *or*
- (2) To refer the complaint to the Political Group Leader/s for steps to be taken to resolve the complaint, *or*
- (3) To undertake local resolution at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer, *or*
- (4) To investigate the complaint

2.5 The councillor who is the subject of the complaint may consult the 'independent person' to secure their views on the allegation.

3. No action

3.1 The Monitoring Officer informs the complainant and councillor that no action is required and the reasons for the decision. The complaint is closed.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

4. Referral to Political Group Leader

4.1 The Monitoring Officer provides details of the complaint to the Political Group Leader and relays the steps to be taken as agreed with the 'independent person'. Agrees the timescale for both the requested action and for a report back to be made.

4.2. The Leader confirms action has been taken as agreed. The complainant and councillor are informed that the complaint is closed.

4.3 If the Leader does not:

- (i) take the requested action, *or*
- (ii) report back to the Monitoring Officer within the agreed timescale, *or*
- (iii) the councillor does not fully co-operate with the Leader,

the Monitoring Officer re-consults the 'independent person' to consider local resolution or investigation. In exceptional circumstances, an extension of time may be provided. The Monitoring Officer informs the complainant and councillor of the decision taken.

5. Local resolution

5.1 This can take any form as agreed with the 'independent persons'. Examples include the issue of an apology by the councillor, the provision of training, conciliation or mediation.

5.2 The Monitoring Officer informs the complainant and councillor of the action required to close the complaint and the timescale in which the action must be taken.

5.3 If the requested action is taken within the prescribed timescale, the complaint is closed and the Monitoring Officer provides written confirmation to the complainant and councillor.

5.4 If the councillor does not take the requested action within the prescribed timescale, the Monitoring Officer re-consults the 'independent person' to consider local resolution or investigation. In exceptional circumstances, an extension of time may be provided to secure compliance. The Monitoring Officer informs the complainant and councillor of the decision taken.

5.5 If the form of local resolution requires the co-operation of the complainant (e.g. mediation) and the complainant declines to co-operate within a prescribed period, then the Monitoring Officer may close the complaint following further consultation with the 'independent person'.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

6. Investigation

6.1 The Monitoring Officer offers the councillor opportunity to respond to the complaint within a specified period of time.

6.2 The Monitoring Officer secures copies of any supporting information as he/she considers appropriate. The Monitoring Officer arranges for the interview of the complainant, the councillor and any witnesses as he/she considers is necessary and proportionate.

6.3 The information bundle is submitted to the 'independent person' for consideration. The 'independent person' is invited on each complaint to identify whether he/she considers that the alleged conduct amounts to a breach of the relevant Council's Code of Conduct.

6.4 If the 'independent person' finds that there is no breach of the Code of Conduct, the complaint is closed. The Monitoring Officer informs the complainant and the councillor of the decision with reasons.

6.5 If the 'independent person' finds that there is a breach of the Code of Conduct, the 'independent person' is invited to recommend the action that should be taken if their finding is upheld. The Monitoring Officer reports the complaint and finding to the designated committee for determination (and sanction, if appropriate). The consideration by the Committee takes place on the written material only.

6.6. The Monitoring Officer informs the complainant and the councillor of the Committee's decision with reasons. The complaint is closed.

N.B. There is no right of appeal against any stage of the process.

Louise Lennard

From: Democratic.Services.scdc
Sent: 04 July 2018 09:10
To: Hilary Slater
Subject: FW: Councillor conduct complaint - CC29203376

Thank you
 Maxine

From: noreply@eastssuffolk.gov.uk [<mailto:noreply@eastssuffolk.gov.uk>]
Sent: 03 July 2018 14:34
To: Democratic.Services.scdc
Subject: Councillor conduct complaint - CC29203376

Councillor conduct complaint form - Suffolk Coastal

Customer details:

Name: **Lady Caroline Blois**

Address: [REDACTED]

Contact details:

[REDACTED] councillorblois@woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk

Councillor details:

Councillor name: **Councillors [REDACTED] O'Nolan [REDACTED]**

Name of Council: **Woodbridge Town Council**

Which paragraph(s) of the Code of Conduct do you believe the Councillor who is the subject of your complaint has breached: **Section 100A(4) of the local government act 1972 para 3 part one of schedule12A**

Suffolk local code of conduct no 1, 2 - (2) (4) 3, (1) 4, 5 (2) (2b) (3)

Details of complaint: **Councillor Nolan [REDACTED] have breached this section of the act by going to the press concerning matters that were discussed in private with a unanimous vote which included these councillors, which could have financial implications for the council and the residents of Woodbridge.**

I am also complaining about [REDACTED]

I am complaining about his interview with the San Francisco Post where Councillor Nolan stated that he was basically an anarchist and wanted to upset the apple cart in England. I have the link if you require it.

I believe that these [REDACTED] councillors are deliberately causing upset to the members of the Town Council which is setting councillor against councillor because there is an up and coming election for one space in the Council.

Customer outcome expectation: I hope that the examiners will find in favour of the Council and formally reprimand these [REDACTED] councillors as trying to bring disrepute on the WTC and publicly shame them for their monstrous behaviour. The WT councillors work very hard for the benefit of Woodbridge and do not deserve this kind publicity or behaviour. I have watched the insidious bullying of the previous Town Clerk with dismay and concern and I feel that I now have to stand up and be counted as this kind of behaviour has to stop forthwith. I am so angry about the insinuation that I as one of the councillors lack integrity after 23 years with HM tribunal service, I feel I must be heard. This bullying has to stop.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Dear Cllr Blois

I note what you say.

I will up-date you about the complaints which have been made, shortly,

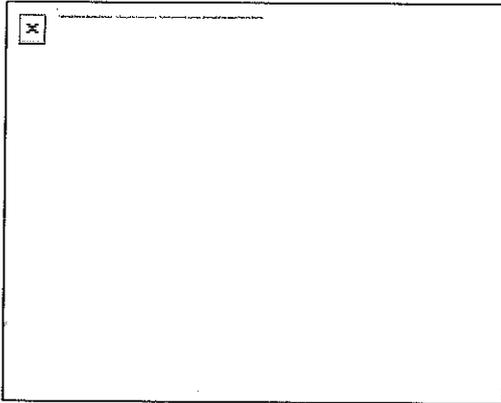
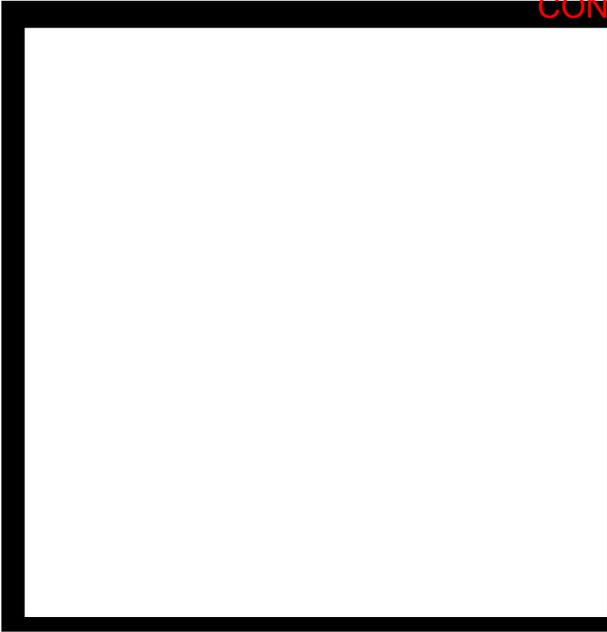
Thanks,

██████████

From: Councillor Blois [<mailto:councillorblois@woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk>]
Sent: 24 July 2018 08:46
To: ██████████
Subject: Complaint

Dear ██████████ just so that you know, we did our councillor training last night. ██████████ did not attend nor did O'Nolan despite the fact we received the letter saying we need training in the nolan principles which I have complained about. Councillor ██████████ put on her Facebook page that she had inspected Woodbridge accounts and intimated there was something wrong. This was the first I heard of it as I had been away. I am very angry as it is unforgivable to blatantly stir things as she is doing. Caroline.

Click [here](#) to report this email as spam.



Woodbridge Town Council

www.woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk

Councillor attendance at meetings for the Civic Year 2017/18.

Please click on the link below to view the Councillor

attendance at meetings record for the Civic Year 2017/18.

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email and any attachments to it are intended solely for the individual to whom it is addressed. It may contain sensitive or confidential material and should be handled accordingly. However, it is recognised that, as an intended recipient of this email, you may wish to share it with those who have a legitimate interest in the contents. If you have received this email in error and you are not the intended recipient you must not disclose, distribute, copy or print any of the information contained or attached within it, all copies must be deleted from your system. Please notify the sender immediately.

Whilst we take reasonable steps to identify software viruses, any attachments to this email may contain viruses which our anti-virus software has failed to identify. No liability can be accepted, and you should therefore carry out your own anti-virus checks before opening any documents.

Please note: Information contained in this e-mail may be subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

To view the Woodbridge Town Council privacy policy please click [here](#).

Click [here](#) to report this email as spam.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Click [here](#) to report this email as spam.

Confidentiality: This email and its attachments are intended for the above named only and may be confidential. If they have come to you in error you must take no action based on them, nor must you copy or show them to anyone; please reply to this email and highlight the error.

Security Warning: Please note that this email has been created in the knowledge that Internet email is not a 100% secure communications medium. We advise that you understand and accept this lack of security when emailing us.

Viruses: Although we have taken steps to ensure that this email and attachments are free from any virus, we advise that in keeping with good computing practice the recipient should ensure they are actually virus free.

This message has been scanned for malware by Websense. www.websense.com

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Complaint from Councillor Blois

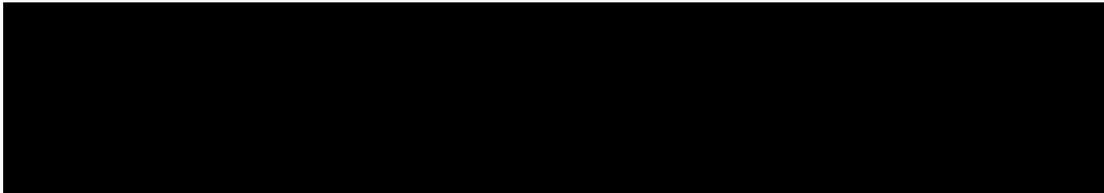
[by Cllr O'Nolan]

Background:

I think it is important that the Independent Person has some idea of the background to the events which are being considered. None of the complainants has laid out any background, or indeed any detail to support their allegations.

The ex-Town Clerk, [REDACTED] resigned from her post on February 2nd. I do not know why she resigned, and I was not at the time remotely concerned about this. I was out of the country at this time, and when I returned, I found that the Mayor had formed a Committee to hire the Clerk's replacement.

On February 26th, I queried the formation of the Committee with the Mayor, and called the Deputy Clerk to request a copy of Town Council Minutes for a meeting when I was away. I also requested a copy of the Staff Selection Procedure to be used for the recruitment. I was concerned that the Mayor and the F&S Committee were operating outside Standing Orders, which now seems to have clearly been the case.



Email from ex-Mayor below:

Dear Eamonn

I just wanted to personally say thank you for withdrawing your complaint . It was a horrid period for all of us , especially you .

In case you were wondering why, after all that has happened ,I am sending round emails with you included ,relating to [REDACTED] leaving , I thought I had better explain .



I do not expect you to sign the card or indeed suggest a present considering what has happened .

I hope you understand my reasons for doing it and why.

I hope that when she has left we will see you around the table again , because you are a valued member of the council .

Here's to better and peaceful times ! Thank you again Eamonn.

Hope you are having an ok time

Best Wishes



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Two separate subjects form the basis of the complaint which is now being considered:

1. Data Deletion

The [REDACTED] deletion, by the Clerk, of Council emails and paper Files

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

The highly unorthodox transactions between the Clerk (on behalf of the Council) and the Handsome Prints Company.

1. Data Deletion

On or about April 5th, the new Town Clerk discovered that the entire contents of the ex-clerks two email accounts had been deleted. These included many thousands of Town Council business emails, including quotes, orders, negotiations, questions and answers from and to the public, and so on.

I found out about this in the second half of April, when Councillor Gillard told me that the Mayor had announced that the ex-clerk had deleted all emails in both her accounts, and had shredded the day-to-day hard-copy files.

The Mayor announced this **outside of a meeting**, and as such outside of Standing Orders. **Confidentiality was not requested.**

I attended a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee on May 1st. There was one discussion *in camera*. After that had ended, a lengthy discussion took place about the Data Deletion. This discussion took place **after the meeting had ended**, and was not minuted. Again, this meeting was an informal one, outside of Standing Orders.

During this discussion, the Mayor described in detail what appeared to have happened, and many of the Councillors present contributed.

The information which I later gave to the East Anglian Daily Times emanated from this meeting.

The Chair of F&S, Councillor Sylvester, requested that Councillor Attwell and I conduct an informal enquiry into the data deletion event, and to report back to him.

On Tuesday May 8th I met with the new Clerk to discuss the deletion of the files. We jointly examined the ex-clerks PC and email accounts, and verified that almost all emails had been deleted. With her agreement, I spoke with the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

council's computer services provider, and arranged access to the backup files, and the old server.

During this meeting, we discussed the discussion of the F&S meeting on May 1st. The clerk told me unequivocally that the discussion of the data deletion event had taken place outside of the meeting. She said : "It was not on the agenda, so couldn't have been discussed in the meeting" and "I can only minute items which have appeared on the Agenda".

I returned on the afternoon of May 8th to examine the restored files. The Clerk refused to allow me to enter the building, and informed me that SALC had advised her that this examination was to be carried out by an officer, and not by a councillor.

I subsequently submitted a report to council with my initial findings, and with a suggestion that a data specialist might be employed to retrieve files which the ex-clerk had deleted from the old server.

The council declined to make any further efforts to retrieve this data.

It was only after this date that the council started discussing the data deletion event *in camera*. Accordingly, I fail to see how I could have breached any confidentiality code on this item.

It is clear to me that the dominant party was motivated by embarrassment, and some inexplicable desire to protect the ex-clerk, in wanting to bury this event.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

During the Summer of 2017 the Amenities Committee (of which I am a member) discussed "Branding the Council Assets". At a meeting on September 26th, the Clerk was authorized to purchase about eight new signs for three locations. The total expenditure was in the region of £3500.

199. **TO CONSIDER REPORT AND QUOTES FROM THE TOWN CLERK ON NO PARKING SIGNS AT TIDE MILL WAY AND BETTER SIGNAGE FOR ELMHURST PARK, KINGSTON FIELD AND FEN MEADOW**

The Town Clerk presented designs for No Parking Signs for Tide Mill Way to replace the old signs currently in situ. In the absence of the Harbourmaster (Councillor Dale) the Clerk will liaise with him via email to confirm the wording required.

The Town Clerk then presented signage examples designed by the 'The Handsome Prints Company' for the purpose of 'Badging our Assets' within the town. Together with professionally taken photographs and wording specific to each location these will form the basis of signage to be installed in Elmhurst Park, Kingston Field and Fen Meadow.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Town Council that:

- The No Parking signs are purchased following further discussing between the Town Clerk and Councillor Dale to confirm the wording required.
- The park signage be purchased once the Town Clerk has agreed the designs and costs with the Handsome Prints Company.

After further discussion it was agreed the Clerk should also seek designs and costs for signage covering all Town Council assets including the Art Club, Broomheath, Fitzgerald Green, Quaker Burial Ground, Tide Mill, War Memorial and when ready the Whisstocks Open Space. It was also agreed that the Town Clerk should contact Mr Julian Royal in regards to his proposed signage for Elmhurst Walk.

As you can see, the clerk was also authorized at that meeting to obtain quotes and designs for further signs, quantity unspecified, for the council's other locations.

The clerk did not report back to the Amenities Committee at any time after that meeting. No further quotes were submitted, and no proofs were provided. Early in April, after the clerk had departed, the new clerk discovered that a local supplier had been paid a total of £8200, and that 33 signs were "in production".

It was difficult for the new clerk to get to the bottom of things, because all of the related emails had been deleted.

The Clerk subsequently requested copies of correspondence from the supplier, the Handsome Prints Company. These are attached, and reveal a dialogue between the ex-clerk and the supplier's salesperson which is, at the very least, unprofessional. It is clear from gaps in the dialogue that the supplier has not provided the council with the full email history.

What concerned me immediately was that:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- competitive quotes were not obtained for the work
- no Purchase Order was ever placed for any of the work
- all signs were paid for in advance
- at no time did the council approve advance payments
- a total of £8200 was paid to the supplier, when only £3500 had been authorized
- the vast majority of the signs have still not been delivered
- the council wanted to cover up the whole issue, and were not in any hurry to chase the supplier

On further investigation, and from discussions with Councillor Harrup (who had until recently been responsible for signing off all payments), I discovered that most payments to the supplier had been made by the clerk **in advance of authorization by the council.** [REDACTED]

At least two payments to the supplier had not been initialed by a councillor, contrary to normal practice. Both of these payments were for amounts **in excess of the Clerk's authority.**

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Blois complaint, per paragraph of the Suffolk Code:

Paragraph 1

You must treat others with respect.

I have at all times treated others with respect. If I am to respond to this in detail, then I require more detail from those whom I am alleged to have treated without respect.

Paragraph 2.2

You must not bully any person.

I am not a bully, and I do not condone any form of bullying. Again, if I am to respond to this allegation in detail, then I require details from those whom I am accused of bullying, with specific examples.

I will say at this stage that the co-ordinated manner of this and other complaints certainly feels like bullying to me.

- Four councillors have made remarkably similar complaints, using almost exactly the same paragraphs of the Suffolk Code
- All four have avoided including any substantive evidence
- Three have quoted the same erroneous date on one of the East Anglian articles

Councillor Blois has made some disturbing statements in her complaint:

I am complaining about the bullying way the previous Town Clerk was spoken to on a regular basis and the current new Town Clerk is also being bullied in the same way by both councillors.

I have watched the insidious bullying of the previous Town Clerk with dismay and concern and I feel that I now have to stand up and be counted as this kind of behaviour has to stop forthwith.

I am very concerned by these claims. They imply a steady stream of abusive behaviour towards the ex-clerk which simply did not happen. Likewise, Councillor Blois states that I am bullying the new town clerk. This is simply not true.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

In fact, when the ex-clerk made a complaint about me back in 2016, the Independent Person found against Mrs Walker, after several councillors and members of the public, who had witnessed the exchange about which the ex-clerk complained, supported my defence.

As for my interaction with the new clerk, well that has been minimal indeed, and related to specific subjects.

I could go on, but I would request that Councillor Blois produces some actual evidence that I have bullied either the ex-clerk or the new clerk, and that this is backed up by statements from the alleged victims. Otherwise, I find it impossible to respond to sweeping, non-specific statements.

I said in my covering letter that this is not the first time that I have been bullied in the council.

The first time this occurred, Cllr Blois was one of my supporters, per the emails below. In the event, I did not take up her offer, but it should be clear from this exchange that it was me, rather than the Clerk and Mayor that she supported.

When the ex-clerk subsequently made a complaint about me to the Monitoring Officer, I am pretty sure that Cllr Blois contacted the Monitoring Officer to support my defence.

So I am a bit mystified by her current thinking.

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your very kind note: we were away over the weekend, and I have just arrived home from Southampton, hence the delay in responding.

I agree with what you have said, and I am happy to come to a meeting with Josh & Chris, to sort this out. I would be very grateful if you will come along as my representative.

As you will have gathered last week, I am more than keen that the complaints are aired, and that the evidence is produced. I don't know whether the complaints are written or verbal, but Kay is adamant that it had been strongly hinted that letters had been received.

How would you like to proceed? Shall we meet?

*Kind regards,
Eamonn*

On 11 Mar 2016, at 10:56, Caroline Blois | [REDACTED]

Dear Eamonn, This situation has to be resolved as you so rightly said - an evening I will not forget in a hurry~!! However Chris and Josh have no powers to reprimand you - so there is no reason why you should not sit down and try and resolve it. However, one of the sticking points is the "people" who have sent in written complaints - I think this should be resolved as well with you being told who and what they are and then if it cannot be resolved at the meeting the matter has to go to Hilary Slater but I hope for everyone's sake there can be a "kiss and make up" session. I deliberately did not read the document on web hope - after 22 years sitting in the Tribunal Service, I rang up my legal advice department and O was told it was ok to try and remain neutral for the time being.

I would be happy as a no political person to be your representative - this means I cannot take part in the proceedings but I can analyse and take notes if you want. It will drive everyone into a frenzy no

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

doubt - but the offer is there if its a way out of settling this issue. Common sense is what is needed now between everyone. Caroline.

--

Caroline Blois, Woodbridge, Suffolk

Paragraph 2.4

You must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your council.

I do not understand this ridiculous allegation. If it is intended to mean that I have coerced any member of the Council staff into doing something against their will, then I totally reject this.

Again, I would require more detail, including statements from any affected member of the Council staff before I could respond to this allegation.

Paragraph 3

You must not :-

- (1) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where—*
- (a) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;*
 - (b) you are required by law to do so;*
 - (c) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or*
 - (d) the disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority;*

Councillor Blois does not specify which information she refers to.

If she refers to the Data Deletion episode, then this was clearly discussed in open forum, outside of a meeting, on at least two occasions before the council started discussing it in camera.

If she refers to the Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments, then I would say that disclosure most certainly was in the public interest, for a number of reasons, including:

- the council told the East Anglian that the matter was confidential "because the supplier was local". This was a nonsensical reason for withholding news of the waste of public funds from the local taxpayers

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- the ex-clerk had exceeded her spending authority and secretly paid over £3500 to a supplier with whom the council had no contract
- the chair of F&S, Councillor Sylvester, had recommended for approval the Accounts for March, clearly without checking them. He mentioned that Councillor Attwell had checked them, but this had clearly not happened.

This is the set of accounts which included ALL of the payments to the supplier, a total of £8220. As stated above, £3500 of these invoices had been secretly paid by the ex-clerk, and £4600 had been paid-in-advance for products which have still not been delivered.

These councillors had clearly been duped [REDACTED] and had failed to carry out their responsibilities.

- [REDACTED] had approved the unlawful modification of the town's coat of arms, and its reproduction on a number of signs
- [REDACTED] had pre-paid a further £4600 to the same supplier in March, but had not informed the council that the product had not been delivered. In fact, [REDACTED] had sent an email to councillors in February stating that the signage relating to this payment "would be delivered by end of February".
- the council had made no meaningful progress in chasing reimbursement from the supplier. It is now more than three months since the [REDACTED] expenditure was discovered, and the supplier has still not responded to the council's without prejudice letter
- The council only commenced legal action against the supplier **after** the first article appeared in the East Anglian

Since the disclosures, the council has introduced new governance and security measures, bolting the door long after the horse had bolted.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Paragraph 4

You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.

I do not believe that I have brought either my office or my authority into disrepute. In fact, Woodbridge Town Council has itself brought itself into disrepute, if anyone has. Councillor Gillard and I took the decision that we would not comply with the council's efforts to cover up the extraordinary behaviour of the ex-clerk.

Paragraph 5.2

You :

(2) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority—

(b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes);

This is a remarkable allegation. The dominant party, to which the complainant belongs, has in the past used the town clerk to take minutes from the Conservative Group meetings (which are not council meetings), and the same party regularly uses the resources of the council to run a mini cabinet system. I have evidence of this, if you require it.

In response, I say that I have not used the resources of the council for political purposes. Councillor Blois may refer to the recent by-election in Kyson ward, but my party did not stand in that election.

Paragraph 5 (3) of the Code states that:

You must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

Would Councillor Blois care to identify which elements of the Local Government Act she would like to include in this exchange? Otherwise, we could be here until Christmas.

Response to Blois complaint, per narrative comments:

"I am complaining about his interview with the San Francisco Post where Councillor Nolan stated that he was basically an anarchist and wanted to upset the apple cart in England."

McCarthyism is obviously alive and well in Suffolk. It is unclear which part of the Code Councillor Blois is referring to here.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT



**STATEMENT
FRONT COVER**

Name:	Councillor Lady Caroline Blois
Position Held:	Complainant

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House,
26 Chantry Lane,
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England number OC343261
authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority

wilkin chapman llp

STATEMENT of: Councillor Lady Caroline Blois

1. I have been a member of Woodbridge Town Council since 2011. For most of my working life I have been involved in public service. I became a member of the Health Authority in 1983 and served on the Appointments Committee of the Peterborough Health Authority. In 1987 I was appointed as the Chairman of St Audrey's Hospital. In 1992 I became a member of the Tribunal Service, a position I held for 23 years.
2. My complaint about Councillors [REDACTED] O'Nolan relates to various aspects of their recent behaviour.
3. In an article in the East Anglia Daily Times, published on 16 June 2018, both Councillors were photographed by [REDACTED] a reporter for that newspaper. The article was headed "Thousands of pounds worth of undelivered signs in Woodbridge". This subject was debated in camera with no press there and they broke silence and their word not to discuss it publicly.
4. In the article the two Councillors claim that they discovered the problems with the signs. This is not correct as it was the new Town Clerk that identified the problems and with myself we investigated them.
5. On 4 July 2018 another article by [REDACTED] in the East Anglia Daily Times said Woodbridge Town Council was forced to defend itself after data loss. This was accompanied by photographs of Councillors O'Nolan [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again about a subject that for the time being was confidential and discussed in camera. They broke silence and their word not to discuss it publicly.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

6. In an article seen on Facebook, which was published in the San Francisco Chronicle on 22 August 2017, Councillor O'Nolan discusses his life and his UK politics being a Green Party member. In his words he is quoted as saying "we are interested in upsetting the apple cart. I am not a hippie I am an anarchist". This was subsequently removed from Facebook. He has upset the apple cart by breaking silence when an agenda item was agreed to be heard in camera.
7. My reference to bullying is on behalf of the staff who cannot answer back. I have walked into the office when the previous Town Clerk was in tears due to the way Councillor O'Nolan bullied her. This is on record. Now the new Town Clerk has also complained to me about Councillor O'Nolan's [REDACTED] [REDACTED] bullying manner and the way the staff are all spoken to when an issue is taking time to resolve. I have seen this at Council meetings in the way they approach their questioning of the Town Clerk. An example of this is when they ask the new Town Clerk questions in a public meeting knowing that she might not have the answer immediately.
8. I have had training from SALC (Suffolk Association of Local Councils) in how to deal with bullies in a Council meeting situation because of the bullying manner of certain Councillors. I just want them to realise they are now unpaid public servants and the public deserve to be spoken to and the staff dealt with in a proper manner.
9. The way they have used the media politically has caused immense lack of trust in the Council as a whole. For example, regarding the signage issue which is still ongoing, at the Amenities Committee meeting in October I had to say that the last item on the agenda was to be held in camera. I did not know whether the members of the Committee with political persuasions other than Conservative would obey the rules. This had been happening ever since Councillors O'Nolan [REDACTED] had previously broken silence. No one trusts anyone any longer and Council work is based on trust a lot of the time. The Council is now no longer a non political Council, it is split most certainly into them and us which it should not be according to the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

rules as I understand them.

10. Councillor [REDACTED] wrote an email to all Councillors saying that at our forthcoming training we needed to make sure the Nolan principles of Councillors were included and he listed them. By this implication he meant that we were not behaving correctly and to be told that I needed training in integrity after 35 years public service including 23 years with the Tribunal Service made me seriously angry. I decided to stand up and be counted and complain about their behaviour. This could also be called bullying by insinuation and cause upset to any one of the people receiving it as they could feel inadequate and self doubting of their performance doing their job. The Town Clerk organised training for councillors at which neither Councillor O'Nolan [REDACTED] attended.
11. I have been on the Town Council since 2011. In that time the only incorrect behaviour I have seen has been bullying of Councillors, including myself, and usually because of arguments. The bullying took the form of the volume and length and speed of speech when a Councillor wants to be heard all the time. This was why I asked for training from SALC, as I had never come across it before in 35 years of being a paid and unpaid public servant.
12. I have provided the investigating officer with copies of part of the article published in the San Francisco Chronicle [REDACTED] regarding the training and his comment about the Nolan Principles.

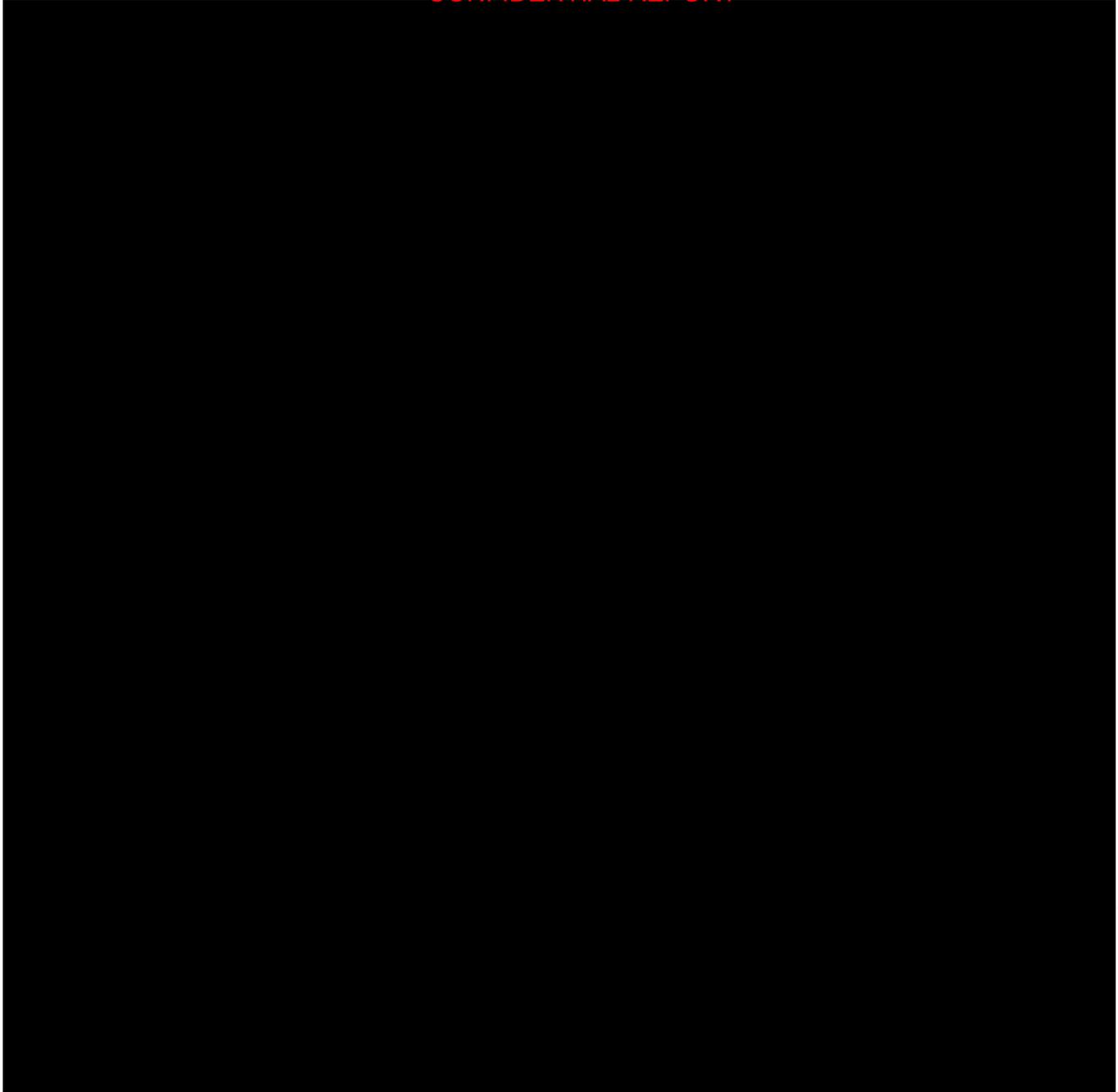
I Lady Caroline Blois declare that this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signe

[REDACTED]

Date

14/11/2018



se

Councillor conduct complaint form - Suffolk Coastal

Customer details:

Name: **Councillor Clare Perkins**

Address: [Redacted]

Contact details:



Councillor details:

Councillor name: **1. Councillor 2. Councillor 1. [Redacted] O'Nolan 2. [Redacted]**

Name of Council: **Woodbridge Town Council**

Which paragraph(s) of the Code of Conduct do you believe the Councillor who is the subject of your complaint has breached: **I believe that Councillors O'Nolan [Redacted] have breached the Suffolk**

Code of Conduct in points :

- 1. You must treat others with respect.**
- 2. You must not —**
- (2) bully any person;**
- (4) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for,**

or on behalf of, your council.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

3. You must not — (1) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature
4. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or council into disrepute.
5. You —
 - (2) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your council
 - (b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes);
 - (3) must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

I also believe that Councillors O’Nolan [REDACTED] have breached the Local Government Act 1972 in the point below:

(4) A principal council may by resolution exclude the public from a meeting during an item of business whenever it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during that item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information.

Details of complaint:

It saddens me to have to complain formally about fellow councillors, but it has come to a point where something has to be said. With the recent flouting of the Suffolk Code of Conduct rules that Councillors O’Nolan [REDACTED] seem to have taken upon themselves to do, it makes a mockery of what we as councillors uphold and adhere to.

During the last 2/3 years Councillors O’Nolan [REDACTED] have shown disrespectful behaviour towards members of the Council’s office staff, resulting in the recent resignation of, not only [REDACTED] the Town Clerk, but our secretary [REDACTED]. Both were affected by the way Councillor O’Nolan spoke to them and our secretary cited his ‘bullying ways’ as her reason for leaving.

[REDACTED] also displayed rudeness and disrespect to them both at varying times. This is in my opinion unforgivable.

Last year, during my mayoral year, an official complaint was made about me by Councillor O’Nolan, saying that I had “defamed his reputation in a smear campaign”. He accused myself and the then Town Clerk of lying about him, which was untrue. This complaint was removed subsequently at his request and never came to anything. However it left me reeling with shock and it affected me greatly and my confidence in my role as the Town Mayor. Our Town Clerk resigned I am sure because of the actions that Councillor O’Nolan took. I am now of the opinion that it was he who lied and tried to cause upset between the councillors and to topple the council for political gain.

More recently and worryingly so, are the recent articles that have been published in the EADT about things that were said in Confidence and in Camra at 2 separate meetings, and which should never have been made public. Not because the Council wanted to hide the information, but because it was sensitive and confidential. These Councillors both attended and agreed that these meetings should be held in camra. It appears that as soon as one meeting was over the information was immediately passed to the journalist who was waiting for them outside and the subsequent article was printed the next day revealing what we had discussed in confidence.

Not content with one article being written with both councillors being photographed, two other articles followed a few days later publicising yet more sensitive material that had been discussed in camra with them at the meeting again.

This is not how councillors should behave. The Suffolk Code of Conduct has blatantly been breached by them both in a number of ways it appears, for political gain. With the [REDACTED] ward election soon happening, it would appear that they want to upset the equilibrium of the Council by making it out to be in crisis. We are not. As councillors we are supposed to be non-political when elected and deal with everything in a non-political way for the good of the town.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Our new Clerk [REDACTED] unfortunately is currently being subjected to countless unnecessary phone calls, emails and requests from Councillors O'Nolan [REDACTED]. This is taking her away from being able to do her job properly and has caused her much distress. She feels that she is being bullied and has threatened to leave because of these two councillors behaviour towards her. We cannot allow this to happen and we as a whole council are responsible for the welfare of our staff, who work hard to help us be effective councillors for the electorate. Our staff do not deserve to be treated in this way and those who do should be reprimanded.

[REDACTED]

Councillor O'Nolan were 'robustly supporting the principles' especially the seventh one which is leadership. He also questioned the council's 'intergrity'. This I find totally unacceptable. How dare he question our integrity.

The definition of Integrity is: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. Someone who doesn't toe the line, and who goes out of their way to cause problems, soon infect the whole environment and causes division, fear and stress. This is what is happening and we must stop it.

Customer outcome expectation: I would like to see Councillors O'Nolan [REDACTED] publicly reprimanded and reminded of the importance of the Suffolk Code of Conduct. I would also like them to be reminded that it does no good to cause ill feeling and upset amongst a group of decent people who have been democratically-elected to be local representatives in a unique and privileged position – and the potential to make a real difference to people's lives. This is what being a councillor is. It is not to pitch Councillor against Councillor in a political fight.

Do you want the complaint to be dealt with anonymously?: No

If yes, Please provide details of why you believe that your name and/or the details of your complaint should be withheld:

If yes, If anonymity isn't granted, do you still wish to proceed?:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

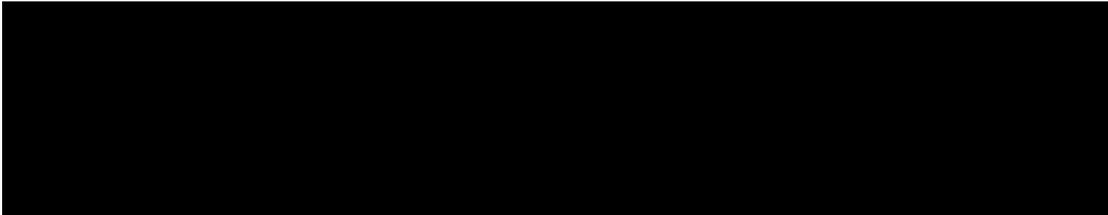
Response to Complaint from Councillor Perkins

Background:

I think it is important that the Independent Person has some idea of the background to the events which are being considered. None of the complainants has laid out any background, or indeed any detail to support their allegations.

The ex-Town Clerk [REDACTED] resigned from her post on February 2nd. I do not know why she resigned, and I was not at the time remotely concerned about this. I was out of the country at this time, and when I returned, I found that the Mayor had formed a Committee to hire the Clerk's replacement.

On February 26th, I queried the formation of the Committee with the Mayor, and called the Deputy Clerk to request a copy of Town Council Minutes for a meeting when I was away. I also requested a copy of the Staff Selection Procedure to be used for the recruitment. I was concerned that the Mayor and the F&S Committee were operating outside Standing Orders, which now seems to have clearly been the case.



Email from ex-Mayor below:

Dear Eamonn

I just wanted to personally say thank you for withdrawing your complaint . It was a horrid period for all of us , especially you .

In case you were wondering why, after all that has happened ,I am sending round emails with you included ,relating to [REDACTED] eaving , I thought I had better explain .



I do not expect you to sign the card or indeed suggest a present considering what has happened .

I hope you understand my reasons for doing it and why.

I hope that when she has left we will see you around the table again , because you are a valued member of the council .

Here's to better and peaceful times ! Thank you again Eamonn.

Hope you are having an ok time

Best Wishes

[REDACTED]

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Two separate subjects form the basis of the complaint which is now being considered:

1. Data Deletion

The [REDACTED] deletion, by the Clerk, of Council emails and paper Files

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

The highly unorthodox transactions between the Clerk (on behalf of the Council) and the Handsome Prints Company.

1. Data Deletion

On or about April 5th, the new Town Clerk discovered that the entire contents of [REDACTED] two email accounts had been deleted. These included many thousands of Town Council business emails, including quotes, orders, negotiations, questions and answers from and to the public, and so on.

I found out about this in the second half of April, when [REDACTED] told me that the Mayor had announced that the ex-clerk had deleted all emails in both [REDACTED] accounts, and had shredded the day-to-day hard-copy files.

The Mayor announced this **outside of a meeting**, and as such outside of Standing Orders. **Confidentiality was not requested.**

I attended a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee on May 1st. There was one discussion *in camera*. After that had ended, a lengthy discussion took place about the Data Deletion. This discussion took place **after the meeting had ended**, and was not minuted. Again, this meeting was an informal one, outside of Standing Orders.

During this discussion, Councillor Perkins, then the Mayor, described in detail what appeared to have happened, and many of the Councillors present contributed.

The information which I later gave to the East Anglian Daily Times emanated from this meeting.

The Chair of F&S, Councillor [REDACTED] requested that Councillor [REDACTED] and I conduct an informal enquiry into the data deletion event, and to report back to him.

On Tuesday May 8th I met with the new Clerk to discuss the deletion of the files. We jointly examined the [REDACTED] PC and email accounts, and verified that almost all emails had been deleted. With her agreement, I spoke with the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

council's computer services provider, and arranged access to the backup files, and the old server.

During this meeting, we discussed the discussion of the F&S meeting on May 1st. The clerk told me unequivocally that the discussion of the data deletion event had taken place outside of the meeting. She said : "It was not on the agenda, so couldn't have been discussed in the meeting" and "I can only minute items which have appeared on the Agenda".

I returned on the afternoon of May 8th to examine the restored files. The Clerk refused to allow me to enter the building, and informed me that SALC had advised her that this examination was to be carried out by an officer, and not by a councillor.

I subsequently submitted a report to council with my initial findings, and with a suggestion that a data specialist might be employed to retrieve files which the ex-clerk had deleted from the old server.

The council declined to make any further efforts to retrieve this data.

It was only after this date that the council started discussing the data deletion event *in camera*. Accordingly, I fail to see how I could have breached any confidentiality code on this item.

It is clear to me that the dominant party was motivated by embarrassment, and some inexplicable desire to protect [REDACTED] in wanting to bury this event.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

During the Summer of 2017 the Amenities Committee (of which I am a member) discussed "Branding the Council Assets". At a meeting on September 26th, the Clerk was authorized to purchase about eight new signs for three locations. The total expenditure was in the region of £3500.

199. **TO CONSIDER REPORT AND QUOTES FROM THE TOWN CLERK ON NO PARKING SIGNS AT TIDE MILL WAY AND BETTER SIGNAGE FOR ELMHURST PARK, KINGSTON FIELD AND FEN MEADOW**

The Town Clerk presented designs for No Parking Signs for Tide Mill Way to replace the old signs currently in situ. In the absence of the Harbourmaster (Councillor Dale) the Clerk will liaise with him via email to confirm the wording required.

The Town Clerk then presented signage examples designed by the [REDACTED] Company' for the purpose of 'Badging our Assets' within the town. Together with professionally taken photographs and wording specific to each location these will form the basis of signage to be installed in Elmhurst Park, Kingston Field and Fen Meadow.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Town Council that:

- The No Parking signs are purchased following further discussing between the Town Clerk and Councillor Dale to confirm the wording required.
- The park signage be purchased once the Town Clerk has agreed the designs and costs with the Handsome Prints Company.

After further discussion it was agreed the Clerk should also seek designs and costs for signage covering all Town Council assets including the Art Club, Broomheath, Fitzgerald Green, Quaker Burial Ground, Tide Mill, War Memorial and when ready the Whisstocks Open Space. It was also agreed that the Town Clerk should contact Mr Julian Royal in regards to his proposed signage for Elmhurst Walk.

As you can see, the clerk was also authorized at that meeting to obtain quotes and designs for further signs, quantity unspecified, for the council's other locations.

The clerk did not report back to the Amenities Committee at any time after that meeting. No further quotes were submitted, and no proofs were provided. Early in April, after the clerk had departed, the new clerk discovered that a local supplier had been paid a total of £8200, and that 33 signs were "in production".

It was difficult for the new clerk to get to the bottom of things, because all of the related emails had been deleted.

The Clerk subsequently requested copies of correspondence from the supplier, the [REDACTED]. These are attached, and reveal a dialogue between the ex-clerk and the supplier's salesperson which is, at the very least, unprofessional. It is clear from gaps in the dialogue that the supplier has not provided the council with the full email history.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

What concerned me immediately was that:

- competitive quotes were not obtained for the work
- no Purchase Order was ever placed for any of the work
- all signs were paid for in advance
- at no time did the council approve advance payments
- a total of £8200 was paid to the supplier, when only £3500 had been authorized
- the vast majority of the signs have still not been delivered
- the council wanted to cover up the whole issue, and were not in any hurry to chase the supplier

On further investigation, and from discussions with Councillor [REDACTED] (who had until recently been responsible for signing off all payments), I discovered that most payments to the supplier had been made by the clerk **in advance of authorization by the council.** [REDACTED]

At least two payments to the supplier had not been initialed by a councillor, contrary to normal practice. Both of these payments were for amounts **in excess of the Clerk's authority.**

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Perkins complaint, per paragraph of the Suffolk Code:

Paragraph 1

You must treat others with respect.

I have at all times treated others with respect. If I am to respond to this in detail, then I require more detail from those whom I am alleged to have treated without respect.

Paragraph 2.2

You must not bully any person.

I am not a bully, and I do not condone any form of bullying. Again, if I am to respond to this allegation in detail, then I require details from those whom I am accused of bullying, with specific examples.

I will say at this stage that the co-ordinated manner of this and other complaints certainly feels like bullying to me.

- Four councillors have made remarkably similar complaints, using almost exactly the same paragraphs of the Suffolk Code
- All four have avoided including any substantive evidence
- Three have quoted the same erroneous date on one of the East Anglian articles

Councillor Perkins makes some very serious allegations. If she is to be believed, I have been responsible for the departure of [REDACTED] (not true), [REDACTED] (not true), and the potential departure of the current clerk (again, not true).

In respect of these allegations, I require Councillor Perkins to provide detailed accounts of incidents where she believes that I have bullied any of these three people, backed up by statements from all three. Otherwise, what we are dealing with here is unfounded, unsupported allegations.

Councillor Perkins refers to the complaint which I made about her and Councillor Sylvester last year.

I am completely flabbergasted by her paragraph:

"Last year, during my mayoral year, an official complaint was made about me by Councillor [REDACTED] saying that I had "defamed his reputation in a smear campaign". He accused myself and the then Town Clerk of lying about him, which was untrue. This complaint was removed subsequently at his request and never

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

came to anything. However it left me reeling with shock and it affected me greatly and my confidence in my role as the Town Mayor. Our Town Clerk resigned I am sure because of the actions that Councillor ██████ took. I am now of the opinion that it was he who lied and tried to cause upset between the councillors and to topple the council for political gain .

I did make a complaint to the Monitoring Officer, in March of this year. Councillors Perkins ██████ had defamed me, in front of a group of other councillors, after a Finance & Staffing Committee meeting at which I had not been present. They said that I had requested a copy of the ex-clerk's contract of employment (she had recently resigned)

I had not done this. I had requested from the Deputy Clerk a copy of the Selection Process for her replacement, which is an altogether different thing. This relates to the 'Committee' which the Mayor (Councillor Perkins) had set up to appoint her replacement, which consisted of five members of the dominant party. My point was that it was not representative of the political make-up of the council, and that once again the dominant party was running things outside of Standing Orders.

Councillor Perkins repeated her slander on at least one other occasion, in the presence of Councillor ██████ and County Councillor ██████. In that encounter, she also tried to persuade Councillor ██████ to withdraw his support for my version of events.

Councillor ██████ informed me that the Deputy Clerk had confirmed to him that I had not requested a copy of the Clerk's contract. Councillor ██████ informed me that this conversation had happened while she was in the room, and that she could confirm Councillor ██████ statement.

"This complaint was removed subsequently at his request and never came to anything"

The actual fact is that when they heard about the Deputy Clerk's statement, Councillors Perkins ██████ realised that the ██████ had misled them, and requested a meeting with me. This ran for at least 90 minutes. Both were distraught, and Councillor Perkins quite emotional. They asked me to withdraw my complaint, and apologized to me.

Councillor Perkins used the same phrase that she uses now – "reeling with shock". The difference is that it was ██████ who had been the cause of her distress.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Paragraph 2.4

You must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your council.

I do not understand this ridiculous allegation. If it is intended to mean that I have coerced any member of the Council staff into doing something against their will, then I totally reject this.

Again, I would require more detail before I could respond to this allegation.

Paragraph 3

You must not :-

(1) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where—

(a) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;

(b) you are required by law to do so;

(c) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

(d) the disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority;

Councillor Perkins does not specify which information he refers to.

If she refers to the Data Deletion episode, then this was clearly discussed in open forum, outside of a meeting, on at least two occasions before the council started discussing it in camera.

If she refers to the [REDACTED] Signage Procurement and [REDACTED] Payments, then I would say that disclosure most certainly was in the public interest, for a number of reasons, including:

- the council told the East Anglian that the matter was confidential "because the supplier was local". This was a nonsensical reason for withholding news of the waste of public funds from the local taxpayers
- the [REDACTED] had exceeded [REDACTED] spending authority and secretly paid over £3500 to a supplier with whom the council had no contract
- the chair of F&S, Councillor Sylvester, had recommended for approval the Accounts for March, clearly without checking them. He mentioned that Councillor Attwell had checked them, but this had clearly not happened.

This is the set of accounts which included ALL of the payments to the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

supplier, a total of £8220. As stated above, £3500 of these invoices had been secretly paid by the ex-clerk, and £4600 had been paid-in-advance for products which have still not been delivered.

These councillors had clearly been duped by [REDACTED] and had failed to carry out their responsibilities.

- [REDACTED] had approved the unlawful modification of the town's coat of arms, and its reproduction on a number of signs
- [REDACTED] had pre-paid a further £4600 to the same supplier in March, but had not informed the council that the product had not been delivered. In fact, [REDACTED] had sent an email to councillors in February stating that the signage relating to this payment "would be delivered by end of February".
- the council had made no meaningful progress in chasing reimbursement from the supplier. It is now more than three months since the unlawful expenditure was discovered, and the supplier has still not responded to the council's without prejudice letter
- The council only commenced legal action against the supplier **after** the first article appeared in the East Anglian

Since the disclosures, the council has introduced new governance and security measures, bolting the door long after the horse had bolted.

Councillor Perkins says:

Our new Clerk, Kate Lacey, unfortunately is currently being subjected to countless unnecessary phone calls, emails and requests from Councillors O'Nolan and [REDACTED]. This is taking her away from being able to do her job properly and has caused her much distress. She feels that she is being bullied and has threatened to leave because of these two councillors behaviour towards her.

Has Ms Lacey said that she is being subjected to "countless calls, emails and requests" from me? I think not, because my calls to the new clerk have in fact been very easy to count.

For the record, I was out of the country for much of April, and a transcript of all emails between us is attached at Appendix 666666. My calls number less than 6, five of which were directly related to the task which Councillor [REDACTED] asked me to carry out, namely the audit of the deletion of the clerk's emails, and the shredding of the paper files.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Paragraph 4

You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.

I do not believe that I have brought either my office or my authority into disrepute. In fact, Woodbridge Town Council has itself brought itself into disrepute, if anyone has. Councillor [REDACTED] and I took the decision that we would not comply with the council's efforts to cover up the extraordinary behaviour of the [REDACTED]

Paragraph 5.2

You :

(2) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority—

(b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes);

This is a remarkable allegation. The dominant party, to which the complainant belongs, has in the past used the town clerk to take minutes from the Conservative Group meetings (which are not council meetings), and the same party regularly uses the resources of the council to run a mini cabinet system. I have evidence of this, if you require it.

In response, I say that I have not used the resources of the council for political purposes. Councillor Perkins may refer to the recent by-election in Kyson ward, but my party did not stand in that election.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Perkins complaint, per narrative comments:

Councillor Perkins has used an interesting phrase: “someone who doesn’t toe the line”.

It is the case that the dominant party in Woodbridge Town Council has run the council as if they owned it, for longer than I have been a councillor. Several other long-service councillors feel the same way. If one thing shines clearly through these complaints, it is that these councillors are used to getting their own way. They regularly share information only with a selected group of other councillors, and frequently omit to copy all councillors in on important matters. Several relevant examples have popped up during this whole episode:

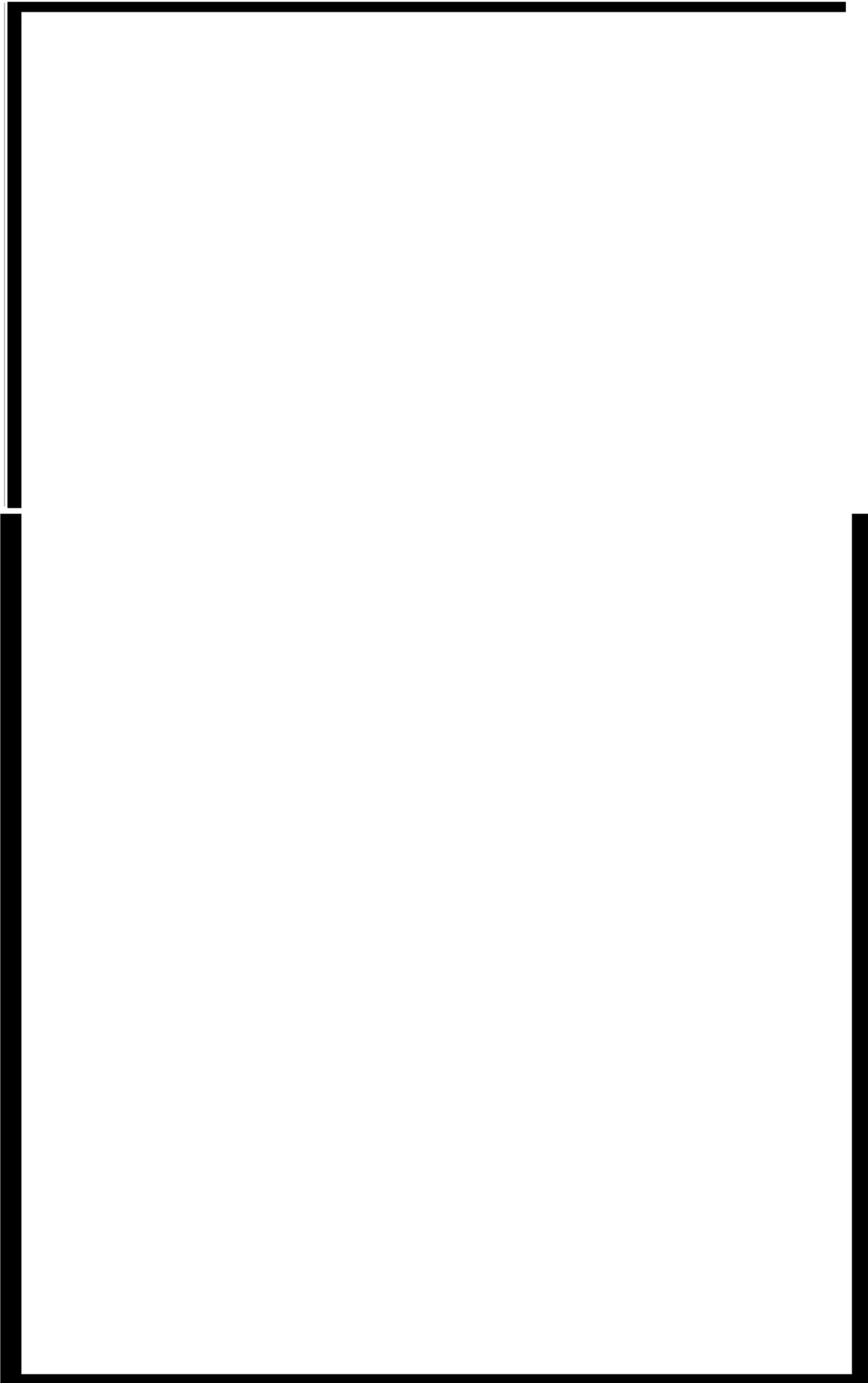
- the news of [REDACTED] deletion of her emails was not shared to all councillors when it became apparent – so the cover-up began at day 1.
- If you have the patience to read it, the following email thread is typical of intra-council messages where most councillors are excluded.

What happened here is important:

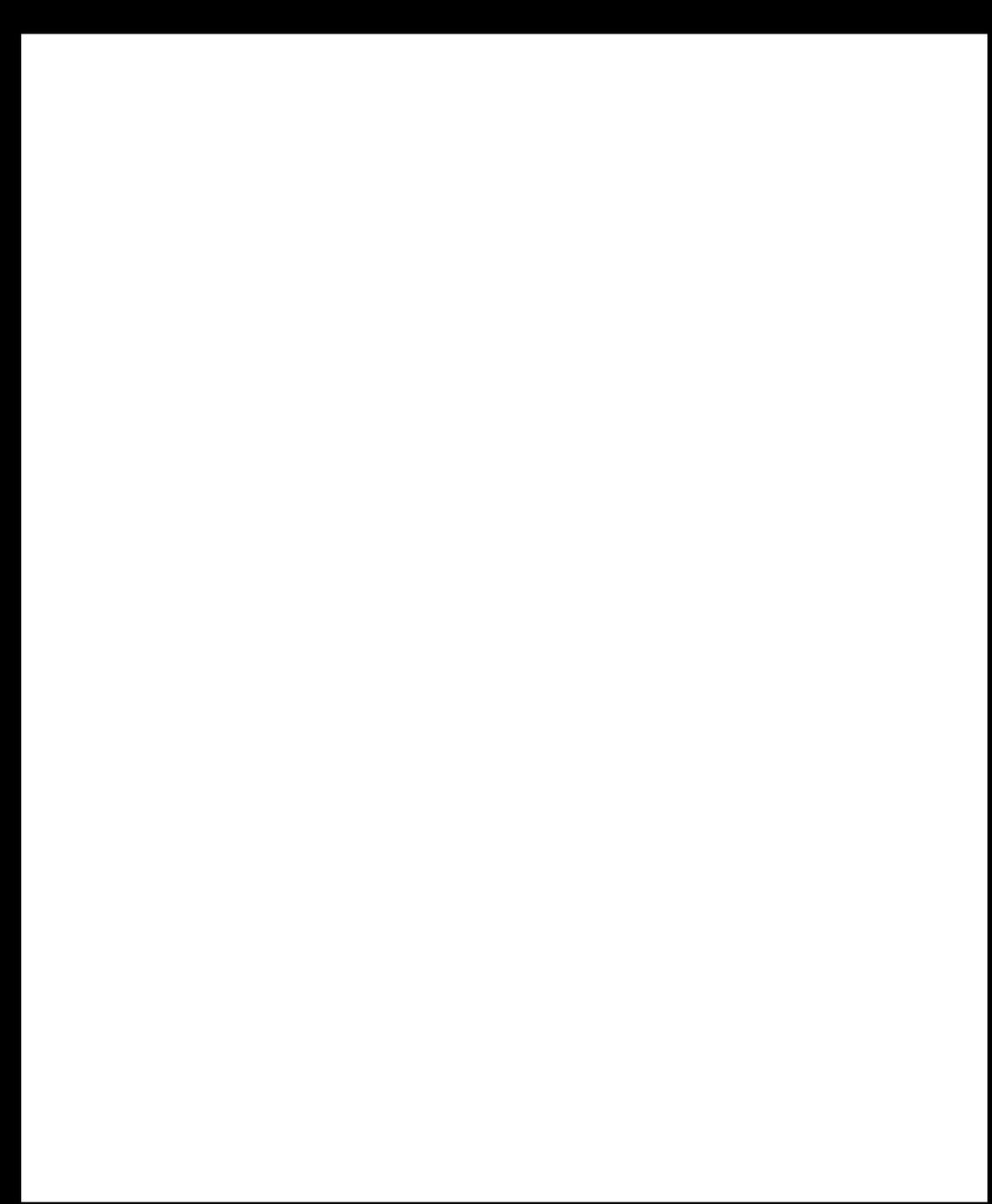
- Gillard asks for an update to the email deletion matter to be added to Town Council agenda (with enough notice, per Standing Orders)
- Perkins jumps in (email was not actually addressed to her)
- She repeats the bogus line about ‘drawing a line under the event’ (from Cllr Mortimer). So the big lie about a non-existent motion is continued.
- She excludes nine councillors from her response, and asks addressees not to share it. Why, for heavens sake?



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

**STATEMENT
FRONT COVER**

Name: Councillor Clare Perkins

Position Held: Complainant

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House,
26 Chantry Lane,
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England number OC343261
authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority



STATEMENT of: Councillor Clare Perkins

1. I have been a member of Woodbridge Town Council since ??? I was elected as a Conservative Councillor. I was the Mayor during the 2107/18 municipal year.
2. Whilst I was the Mayor the Town Councillors got on very well together working for the benefit of the town. I felt we worked as a very cohesive unit.
3. Since the recent problems which are the reason for my complaint against Councillor [REDACTED] O’Nolan the atmosphere has changed. At times I do not know who is right but it is very uncomfortable being in the middle of the disputes.
4. I have witnessed unacceptable conduct from the [REDACTED] ouncillors that I consider to be bullying and disrespectful towards the Council’s staff. I have been in the Council’s office with both the former Town Clerk and the current one when they have received telephone calls or emails from these Councillors. It is evident from the effect on the staff that the contact with these Councillors has caused them distress.
5. Neither of the Councillors listens to advice when they have been provided with information.
6. Their approach is very clever in that they hide behind a facade of what they are doing is for the electorate. I believe they are aware that they are needling the staff by repeatedly asking the same questions.
7. An example of the problems experienced by the Town Clerks has been times when Councillor O’Nolan has been present at meetings of the Council or a Committee. He is often very quiet at the meetings, having little

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

to contribute. However, after the meeting he will enter into an email exchange with the Town Clerk. This usually involves challenging decisions that have been made or demanding further information.

8. I believe both of these Councillors have exhibited bullying and disrespectful behaviour towards the Council's employees, in particular the former Clerk and more recently the new Clerk.
9. A further example of inappropriate behaviour by Councillor O'Nolan relates to a complaint made by him against me during my mayoral year. He alleged that I had been party to lies made about him regarding him requesting information about the former Town Clerk's contract of employment. He denied asking for the contract. After making enquires I was led to believe that what the former Town Clerk had told me was incorrect. I gave a written apology to Councillor O'Nolan and he withdrew the complaint. I have since seen an email from Councillor O'Nolan to the new Town Clerk that clearly requests a copy of the former Town Clerk's contract of employment.
10. My complaint against the two Councillors also refers to articles in the local press which clearly identify the disclosure of confidential information. In the first instance they were quoted in an article about the deletion of emails from the Council's computer. This was first identified by the new Clerk around the time of the Council's Annual General Meeting this year. I met [REDACTED] as I was leaving the Clerk's office and mentioned to him that some of the emails appeared to be missing.
11. The Council immediately took action to recover any missing emails and other files. The matter was discussed at Council and Committee meetings as the issue was being dealt with. These discussions were in the confidential part of the meetings. When the two Councillors spoke to the press they made statements to the effect that the Council had lost data. I believe this was intended to discredit the Council by implying that sensitive data had been lost rather than the deletion of routine emails.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- 12. The second incident related to some signs that had been ordered by the Council. This was first raised after a meeting when confidential information had been considered. At the end of the meeting the Chairman, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] informed the Councillors that some issues had come to light. He clearly stated that this was a private discussion and would be reported to a future meeting. It was immediately following this that the two Councillors were pictured and quoted in the local press in an article which reported on the issues relating to the signs.

- 13. I believe these incidents were politically motivated as the two Councillors are trying to discredit the Council. Their actions are supported by the local County Councillor, [REDACTED]. She is often reported as making derogatory comments about the Town Council.

- 14. I have provided the investigating officer with a number of documents which evidence the conduct referred to in my complaint. These include copies of emails between various Councillors and written rebuttals of the complaints made by Councillor O’Nolan against me.

I Clare Perkins declare that this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

SignedDate

Councillor Perkins was unable to print, sign and return her statement but confirmed approval in an email dated 23.01.19

Councillor conduct complaint form - Suffolk Coastal**Customer details:**Name: **Cllr David Mortimer**

Address: [REDACTED]

Contact details:

[REDACTED], councillormortimer@woodbridge-suffolk.gov.uk**Councillor details:**Councillor name: **Cllr Eamonn O'Nolan**Name of Council: **Woodbridge Town Council**

Which paragraph(s) of the Code of Conduct do you believe the Councillor who is the subject of your complaint has breached: **Section 100a(4) of the Local Government Act 1972. Paragraph 3, Part 1 of schedule 12a.**

Details of complaint: **Councillors O'Nolan has breached this law on multiple occasions within the last 2 weeks.**

EADT 26th June 2018 - Incorrect report over money spent on signage

EADT 28th June 2018 - Another report regarding signage

EADT 28th June 2018 - Incorrect report relating to data loss at Woodbridge Town Council

Plus this has been printed in spin off publications.

This councillor is laughing at the rules and making the Council look foolish and corrupt. There is enormous stress being felt by the staff at the Shire hall and Councillors have been squabbling with each other as political factions have got together in an attempt to bring down the Council.

Customer outcome expectation: **This has reached a point where serious allegations are coming to light of prolonged bullying and the above breach of conduct. This whole situation is about to explode and i urge you to intervene immediately. I expect this councillor to be disciplined to the fullest extent of the law.**

Do you want the complaint to be dealt with anonymously?: **No**

If yes, Please provide details of why you believe that your name and/or the details of your complaint should be withheld:

If yes, If anonymity isn't granted, do you still wish to proceed?:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Complaint from Councillor Mortimer

Background:

I think it is important that the Independent Person has some idea of the background to the events which are being considered. None of the complainants has laid out any background, or indeed any detail to support their allegations.

The ex-Town Clerk, [REDACTED] resigned from her post on February 2nd. I do not know why she resigned, and I was not at the time remotely concerned about this. I was out of the country at this time, and when I returned, I found that the Mayor had formed a Committee to hire the Clerk's replacement.

On February 26th, I queried the formation of the Committee with the Mayor, and called the Deputy Clerk to request a copy of Town Council Minutes for a meeting when I was away. I also requested a copy of the Staff Selection Procedure to be used for the recruitment. I was concerned that the Mayor and the F&S Committee were operating outside Standing Orders, which now seems to have clearly been the case.



Email from ex-Mayor below:

Dear Eamonn

I just wanted to personally say thank you for withdrawing your complaint . It was a horrid period for all of us , especially you .

In case you were wondering why, after all that has happened ,I am sending round emails with you included ,relating to [REDACTED] leaving , I thought I had better explain .



I do not expect you to sign the card or indeed suggest a present considering what has happened .

I hope you understand my reasons for doing it and why.

I hope that when she has left we will see you around the table again , because you are a valued member of the council .

Here's to better and peaceful times ! Thank you again Eamonn.

Hope you are having an ok time

Best Wishes



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Two separate subjects form the basis of the complaint which is now being considered:

1. Data Deletion

The [REDACTED] deletion, by the Clerk, of Council emails and paper Files

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

The highly unorthodox transactions between the Clerk (on behalf of the Council) and the Handsome Prints Company.

1. Data Deletion

On or about April 5th, the new Town Clerk discovered that the entire contents of [REDACTED] two email accounts had been deleted. These included many thousands of Town Council business emails, including quotes, orders, negotiations, questions and answers from and to the public, and so on.

I found out about this in the second half of April, when Councillor Gillard told me that the Mayor had announced that [REDACTED] had deleted all emails in both [REDACTED] accounts, and had shredded the day-to-day hard-copy files.

The Mayor announced this **outside of a meeting**, and as such outside of Standing Orders. **Confidentiality was not requested.**

I attended a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee on May 1st. There was one discussion *in camera*. After that had ended, a lengthy discussion took place about the Data Deletion. This discussion took place **after the meeting had ended**, and was not minuted. Again, this meeting was an informal one, outside of Standing Orders.

During this discussion, the Mayor described in detail what appeared to have happened, and many of the Councillors present contributed.

The information which I later gave to the East Anglian Daily Times emanated from this meeting.

The Chair of F&S, [REDACTED] requested that [REDACTED] and I conduct an informal enquiry into the data deletion event, and to report back to him.

On Tuesday May 8th I met with the new Clerk to discuss the deletion of the files. We jointly examined the [REDACTED] PC and email accounts, and verified that almost all emails had been deleted. With her agreement, I spoke with the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

council's computer services provider, and arranged access to the backup files, and the old server.

During this meeting, we discussed the discussion of the F&S meeting on May 1st. The clerk told me unequivocally that the discussion of the data deletion event had taken place outside of the meeting. She said : "It was not on the agenda, so couldn't have been discussed in the meeting" and "I can only minute items which have appeared on the Agenda".

I returned on the afternoon of May 8th to examine the restored files. The Clerk refused to allow me to enter the building, and informed me that SALC had advised her that this examination was to be carried out by an officer, and not by a councillor.

I subsequently submitted a report to council with my initial findings, and with a suggestion that a data specialist might be employed to retrieve files which the ex-clerk had deleted from the old server.

The council declined to make any further efforts to retrieve this data.

It was only after this date that the council started discussing the data deletion event *in camera*. Accordingly, I fail to see how I could have breached any confidentiality code on this item.

It is clear to me that the dominant party was motivated by embarrassment, and some inexplicable desire to protect [REDACTED] in wanting to bury this event.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

During the Summer of 2017 the Amenities Committee (of which I am a member) discussed "Branding the Council Assets". At a meeting on September 26th, the Clerk was authorized to purchase about eight new signs for three locations. The total expenditure was in the region of £3500.

199. **TO CONSIDER REPORT AND QUOTES FROM THE TOWN CLERK ON NO PARKING SIGNS AT TIDE MILL WAY AND BETTER SIGNAGE FOR ELMHURST PARK, KINGSTON FIELD AND FEN MEADOW**

The Town Clerk presented designs for No Parking Signs for Tide Mill Way to replace the old signs currently in situ. In the absence of the Harbourmaster (Councillor Dale) the Clerk will liaise with him via email to confirm the wording required.

The Town Clerk then presented signage examples designed by the [REDACTED] Company' for the purpose of 'Badging our Assets' within the town. Together with professionally taken photographs and wording specific to each location these will form the basis of signage to be installed in Elmhurst Park, Kingston Field and Fen Meadow.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Town Council that:

- The No Parking signs are purchased following further discussing between the Town Clerk and Councillor Dale to confirm the wording required.
- The park signage be purchased once the Town Clerk has agreed the designs and costs with the Handsome Prints Company.

After further discussion it was agreed the Clerk should also seek designs and costs for signage covering all Town Council assets including the Art Club, Broomheath, Fitzgerald Green, Quaker Burial Ground, Tide Mill, War Memorial and when ready the Whisstocks Open Space. It was also agreed that the Town Clerk should contact Mr Julian Royal in regards to his proposed signage for Elmhurst Walk.

As you can see, the clerk was also authorized at that meeting to obtain quotes and designs for further signs, quantity unspecified, for the council's other locations.

The clerk did not report back to the Amenities Committee at any time after that meeting. No further quotes were submitted, and no proofs were provided. Early in April, after the clerk had departed, the new clerk discovered that a local supplier had been paid a total of £8200, and that 33 signs were "in production".

It was difficult for the new clerk to get to the bottom of things, because all of the related emails had been deleted.

The Clerk subsequently requested copies of correspondence from the supplier, the [REDACTED]. These are attached, and reveal a dialogue between the ex-clerk and the supplier's salesperson which is, at the very least, unprofessional. It is clear from gaps in the dialogue that the supplier has not provided the council with the full email history.

What concerned me immediately was that:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- competitive quotes were not obtained for the work
- no Purchase Order was ever placed for any of the work
- all signs were paid for in advance
- at no time did the council approve advance payments
- a total of £8200 was paid to the supplier, when only £3500 had been authorized
- the vast majority of the signs have still not been delivered
- the council wanted to cover up the whole issue, and were not in any hurry to chase the supplier

On further investigation, and from discussions with Councillor [REDACTED] (who had until recently been responsible for signing off all payments), I discovered that most payments to the supplier had been made by the clerk **in advance of authorization by the council.** [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

At least two payments to the supplier had not been initialed by a councillor, contrary to normal practice. Both of these payments were for amounts **in excess of the Clerk's authority.**

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Mortimer complaint, per paragraph of the Suffolk Code:

Paragraph 1

You must treat others with respect.

I have at all times treated others with respect. If I am to respond to this in detail, then I require more detail from those whom I am alleged to have treated without respect.

Paragraph 2.2

You must not bully any person.

I am not a bully, and I do not condone any form of bullying. Again, if I am to respond to this allegation in detail, then I require details from those whom I am accused of bullying, with specific examples.

I will say at this stage that the co-ordinated manner of this and other complaints certainly feels like bullying to me.

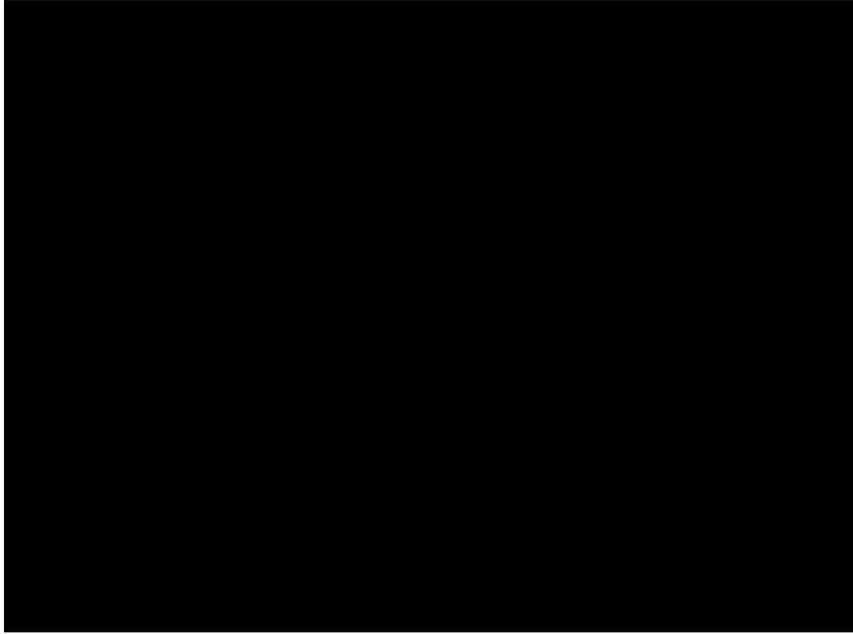
- Four councillors have made remarkably similar complaints, using almost exactly the same paragraphs of the Suffolk Code
- All four have avoided including any substantive evidence
- Three have quoted the same erroneous date on one of the East Anglian articles

Councillor Mortimer has himself used heavy-handed tactics in several of his emails to me about these issues. He has misled the council in one email, copied to most councillors, where he said:

“May I remind you all that at the EGM it was voted unanimously to draw a line under the data loss incident. If this is to be discussed again standing orders dictates that a period of 6 months pass before doing so. If the clerk discovers a loss of data that directly affected the council then she will bring it to our immediate attention.”

This motion was neither proposed, seconded nor voted on, Minutes below:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

In another email, below, written after the EGM, Cllr Mortimer introduced the phrase "draw a line under the events". There is no mechanism in Standing Orders to 'Draw a Line' under anything, and this is clearly an attempt to force me to back off.

In Confidence

Fellow Councillors

After hours of discussions and meetings relating to [REDACTED] actions I am drawing a line under this situation and putting an end to it. I have been assured that no financial information or documentation required to run business as usual has been lost. We agreed at the EGM that there was very little chance of any compensation for actions taken and that if there was a counter claim we would potentially be liable to a large legal bill.

This situation has been a real wake up call with regards to data storage and our new Town Clerk is putting measures in place to prevent this from happening in the future. Indeed she has been working through all of our protocols, Standing Orders, Policies and Procedures to ensure that we are completely up to date with legislation.

It is time to move on and get behind Kate, Greg, Karen & Debbie and offer them your full support as they continue to support us in the day to day running of the Council.

The Printing situation is to be discussed at the next F&S committee meeting where a decision will be made as to the next step in the process.

Thank you

[REDACTED]

Paragraph 2.4

You must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your council.

I do not understand this ridiculous allegation. If it is intended to mean that I have coerced any member of the Council staff into doing something against their will, then I totally reject this.

Again, I would require more detail before I could respond to this allegation.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Paragraph 3

You must not :-

(1) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where—

- (a) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;*
- (b) you are required by law to do so;*
- (c) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or*
- (d) the disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority;*

Councillor Mortimer does not specify which information he refers to.

If he refers to the Data Deletion episode, then this was clearly discussed in open forum, outside of a meeting, on at least two occasions before the council started discussing it in camera.

If he refers to the [REDACTED] Signage Procurement and [REDACTED] Payments, then I would say that disclosure most certainly was in the public interest, for a number of reasons, including:

- the council told the East Anglian that the matter was confidential "because the supplier was local". This was a nonsensical reason for withholding news of the waste of public funds from the local taxpayers
- [REDACTED] had exceeded her spending authority and secretly paid over £3500 to a supplier with whom the council had no contract
- the chair of F&S, Councillor [REDACTED] had recommended for approval the Accounts for March, clearly without checking them. He mentioned that Councillor [REDACTED] had checked them, but this had clearly not happened.

This is the set of accounts which included ALL of the payments to the supplier, a total of £8220. As stated above, £3500 of these invoices had been secretly paid by [REDACTED] and £4600 had been paid-in-advance for products which have still not been delivered.

These councillors had clearly been duped by the [REDACTED] and had failed to carry out their responsibilities.

- the [REDACTED] had approved the unlawful modification of the town's coat of arms, and its reproduction on a number of signs
- [REDACTED] had pre-paid a further £4600 to the same supplier in March, but had not informed the council that the product had not been delivered. In fact, [REDACTED] had sent an email to councillors in February stating that the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

signage relating to this payment “would be delivered by end of February” .

- the council had made no meaningful progress in chasing reimbursement from the supplier. It is now more than three months since the unlawful expenditure was discovered, and the supplier has still not responded to the council's without prejudice letter
- The council only commenced legal action against the supplier **after** the first article appeared in the East Anglian

Since the disclosures, the council has introduced new governance and security measures, bolting the door long after the horse had bolted.

Paragraph 4

You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.

I do not believe that I have brought either my office or my authority into disrepute. In fact, Woodbridge Town Council has itself brought itself into disrepute, if anyone has.

[REDACTED] took the decision that we would not comply with the council's efforts to cover up the extraordinary behaviour [REDACTED]

Paragraph 5.2

You :

(2) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority—

(b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes);

This is a remarkable allegation. The dominant party, to which the complainant belongs, has in the past used the town clerk to take minutes from the Conservative Group meetings (which are not council meetings), and the same party regularly uses the resources of the council to run a mini cabinet system. I have evidence of this, if you require it.

In response, I say that I have not used the resources of the council for political purposes. Councillor Mortimer may refer to the recent by-election in [REDACTED] but my party did not stand in that election.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Mortimer complaint, per narrative comments:

Councillor Mortimer says that I am responsible for 'incorrect' reports in the EADT.

This is not the case. Obviously one can not control editorial, but the information given to the EADT was truthful and correct, and carefully-researched.

The council, on the other hand, was misleading and disingenuous in its press release to the same publication on July 4th 2018, (dictated by Councillor Mortimer), extracts and comment below:

A spokesperson for the council said: "Some data was deleted, possibly inadvertently or as a result of implementing the new GDPR legislation.

This is misleading and untrue. The [REDACTED] deleted all incoming and outgoing emails, covering probably ten years or more. It must have been deliberate, because the clerk and I examined the filing structure within both of the [REDACTED] email accounts. The structure was still intact – ie, sub-folders still existed. The [REDACTED] would have had to open each sub-directory individually, and highlight all emails to be deleted. Further, [REDACTED] would have been asked by the system to confirm the deletion, and would have had to press the confirm button.

Note that this was carried out on TWO separate email accounts. There is no question that it could have been inadvertent.

As for the deletion being a result of implementing GDPR, then this is also a false and misleading statement. The council's GDPR check-list, (Appendix 2), as updated by [REDACTED] makes no mention of deleting emails. In fact, the statutory data retention periods are quite clear, and are legally enforceable. I have attached a copy (Appendix 2), and you will see that many of the deleted file types **must** be retained for a period between 3 and 6 years.

"This came to our knowledge in early April when Members were informed.

This is not the case. It is clear that a select group of 'senior' councillors were informed, but the statement implies that ALL councillors were informed, and that did not happen then. There was no email informing all councillors of the issue.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

"We believe that no public money was lost; this was confirmed during our recent Audit.

I would dispute this. How could the council possibly know? And if the underhand and unauthorised manner in which £8220 was paid to the [REDACTED] does not constitute a loss of public money, then how could an auditor *in full possession of the facts* possibly sign off on this?

Councillor [REDACTED] responsible for Audit matters at the council, remains deeply concerned about these matters. The Mayor and chair of F&S have refused to circulate a report he wrote detailing the unauthorised payments.

"We believe no criminal act has taken place; this has been confirmed by both Suffolk Constabulary and by independent legal advice.

Misleading and inaccurate.

- Neither matter was reported to Suffolk Constabulary. In her own words, the new clerk "had a word with a tame Superintendent". This is not the same, and I wonder if said tame Superintendent would like his name to be attached to this matter?
- Independent legal advice was not sought, despite requests from [REDACTED] and myself. Instead, the council consulted the council's insurer's solicitor.

On July 6th, the EADT printed a half page press release from Councillor Mortimer, in which he stated that [REDACTED] and I "*are in breach of the Suffolk Code*", *by divulging what he says is confidential information.*

He is clearly jumping the gun here, given that this matter has not yet been considered. I had understood that the complaint process was a confidential one, so there is perhaps some irony attached to his release.

In the same article, he went on to repeat his claims that "data loss is a misnomer. No financial, legal or statutory information has been lost"

This is clearly untrue. Only this week, the Clerk was unable to produce the council's grounds maintenance contract, for the Amenities Committee. The truth is that nobody knows what is missing, until a document is required for some reason.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix 1 – Document retention policy

LTN 40

ANNEX TO LEGAL TOPIC NOTE 40

RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE AUDIT OF PARISH COUNCILS

DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
▪ Minute books	Indefinite	Archive
▪ Scales of fees and charges	6 years	Management
▪ Receipt and payment account(s)	Indefinite	Archive
▪ Receipt books of all kinds	6 years	VAT
▪ Bank statements, including deposit/savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
▪ Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
▪ Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
▪ VAT records	6 years	VAT
▪ Petty cash, postage and telephone books	6 years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
▪ Timesheets	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Wages books	12 years	Superannuation
▪ Insurance policies	While valid	Management
▪ Certificates for Insurance against liability for employees	40 years from date on which insurance commenced or was renewed	The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI. 2753), Management.
▪ Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Management
▪ Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit, Management
▪ Members allowances register	6 years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)

National Association of Local Councils
Tel: 020 7637 1665 • Fax: 020 7436 7451 • e-mail: nalc@nalc.gov.uk • website: www.nalc.gov.uk

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix 2 – GDPR Action Plan, as followed by the ex-clerk until end March 2018



GDPR ACTION PLAN

Ser	Action	By Whom	Date Completed
1	Personal Information Audit by Local Council Public Advisory Service	LCPAS	January 2018
2	Implementation of a clear desk policy and lockers for use by staff to secure working documents	All staff	January 2018
3	Audit of noticeboards to clear off personal information	All staff	January 2018
4	Audit of hard copy files and destruction of those not needed	Town Clerk	January – March 2018
5	Creation of new councillor@ e-mail addresses for all councillors and role@ addresses for staff	Town Clerk/REACT	January 2018
6	Consent form sent to all Allotment holders and members of the public on the waiting list whose address details we need to hold for billing/future correspondence. Consent received from all.	Finance Assistant/ Deputy Town Clerk	March 2018 & ongoing
7	Appoint DPO	Town Clerk	No longer required
8	Register with ICO	Town Clerk	25 May 2018
9	Write Privacy Notice, Publication Document Policy and Data Protection Policy	Town Clerk	25 May 2018

GDPR Action Plan
Last Updated 5 June 2018

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

10	Ensure Privacy Notice uploaded to website and appended to signature block for e-mails	Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk	28 May 2018
11	Ensure all Councillors signed up to receiving e-mails	Town Clerk	30 May 2018
12	Write Information Protection Policy and Information Incident Policy	Town Clerk	30 May 2018
13	New system devised for signing out keys to WTC property to avoid personal details being kept unnecessarily.	Finance Assistant/ Deputy Town Clerk	30 May 2018
14	Upload Information Protection Policy and Information Incident Policy to website	Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk	
15	Ensure Councillors approve relevant documentation	Town Clerk	
16	Ensure ongoing training of Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk	Town Clerk/Deputy Town Clerk	

GDPR Action Plan
Last Updated 5 June 2018

**STATEMENT
FRONT COVER**

Case Ref:	1076990/1
Name:	Councillor David Mortimer
Position Held	Complainant

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House,
26 Chantry Lane,
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England number OC343261
authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority

wilkin chapman llp

STATEMENT of: Councillor David Mortimer

1. I have been a Woodbridge Town Councillor since May 2015. I am the current Mayor and Chairman of the Council for the 2018/19 municipal year.
2. My complaint about Councillors [REDACTED] O'Nolan relate to their blatant breach of the Council's Code of Conduct. In particular breaches of confidentiality and their conduct towards the Council's staff and other Councillors which is disrespectful and bullying in nature.
3. The first breach of confidentiality related to an article in the local press about new signage being purchased by the Council. This was discussed in confidential session at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Town Council. At the meeting it was agreed that the matter would be considered by the Finance and Staffing Committee. The two Councillors disclosed to the press information about the signage and were quoted as saying the Council was refusing to do anything about it.
4. The second issue related to an incident when the previous Clerk left the Council following which it was identified that she had deleted a lot of the Council's records from the computer system.
5. I understand that the reason the previous Clerk left was due to the upset caused to her by Councillors [REDACTED] O'Nolan. I believe she was very unhappy when she left. I was not aware of what had been going on, this only came to light after she had left the Council's employment.
6. In view of the articles in the press I believe it was my duty as the Town Mayor and Chairman of the Council to submit a complaint to the Monitoring Officer about their conduct.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

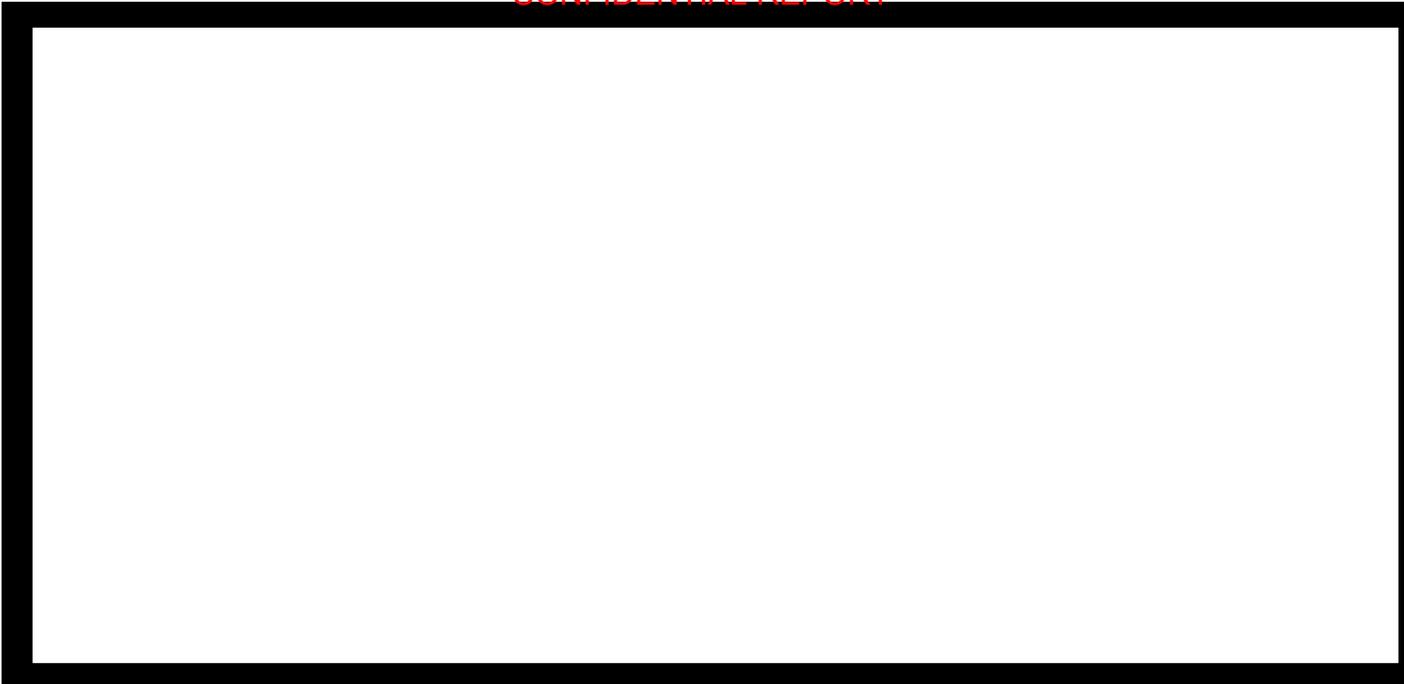
7. I am aware that other Councillors were concerned about the situation and that some have made separate complaints. Councillor [REDACTED] who was a member of the Liberal Democrats with Councillor [REDACTED] was so concern she resigned from the party and now sits on the Council as an Independent.
8. A new Town Clerk was employed commencing in June this year. Already she is feeling under pressure from all that is going on. I understand that on several occasions she has been on the point of resigning due to the conduct of the two Councillors.
9. The Town Council is now operating under an air of mistrust and tension.
10. Councillor O'Nolan visits the Council's offices demanding information. It is evident that he is gunning for the former Town Clerk.
11. The new Town Clerk has reviewed the Council's policies and procedures and through the Council introduced new safeguards to protect the Council, its assets and the Council's officers.
12. I am aware that some time ago the previous Clerk made allegations of bullying which were never really resolved by the Council.
13. The bullying of the staff appears to take the form of psychological warfare and has been ongoing for some time. I understand that whilst the staff have expressed concern there has been a reluctance to make an issue of it.
14. I believe that prior to the recent events the relationship between the Town Councillors had been very good.

I David Mortimer declare that this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed

[REDACTED]

.....Date 1/12/17



Councillor conduct complaint form - Suffolk Coastal

Customer details:

Name: Cllr Sheena Rawlings

Address: [Redacted]

Contact details:

+441394610568 , , sheena.rawlings@sky.com

Councillor details:

Councillor name: 1 Mr [Redacted] O'Nolan

Name of Council: Woodbridge Town Council

Which paragraph(s) of the Code of Conduct do you believe the Councillor who is the subject of your complaint has breached: 1, 2.2, 3.1, 4, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2

Details of complaint: 1, Both councillors have no respect for any councillors other than their own parties. They openly tell lies and bully the council staff by constantly phoning, visiting and causing an overload of work.



3 [Redacted] councillors broke the code of conduct by releasing information to the press from a meeting held in camera, which had been by Sllc and a democratic vote was also taken. The information was hugely exaggerated and some completely untrue. It was not in the public interest to have that knowledge at that time and could have seriously jeopardised the council from finding solutions to the problems and even cost legal fees if the company and people discussed had been named.

Finding this in the EADT 16.06.2018. It caused me to instantly resign from the Lib Dem party and become an independant councillor for fear of being guilty by association.

4, [Redacted] councillors have conducted themselves in a manner that has brough WTC. into disrepute.

They have lied to the public via the press, making the council look corrupt and uncaring.

5, Having made the council look very bad to the public, [REDACTED] councillors are now backing a candidate for the [REDACTED] who is running with the slogan, 'Lets change Woodbridge council and give Woodbridge and Kyson what they want.'

I believe this is misuse of their position to improperly confer and advantage on another person.

6.1, No regard was given to advice from Sllc, the town Clerk or the Finance and Staffing committee.

6.2 No acceptable reason for their actions has ever been offered.

I sincerely hope these councillors will be dealt with effectively.

Customer outcome expectation: **A full public apology for lying to the press and public. A full apology to the council staff for bullying behaviour or removal from the council.**

Do you want the complaint to be dealt with anonymously?: No

If yes, Please provide details of why you believe that your name and/or the details of your complaint should be withheld:

If yes, If anonymity isn't granted, do you still wish to proceed?:

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

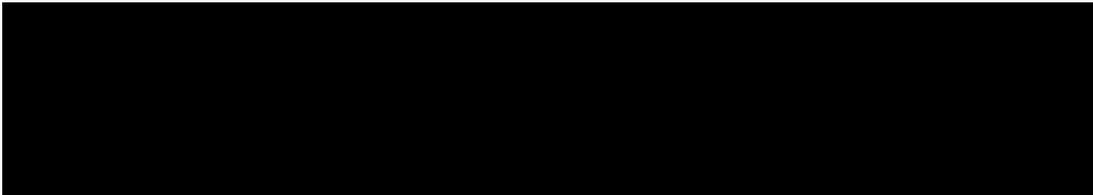
Response to Complaint from Councillor Rawlings

Background:

I think it is important that the Independent Person has some idea of the background to the events which are being considered. None of the complainants has laid out any background, or indeed any detail to support their allegations.

The ex-Town Clerk, [REDACTED] resigned from her post on February 2nd. I do not know why she resigned, and I was not at the time remotely concerned about this. I was out of the country at this time, and when I returned, I found that the Mayor had formed a Committee to hire the Clerk's replacement.

On February 26th, I queried the formation of the Committee with the Mayor, and called the Deputy Clerk to request a copy of Town Council Minutes for a meeting when I was away. I also requested a copy of the Staff Selection Procedure to be used for the recruitment. I was concerned that the Mayor and the F&S Committee were operating outside Standing Orders, which now seems to have clearly been the case.



Email from ex-Mayor below:

Dear Eamonn

I just wanted to personally say thank you for withdrawing your complaint . It was a horrid period for all of us , especially you .

In case you were wondering why, after all that has happened ,I am sending round emails with you included ,relating to [REDACTED] eaving , I thought I had better explain .



I do not expect you to sign the card or indeed suggest a present considering what has happened .

I hope you understand my reasons for doing it and why.

I hope that when she has left we will see you around the table again , because you are a valued member of the council .

Here's to better and peaceful times ! Thank you again Eamonn.

Hope you are having an ok time

Best Wishes



CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Two separate subjects form the basis of the complaint which is now being considered:

1. Data Deletion

The [REDACTED] deletion, by the Clerk, of Council emails and paper Files

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

The highly unorthodox transactions between the Clerk (on behalf of the Council) and the [REDACTED]

1. Data Deletion

On or about April 5th, the new Town Clerk discovered that the entire contents of [REDACTED] two email accounts had been deleted. These included many thousands of Town Council business emails, including quotes, orders, negotiations, questions and answers from and to the public, and so on.

I found out about this in the second half of April, when Councillor [REDACTED] told me that the Mayor had announced that [REDACTED] had deleted all emails in both her accounts, and had shredded the day-to-day hard-copy files.

The Mayor announced this **outside of a meeting**, and as such outside of Standing Orders. **Confidentiality was not requested.**

I attended a meeting of the Finance & Staffing Committee on May 1st. There was one discussion *in camera*. After that had ended, a lengthy discussion took place about the Data Deletion. This discussion took place **after the meeting had ended**, and was not minuted. Again, this meeting was an informal one, outside of Standing Orders.

During this discussion, the Mayor described in detail what appeared to have happened, and many of the Councillors present contributed.

The information which I later gave to the East Anglian Daily Times emanated from this meeting.

The Chair of F&S, Councillor [REDACTED] requested that Councillor [REDACTED] and I conduct an informal enquiry into the data deletion event, and to report back to him.

On Tuesday May 8th I met with the new Clerk to discuss the deletion of the files. We jointly examined the [REDACTED] PC and email accounts, and verified that almost all emails had been deleted. With her agreement, I spoke with the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

council's computer services provider, and arranged access to the backup files, and the old server.

During this meeting, we discussed the discussion of the F&S meeting on May 1st. The clerk told me unequivocally that the discussion of the data deletion event had taken place outside of the meeting. She said : "It was not on the agenda, so couldn't have been discussed in the meeting" and "I can only minute items which have appeared on the Agenda".

I returned on the afternoon of May 8th to examine the restored files. The Clerk refused to allow me to enter the building, and informed me that SALC had advised her that this examination was to be carried out by an officer, and not by a councillor.

I subsequently submitted a report to council with my initial findings, and with a suggestion that a data specialist might be employed to retrieve files which the ex-clerk had deleted from the old server.

The council declined to make any further efforts to retrieve this data.

It was only after this date that the council started discussing the data deletion event *in camera*. Accordingly, I fail to see how I could have breached any confidentiality code on this item.

It is clear to me that the dominant party was motivated by embarrassment, and some inexplicable desire to protect [REDACTED] in wanting to bury this event.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

2. Unauthorised Signage Procurement and Unauthorised Payments

During the Summer of 2017 the Amenities Committee (of which I am a member) discussed "Branding the Council Assets". At a meeting on September 26th, the Clerk was authorized to purchase about eight new signs for three locations. The total expenditure was in the region of £3500.

199. **TO CONSIDER REPORT AND QUOTES FROM THE TOWN CLERK ON NO PARKING SIGNS AT TIDE MILL WAY AND BETTER SIGNAGE FOR ELMHURST PARK, KINGSTON FIELD AND FEN MEADOW**

The Town Clerk presented designs for No Parking Signs for Tide Mill Way to replace the old signs currently in situ. In the absence of the Harbourmaster (Councillor Dale) the Clerk will liaise with him via email to confirm the wording required.

The Town Clerk then presented signage examples designed by the [REDACTED] Company' for the purpose of 'Badging our Assets' within the town. Together with professionally taken photographs and wording specific to each location these will form the basis of signage to be installed in Elmhurst Park, Kingston Field and Fen Meadow.

IT WAS RECOMMENDED to the Town Council that:

- The No Parking signs are purchased following further discussing between the Town Clerk and Councillor Dale to confirm the wording required.
- The park signage be purchased once the Town Clerk has agreed the designs and costs with the Handsome Prints Company.

After further discussion it was agreed the Clerk should also seek designs and costs for signage covering all Town Council assets including the Art Club, Broomheath, Fitzgerald Green, Quaker Burial Ground, Tide Mill, War Memorial and when ready the Whisstocks Open Space. It was also agreed that the Town Clerk should contact Mr Julian Royal in regards to his proposed signage for Elmhurst Walk.

As you can see, the clerk was also authorized at that meeting to obtain quotes and designs for further signs, quantity unspecified, for the council's other locations.

The clerk did not report back to the Amenities Committee at any time after that meeting. No further quotes were submitted, and no proofs were provided. Early in April, after the clerk had departed, the new clerk discovered that a local supplier had been paid a total of £8200, and that 33 signs were "in production".

It was difficult for the new clerk to get to the bottom of things, because all of the related emails had been deleted.

The Clerk subsequently requested copies of correspondence from the supplier, the [REDACTED]. These are attached, and reveal a dialogue between [REDACTED] and the supplier's salesperson which is, at the very least, unprofessional. It is clear from gaps in the dialogue that the supplier has not provided the council with the full email history.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

What concerned me immediately was that:

- competitive quotes were not obtained for the work
- no Purchase Order was ever placed for any of the work
- all signs were paid for in advance
- at no time did the council approve advance payments
- a total of £8200 was paid to the supplier, when only £3500 had been authorized
- the vast majority of the signs have still not been delivered
- the council wanted to cover up the whole issue, and were not in any hurry to chase the supplier

On further investigation, and from discussions with Councillor [REDACTED] (who had until recently been responsible for signing off all payments), I discovered that most payments to the supplier had been made by the clerk **in advance of authorization by the council** [REDACTED]

At least two payments to the supplier had not been initialed by a councillor, contrary to normal practice. Both of these payments were for amounts **in excess of the Clerk's authority.**

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Response to Rawlings complaint, per paragraph of the Suffolk Code:

Paragraph 1

You must treat others with respect.

I have at all times treated others with respect. If I am to respond to this in detail, then I require more detail from those whom I am alleged to have treated without respect. If Cllr Rawlings is to be believed, I should be hearing from twelve councillors.

The language and terminology in Cllr Rawlings' allegation is remarkably similar to that in at least one other of the complaints. It is still completely untrue.

Paragraph 2.2

You must not bully any person.

I am not a bully, and I do not condone any form of bullying. Again, if I am to respond to this allegation in detail, then I require details from those whom I am accused of bullying, with specific examples.

I will say at this stage that the co-ordinated manner of this and other complaints certainly feels like bullying to me.

- Four councillors have made remarkably similar complaints, using almost exactly the same paragraphs of the Suffolk Code
- All four have avoided including any substantive evidence
- Three have quoted the same erroneous date on one of the East Anglian articles

Cllr Rawlings alleges that the current clerk is considering resigning because I am bullying her. If she is considering this, then I would need to hear more from our new clerk about this.

Cllr Rawlings stops just short of alleging that [REDACTED] left as a result of bullying by me. What is the point in mentioning this, if not to smear or sow doubt in the mind of the reader?

Cllr Rawlings and I have always worked closely together, on one project in particular, and I am really sad to see that she has been caught up in this matter. It seems clear to me that she has at the very least received some verbal input from others, during the construction of her complaint.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Paragraph 2.4

You must not do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, your council.

I do not understand this ridiculous allegation. If it is intended to mean that I have coerced any member of the Council staff into doing something against their will, then I totally reject this.

What exactly does Cllr Rawlings mean here?

Paragraph 3

You must not :-

(1) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where—

(a) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;

(b) you are required by law to do so;

(c) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

(d) the disclosure is reasonable, in the public interest, made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority;

Councillor Rawlings does not specify which information she refers to.

If she refers to the Data Deletion episode, then this was clearly discussed in open forum, outside of a meeting, on at least two occasions before the council started discussing it in camera.

If she refers to the [REDACTED] Signage Procurement and [REDACTED] Payments, then I would say that disclosure most certainly was in the public interest, for a number of reasons, including:

- the council told the East Anglian that the matter was confidential "because the supplier was local". This was a nonsensical reason for withholding news of the waste of public funds from the local taxpayers
- [REDACTED] had exceeded her spending authority and secretly paid over £3500 to a supplier with whom the council had no contract
- the chair of F&S, Councillor Sylvester, had recommended for approval the Accounts for March, clearly without checking them. He mentioned that

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Councillor ██████ had checked them, but this had clearly not happened.

This is the set of accounts which included ALL of the payments to the supplier, a total of £8220. As stated above, £3500 of these invoices had been secretly paid ██████ and £4600 had been paid-in-advance for products which have still not been delivered.

These councillors had clearly been duped by ██████ and had failed to carry out their responsibilities.

- ██████ had approved the unlawful modification of the town's coat of arms, and its reproduction on a number of signs
- ██████ had pre-paid a further £4600 to the same supplier in March, but had not informed the council that the product had not been delivered. In fact, ██████ had sent an email to councillors in February stating that the signage relating to this payment "would be delivered by end of February".
- the council had made no meaningful progress in chasing reimbursement from the supplier. It is now more than three months since the ██████ expenditure was discovered, and the supplier has still not responded to the council's without prejudice letter
- The council only commenced legal action against the supplier **after** the first article appeared in the East Anglian

Since the disclosures, the council has introduced new governance and security measures, bolting the door long after the horse had bolted.

Councillor Rawlings says that I exaggerated some information and lied to the press. This is actually not true. I was extremely careful to share only information which I knew to be true.

As detailed in my response to the complaint of Cllr Mortimer, it is the Council (through Mortimer) which has planted false and misleading information with the press.

Paragraph 4

You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.

I do not believe that I have brought either my office or my authority into disrepute. In fact, Woodbridge Town Council has itself brought itself into disrepute, if anyone has. Councillor ██████ and I took the decision that we would not comply with the council's efforts to cover up the extraordinary behaviour ██████

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Cllr Rawlings says:

This is despite the police, a legal advisor and the ICO have all been contacted and agreed that nothing illegal was found. (E mail can be forwarded)

As detailed elsewhere, this is not the case. Neither event was reported to the police, the legal advisor was not independent, and the ICO said that nothing illegal had happened **because nobody had yet made an FOI request which the council had been unable to respond to.**

Paragraph 5.2

You :

(2) must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority—

(b) ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes);

This is a remarkable allegation. The dominant party, to which the complainant belongs, has in the past used the town clerk to take minutes from the Conservative Group meetings (which are not council meetings), and the same party regularly uses the resources of the council to run a mini cabinet system. I have evidence of this, if you require it.

In response, I say that I have not used the resources of the council for political purposes. Councillor Rawlings may refer to the recent by-election in Kyson ward, but my party did not stand in that election.

I did make a personal endorsement of [REDACTED] who subsequently won the seat, and I managed to do this without using any of the Council's resources. Given recent events, I think [REDACTED] slogans are very appropriate.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Paragraph 6.1

When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by—

- (a) your council's chief finance officer; or*
- (b) your council's monitoring officer, where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her statutory duties.*

This is interesting, and it opens up another area which the council could usefully address.

Cllr Rawlings says:

“No regard was given to advice from SALC, the Town Clerk, or the F&S committee.”

1. I have received no advice directly from SALC.

During the EGM on 21st My, I quoted from the NALC data retention rules, attached at Appendix 1. The Clerk said that she had received advice from SALC “that files and emails need be retained only as long as they were useful”.

The next day, I sent an email to the Mayor (appendix 2), and received no response on the substance of the email. Cllr Mortimer stated that he would not discuss the matter with me.

There was no subsequent acknowledgment that the Clerk had, probably through lack of experience, misled the council, and at the same time implied that I had been mistaken.

2. When the Clerk refused me access to the restored files, examination of which I had been asked to carry out by the chair of F&S, she told me verbally that SALC had advised her in this matter. I subsequently asked for copy of their advice, but did not receive this.

I did receive a strong response from Cllr Mortimer, however, no doubt intended to persuade me to drop the matter. (Appendix 3)

Given the recent history with [REDACTED] and the fact that the new clerk had no experience working for any council before her appointment to Woodbridge, I think it was reasonable to request this information. I did of course request it in a polite and respectful manner.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

6. (2) You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your council.

I do not know what decisions Cllr Rawlings refers to here.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix 1 – Document retention policy

LTN 40

ANNEX TO LEGAL TOPIC NOTE 40

RETENTION OF DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR THE AUDIT OF PARISH COUNCILS

DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
▪ Minute books	Indefinite	Archive
▪ Scales of fees and charges	6 years	Management
▪ Receipt and payment account(s)	Indefinite	Archive
▪ Receipt books of all kinds	6 years	VAT
▪ Bank statements, including deposit/savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
▪ Paid invoices	6 years	VAT
▪ Paid cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
▪ VAT records	6 years	VAT
▪ Petty cash, postage and telephone books	6 years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
▪ Timesheets	Last completed audit year	Audit
▪ Wages books	12 years	Superannuation
▪ Insurance policies	While valid	Management
▪ Certificates for Insurance against liability for employees	40 years from date on which insurance commenced or was renewed	The Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1998 (SI. 2753), Management.
▪ Investments	Indefinite	Audit, Management
▪ Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit, Management
▪ Members allowances register	6 years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)

National Association of Local Councils
Tel: 020 7637 1865 • Fax: 020 7436 7451 • e-mail: nalc@nalc.gov.uk • website: www.nalc.gov.uk

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix 2:

22nd May 2018

Dear David,

We need to talk.

I have attached the NALC LTN which applies to document retention. (I was introduced to LTNs when Chris made her complaint about me two years ago!)

Last night, we agreed to ask Nalc for legal advice, largely based on the clerks statement that NALC said that documents only need to be kept "while useful". As you'll see from the attached, this is not the case. Jump straight to the Appendix, and you'll see that quotes and paid invoices must be kept for six years, as I said during the meeting.

Her statement also formed the basis for the "settled view" which Geoff described, that no crime had been committed.

I'd like to meet with you and Kate asap, because this issue is, I feel, being swept under the carpet. After this meeting, I expect Kate will feel the need to correct the perception she created.

Kate assured me that we would be able to bring up any matters we wished to, under the banner of Staffing Matters, but that wasn't allowed to happen.

So, this issue clearly relates both to the document destruction issue, and the Handsome Prints issue. The latter was last night referred back to F&S, mainly because Josh pointed out that it wasn't on the agenda. F&S doesn't meet again until 19th June. That is far too long a delay, for a matter involving the waste of £8500 of public money. It is clear to me that there are some in the council, probably a majority, who want none of this to come out. However, they'll be judged harshly, when it does get into the public domain, as it clearly needs to.

When are you free :-)?

Eamonn.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix 3.

Eamon - this has to stop right now. I am now very annoyed that the Clerk is being cross examined about every move she makes. I am also concerned that only councillor [REDACTED] is being copied in on every email. There is obviously some kind of hidden agenda going on here.

This is disrupting for the staff at the Shire Hall and I am unable to get on with things that I want to do.

I am not going to talk on the phone as my email last night is clear enough. All other responses to my email are in agreement except yours.

If this is going further now then I suggest you make contact with the monitoring officer so this is sorted once and for all. This is my first week as the Mayor and it has not been a good one for me. This is putting an enormous amount of stress onto the Clerk who has had a steep enough learning curve as it is.

David

Get [Outlook for IOS](#)

From: Eamonn O'Nolan [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, May 23, 2018 11:44:24 AM
To: Town Clerk
Cc: Councillor Mortimer; Councillor Gillard
Subject: SALC Advice

Dear Kate,

You will recall that last week you stopped me from examining the server files, on the advice you had received from SALC.

Can you please email me the correspondence trail on this? The question that was asked, and the advice received. I'm interested in having a clear picture of what input they have had.

Likewise, I would like to receive copy of the correspondence between the Council and SALC about the other matter (signage), and what their advice was.

Finally, can you also let me have copy of the SALC advice / document which you quoted at the EGM, when we discussed document retention periods?

Kind regards,
Eamonn

Eamonn O'Nolan
[REDACTED]

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

0

**STATEMENT
FRONT COVER**

Name:	Councillor Sheena Rawlings
Position Held:	Complainant

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House,
26 Chantry Lane,
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England number OC343261
authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority



STATEMENT of: Councillor Sheena Rawlings

1. I have been a member of Woodbridge Town Council since 2015 having been elected as a Liberal Democrat. I resigned from the Liberal Democrat Party when I had concerns about the conduct of one of the Councillors representing the Party. I now sit as an Independent member of the Town Council.
2. My concerns related to [REDACTED] Councillors, Councillors [REDACTED] O'Nolan who I believed were working against the Council. My belief was based on the fact that they constantly argued against any proposal put forward by other Councillors. Their manner was disrespectful and aggressive which caused me great concern.
3. The conduct of the two Councillors has led to the Clerk suffering stress as the Councillors want to ignore the rules. I believe their conduct resulted in the previous Town Clerk resigning from the Council. On reflection I believe the Council let the previous Clerk down by not providing adequate support to her.
4. I am aware that the two Councillors are constantly making demands of the new Clerk which is impacting on her already busy workload. Councillor O'Nolan has on occasion been into the Council's offices and banged on the internal door, instead of ringing the bell, making demands.
5. [REDACTED] regularly telephones the Clerk requesting information.
6. Both Councillors have been pictured in the local press in relation to articles making allegations about the Town Council. These were in connection with matters discussed at confidential meetings. One item related to an order for new signage which had been placed by the Town Council. In the article the

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

two Councillors are reported to have made false or misleading allegations that the Town Council was refusing to pursue the matter and seek a refund for payments made against goods that had not been delivered. This was discussed at a meeting in confidential session, the two Councillors had a reporter from the local press outside the meeting to whom they provided confidential information that was then published.

7. The other press article which was attributed to the two Councillors involved the deletion of a number of emails and files from the Council's computer system. The article inaccurately alleged that the Council had lost data. This implied that it was sensitive data that had been lost when in fact it was routine business documents that had been deleted.
8. I believe the articles and comments attributed to the two Councillors were deliberately misleading to damage the reputation and public's image of the Town Council.
9. Further instances of them attempting to discredit the Council are evidenced by their support for a Labour candidate at a recent by-election. The candidate was pictured with one of the Councillors, [REDACTED] under the heading "Let's change Woodbridge Council and give Kyson and Woodbridge what they deserve".
10. Councillor O'Nolan has also been quoted in the press in San Francisco as saying he is an anarchist and was quite interested in upsetting the applecart back in England.

I Sheena Rawlings declare that this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed [REDACTED]Date 14.11.2018...

**STATEMENT
FRONT COVER**

Name:	Kate Lacey
Position Held:	Town Clerk, Witness

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House,
26 Chantry Lane,
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England number OC343261
authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority



STATEMENT of: Kate Lacey

1. I am the Town Clerk for Woodbridge Town Council having taken up the position on 3 April 2018. I have previously served in the Royal Air Force, been employed in the private sector, undertaken consultancy work for the National Health Service and most recently employed by Suffolk County Council.
2. I commenced employment with Woodbridge Town Council after the former Clerk had left the Council, therefore there was no formal handover. I did spend about two hours with the former Clerk prior to commencing employment with the Council although this was just a brief discussion about the Council's staff rather than the work involved.
3. Soon after I commenced employment I realised there was a problem as I could not find any files or documentation relating to various aspects of the Council's functions. I also realised that there were no records of email communication and other routine documentation. The Council's IT supplier was immediately contacted and a backup of the previous 90 day's files was secured.
4. During the second week of my employment with the Council the then Mayor, Councillor [REDACTED] mentioned to Councillor [REDACTED] that there was a problem with deleted emails. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

5. [REDACTED] On

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- another occasion Councillor O’Nolan came in to the office demanding access to passwords for the Council’s computer and various files and/or systems. I took advice from SALC regarding this who confirmed that Councillors should not be provided with such information. A copy of the email containing the advice has been provided to the investigator. The current Mayor, Councillor Mortimer, has emailed Councillor O’Nolan asking him to desist from pestering the Clerk.
6. At this stage it was evident that none of the emails deleted or files removed contained sensitive information. All minutes of meetings, legal documents and other such information had been retained.
 7. Despite none of the information that was deleted being sensitive data [REDACTED] Councillor O’Nolan reported the matter to the Information Commissioner’s Office via their erroneous statements in the press. I was interviewed by someone from the Information Commissioner’s Office. Following their investigation the Council was informed that there was no case to answer.
 8. Prior to the previous Clerk’s departure, the Council engaged a company who advised on the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The outcome of their review of the Council showed that the Council was in a good position. I prepared a data retention policy which was adopted by the Council. Also as a result of the GDPR requirements other measures were put in place to improve security of information and the Council’s assets. This included the installation of a security system for the door to the Council’s offices. This requires visitors to the office, including Councillors, to ring a bell to gain access. Councillor O’Nolan refuses to use the bell, instead he tries to force the door open to prove a point.
 9. Other policies introduced recently include a Member/Officer Protocol to identify the respective roles and what Councillors and officers can expect from each other. One of the provisions in the Protocol is that Councillors

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- should make an appointment to see an officer of the Council. This is continually ignored. On the evening of a recent Finance and Staffing meeting [REDACTED] walked straight in to my office.
10. Despite the new and updated policies and procedures being approved and adopted by the Council, one of the Liberal Democrat Councillors referred to them, at a Town Council meeting, Standing Orders as "Kate's stupid rules".
 11. If the former Town Clerk received the same treatment from these two Councillors as I have during the first seven months of my employment with the Council it is no surprise that she went off with stress. I consider myself to be quite robust when it comes to dealing with difficult situations. Despite this, I have recently been prescribed anti-depressants by my doctor as the doctor said I was clearly under stress.
 12. Some of the causes of the stress is the direct confrontational conduct referred to above and other conduct that is more subtle. For example, regularly at meetings Councillors [REDACTED] O'Nolan sit staring at me. If I am speaking they will yawn at each other, clearly indicating that they find me boring. Other Councillors have noticed and commented on this.
 13. Another issue which has caused concern relates to a number of signs ordered by the former Clerk. When I commenced employment it came to light that there were problems with the signs both in the quality of the product and that some had not been delivered. The Council was in contact with the company producing the signs to rectify the issue.
 14. The matter was discussed at a meeting on 16 June 2018. The item was determined to be confidential as the Council did not wish to identify a local company whilst negotiations were ongoing as it may have prejudiced both the negotiations and the company's reputation. Despite the matter being

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

discussed in private and in camera, straight after the meeting Councillors ██████████ O'Nolan met with a reporter from the local press. They were then pictured and quoted in the newspaper in an article about the signs. It should be noted that in the article they stated that the Council was not doing anything about the issue, which was untrue. Their statement is then contradicted in the article where it states it would be considered at a meeting of one of the Council's Committees.

15. A further article appeared in the newspaper on 28 June 2018. This covered what was termed in the newspaper as the loss of data by the Council. Again Councillors ██████████ O'Nolan are quoted as the source of the information provided to the reporter, the same reporter who the signage article was attributed to.
16. This disclosure of confidential information did not follow a meeting where it was discussed. The matter had been ongoing for some time. I believe the motivation for the story was to discredit the Council in the run up to a by-election.
17. An article was published in the newspaper some time later, after several attempts by the Council to put its side of the story. The article was based on a press release issued by Councillor Mortimer in his position as Mayor.
18. Some of the inappropriate conduct has moderated since the code of conduct complaints were submitted. The two Councillors still stare at me during meetings.
19. I am still working in an extremely stressful environment and am having to work longer hours to deal with the issues being raised.
20. I have provided the investigator with copies of emails and other relevant documents which highlight some of the issues raised in the complaints against ██████████ and Councillor O'Nolan.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

I Kate Lacey declare that this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed



Date 13 Dec 18

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW
FRONT COVER

Name: Councillor Eamonn O’Nolan

Position Held: Respondent Councillor

wilkin chapman llp
solicitors

Cartergate House,
26 Chantry Lane,
Grimsby
DN31 2LJ

a limited liability partnership registered in England number OC343261

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority

Notes of a telephone interview with Councillor Eamonn O’Nolan conducted by Alan Tasker.

1. Councillor O’Nolan confirmed that he was aware of four complaints submitted to the Monitoring Officer of Suffolk Coastal District Council and that these covered a number of areas of the Code of Conduct. He pointed out that he had provided full written responses to the allegations made. He was informed that these would be referred to in the final report and would be appended to that report.
2. Councillor O’Nolan agreed that the interview could be recorded however due to the poor quality of the telephone link this was not possible.
3. Councillor O’Nolan believed that the motivation for the complaints, which he considered were orchestrated, was to put him in a bad light with the other Town Councillors.
4. Issues first materialised some 4 or 5 months prior to the current complaints. He submitted a complaint to the Monitoring Officer regarding Councillor Perkins’ conduct towards him. He considered that Councillor Perkins had made false statements about him by claiming that he had asked the Council’s staff for a copy of the then Town Clerk’s contract of employment. When challenged on the matter Councillor Perkins established the true facts and provided him with a written apology for making the allegations. On the basis of this apology he withdrew the complaint.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

5. At about the same time as the above complaint the then Town Clerk resigned. This resulted in a Committee being formed to oversee the recruitment of a new Town Clerk. Councillor O’Nolan said he had reason to believe the procedure for establishing the Committee was contrary to the requirements of the Council’s Standing Orders. In addition, the ‘Committee’ consisted only of Conservative members. He said this was symptomatic of the culture of the Town Council which was being run by the majority group of Conservative Councillors without any challenge.
6. On about 3 April or 4 April 2018 the new Town Clerk discovered that the Council’s email account had been deleted from the server by the previous Clerk. She also found that financial information had also been deleted. This information was not shared with all the Councillors until about 10 days later.
7. It was after a meeting of the Council that the Mayor announced that “it had all gone” referring to the Council’s files and emails held on the server. As he had some significant experience and knowledge of IT systems he was asked by the Chair of Finance & Staffing Committee if he could have a look to see what was missing. He found that no backups had been made of the files. He was aware that if action had been taken within 14 days the files and emails could have been recovered. However, the fact that the files had been deleted was not shared with all the Councillors until it was too late. He did not think this was a deliberate delay.
8. Councillor O’Nolan did think that it was unlikely that the initial deletion of the emails was an error. This was because to delete any email the system always requires confirmation that the operator’s intention is to delete. Additionally, he found that the Clerk had deleted all emails within the various sub-directories, yet left the sub-directories there. This showed that a methodical approach had been taken, further indicating

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

that it could not have been unintentional. He therefore thought this was a deliberate act that should be investigated.

9. When he raised this he was informed that the new Town Clerk had had words with a tame Police Superintendent. Whilst he acknowledged that he did not know what had been discussed he did not consider that an informal discussion with the Police was an appropriate response to what he considered a potentially serious issue. His informal legal advice was that the matter could warrant a complaint to the Police. As far as he was aware the Town Council had not formally referred the matter to the Police for their opinion.
10. When he discussed this matter with a reporter from the local newspaper he was of the opinion that the matter was not confidential. He had been present when it was discussed after a meeting of the Council, not during a confidential meeting. He also considered that there was no detriment to the Council if the matter was made public. He did think that if the Council did not disclose to the public that the files had been deleted or lost and it subsequently became public knowledge then the public might think the Council had been trying to cover the matter up. That would have been detrimental to the Council's image and reputation.
11. Similarly, the issue of the problem with new signs was in the public interest, for three reasons:
 - 11.1 The former Town Clerk had been authorised to spend £3,500 with the supplier, but had spent a further £5,000 without authorisation.
 - 11.2 The former Town Clerk had arranged for the supplier to be paid in excess of £8,200 a) in advance of delivery, and b) without having those payments authorised. Two of these payments were in excess of her sign-off authority, so there can be no argument that she did this accidentally.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- 11.3 The former Town Clerk had ordered a number of signs from a local supplier. It became evident when the new Town Clerk looked into the matter that correct procedures had not been followed and that mistakes had been made. Councillor O’Nolan said that he had contacted the supplier and was informed that the first batch of signs had been produced three times. The first time when the signs were inspected it was noticed the Town Clerk had failed to include the Council’s contact details; address, telephone number etc. This was rectified with details provided by the Clerk. When these were produced for the second time it was then noticed that the telephone number provided by the Clerk was incorrect. None of this had been reported to the Councillors.
12. Councillor O’Nolan’s concern was that if the supplier was challenged over the problems with the production of the signs the Council would have some difficulty.
13. Councillor O’Nolan was surprised at the allegation of bullying and not respecting the Council’s employees. He was not aware of any occasion when he had spoken aggressively to any of the staff or other Councillors. In the absence of any specific instances being identified in the complaints he found it difficult to respond to these allegations. He would be happy to consider any information or evidence put forward by the complainants or the staff.
14. He explained that he had almost no contact with the Council’s staff, what contact he did have was mainly with the Deputy Clerk. As far as he was aware the Deputy Clerk had not reported any problems regarding their relationship. He believed that he had got on well with the Secretary who had left. Since the new Clerk had started he could not recall having had any significant amount of contact with her other than a couple of emails.

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

- 15. With regard to the suggestion that the two employees who had recently resigned had done so due to his conduct he pointed out that for about three months prior to their leaving he had not been in the country.

- 16. Councillor O’Nolan thought that the Town Council was very political and was run by a cohort of Councillors. As the only Councillor representing the Green Party he acted very much independently. He was mystified by the allegation that he had acted in an inappropriate and political manner by supporting a candidate at the recent by-election. The candidate in question, as he understood it, was a Labour candidate. His Party rules precluded him from supporting another political party’s candidate. He did not campaign for the Labour Party candidate nor do anything to support the candidate at the by-election. He did say at some stage that he thought the candidate was a suitable individual to represent the electorate.

- 17. Councillor O’Nolan was not aware of any action by him that could be considered to bring his office or the Council into disrepute. He did think it was questionable the way the Council had dealt with the issues referred to in the complaints against him. The public’s confidence in the Council might be affected if it was fully aware of the facts.

I Eamonn O’Nolan confirm that to the best of my recollection and belief this is an accurate summary of the telephone interview with Alan Tasker held on Wednesday 31 October 2018.

26/11/2018

Signed Date



Councillors Eamonn O'Nolan and Patrick Gillard with one of the incorrect signs

Picture: EAMONN O'NOLAN

Councillors hit out at 'unlawful' Woodbridge signs costing thousands

New signage looking to celebrate the town of Woodbridge has been blasted by two councillors for being created with inaccuracies on the crest.

The new signs cost Woodbridge Town Council £8,200 and were due to be placed at a number of locations across the town including Elmhurst Park, Fen Meadow and Kingston Field and would replace old signage there.

Further signs would then be purchased for other locations including Broomheath, the Art Club, Quaker Burial Ground, Tide Mill, War Memorial, and the Whisstocks Open Space.

However, according to town councillors Eamonn O'Nolan and Patrick Gillard, the signs should not be used as they include changes never accepted by the College of Arms.

"The Crest used on the new signage is a modification of the

KATY SANDALLS

katsandalls@journal.co.uk

existing crest," said the councillors.

"The College of Arms has determined that it is unlawful to bear Arms which have not been authorised by the Crown or by Her Majesty's heraldic authorities at the College of Arms, and accordingly the new signage cannot be used."

The councillors allege that signs for all of the locations were ordered at once, paid for ahead of delivery and that they should not be used.

Amongst the problems are that the crest on the new signage has the cockerels facing the wrong direction and the flowers on the shield in a new design.

The councillors also claim that only a quarter of the signs have

ever been delivered and that the council are refusing to seek a refund for the undelivered goods.

"As councillors, mindful of our responsibilities to the taxpayers of Woodbridge, and of the importance of transparency in modern government, we do not feel it is right to cover up any aspect of the way in which the council is run," said Mr O'Nolan and Mr Gillard in a joint statement to this newspaper.

A spokesperson for Woodbridge Town Council said: "Matters regarding signage for Woodbridge Town are due to be discussed at Woodbridge Town Council's finance and staffing committee meeting to be held on Tuesday June 19.

"It is not correct to pre-empt the discussions and decisions of the committee at this stage."

The finance and staffing committee meeting will take place at the Shire Hall at 7pm.



Email



Save

1 of 1 Thursday, June 28, 2018

Council defends itself over loss of data

KATY SANDALLS
katy.sandalls@archer.co.uk

A Suffolk town council has confirmed it has lost held data after allegations were made by two of its own councillors.

A loss of data at Woodbridge Town Council was revealed to this paper by two of the town's councillors Patrick Gillard and Eamonn O'Nolan.

The news comes days after Woodbridge Town Council renewed their policies in regards to data storage and information incidents.

"We are concerned that the council has lost a lot of data and is keeping it quiet," said the councillors.

"We are worried that the council cannot fulfil its obligations to FOI requests.

"This lets down the people of our town and makes all councillors potentially liable.

"This is going to cost taxpayers' money to sort out.

"It has already cost a lot of staff time and will cost more."

Amongst the councillor's allegations are that the town council has lost important financial information, including information regarding how and why money was spent at the council.

The councillors are also concerned that the Town Council failed to set up backup systems for their data despite warnings given to them over a year ago.

The council have hit back at the criticism.



Councillors Eamonn O'Nolan and Patrick Gillard

Picture: EAMONN O'NOLAN

A spokesperson for the council said: "Some data was deleted, possibly inadvertently or as a result of implementing the new GDPR legislation.

"This came to our knowledge in early April when members were informed.

"Woodbridge Town Council spoke with our data support team who were able to recover data.

"We believe that no public money was lost; this was confirmed during our recent Audit.

"As there has been no loss of personal data, under data protection legislation there is no requirement to bring the matter to the attention of the Information Commissioner.

"We believe no criminal act has taken place; this has been confirmed by both Suffolk Constabulary and by independent legal advice.

"The Town Council has conducted a review of its systems and processes and is satisfied that it has taken sufficient steps to prevent a future occurrence.

"The Town Council now considers the matter closed."



Email



Save

Mayor accuses councillors of breaking code of conduct

The Mayor of Woodbridge has accused two of his fellow councillors of breaching the Suffolk code of conduct.

In a statement, town mayor David Mortimer has responded to two matters raised by councillors Eamonn O'Nolan and Patrick Gillard.

The first related to issues with new signage purchased for the town but which the councillors said should not be used due to 'unlawful' changes to their designs and the non-delivery of several of the items.

The second related to a loss of data held by the council.

Discussions about how to resolve both problems have been ongoing but some of these meetings, including one after last month's town council meeting, have been held in camera.

KATY SANDALLS
k.sandalls@eastanglian.co.uk

This means that the council has been discussing the issues away from the press and public.

Regarding the signs, Mr Mortimer said: "All councillors are bound by the code of conduct which prohibits the release of confidential information. The two councillors are in breach of this code.

"Discussions concerning the signage of the town were held in a confidential meeting as the council was discussing a local company."

The council has since asked the town clerk and deputy town clerk to resolve the signage problems, a decision which, Mr Mortimer said, had been agreed to by Mr



The Shire Hall, the meeting place of Woodbridge Town Council. Inset: Mayor of Woodbridge David Mortimer. Pictures: GREG MURPHY, KATY SANDALLS

O'Nolan, who is a member of the amenities committee. Mr Mortimer hoped the decision would "ensure a more expedient outcome".

Mr Mortimer also clarified the council's position on a loss of data from the authority which he said had not cost the public money. He said: "Data loss" is a misnomer. No financial, legal or statutory information has been lost.

"Some working papers had been deleted either inadvertently or

under GMYR.

"Most of these have been reinstated by our computer support team or through other sources."

In response to the Mayor's statement, Mr O'Nolan said: "I am fully aware of the Suffolk code of conduct. I am convinced that the taxpayers of Woodbridge would still be in the dark on both matters, if councillor Gillard and I had not blown the whistle."

Mr Gillard said that he agreed with Mr O'Nolan's comments.

Councillor changes allegiance

One councillor has decided to change her party allegiance following recent disagreements at Woodbridge Town Council. Rebecca Rawlings, a councillor for the Ryan Ward, said that she could no longer stay in the Liberal Democrat party.

In a letter to the newspaper Ms Rawlings expressed her disappointment with the accusations made by the two councillors, one a Lib Dem and the other a Green.

"I was a Lib Dem Councillor but that day when I read an article in the EAST I was shocked and knew I could no longer support them," said Ms Rawlings.

"Anyone who read the article will be aware that there were problems that needed to be discussed and solutions found.

"We had long discussions about the best way to sort out the problems and made decisions about things and what to move forward to go the best possible way. Ms Rawlings will stay in the council as an independent councillor."



AUTHOR KATE LACY
CLEARED 11.45 29 JUNE
LAST MOD 14.38 29 JUNE

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT



Woodbridge
Town Council

WC 15

Press Release

There has been considerable speculation in the press about Woodbridge Town Council. This statement aims to clarify and refute claims made by two councillors.

A town council is a 'body corporate' which means that all councillors are collectively responsible for decisions made in a democratic vote and all councillors have access to financial information, and collectively make the decision to sign off payments.

All councillors have access to all Council decision making and the opportunity to raise concerns during democratic discussions should they wish so to do.

All Councillors are bound by the Code of Conduct which prohibits the release of confidential information. The two Councillors are in breach of this Code.

Discussions concerning the signage of the town were held in a confidential meeting as the Council were discussing a local company. The Council's position has always been to ensure a positive outcome for the Town. The Amenities Committee rightly charged the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk as Officers of the Council with making this happen as it will ensure a more expedient outcome than having to form a sub-committee. This will not put the Council back a month as claimed by the two Councillors but will enable the Council to move more quickly. Councillor O'Nolan, as a member of the Amenities Committee voted in favour of this resolution.

'Data loss' is a misnomer. No financial, legal or statutory information has been lost. Some working papers had been deleted either inadvertently or under GDPR. Most of these have been reinstated by our computer support team or through other sources. There has been no expenditure of public money on this. The only expenditure of public money is through a proposal by the two Councillors which would cost the tax payer over £2,000 but would give no benefit to the Council or to the Town of Woodbridge.

Councillor David Mortimer
Woodbridge Town Mayor

Attached:

- Draft minutes of the Finance and Staffing Committee held on 19 July 2018 (see minute number 110) and attachment
- Draft minutes of the Amenities Committee held on 26 June 2018 (see minute number 127)