

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS (DETERMINATION) SUB-COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF DETERMINATION

Slough Borough Council's Standards (Determination) Sub-Committee, at a hearing held on Monday 22 June 2015, determined a self referral made by Councillor Chaudhry that he had breached the Council's Code of Conduct by providing a letter of support to a defendant on trial for sexual offences relating to children. Councillor Chaudhry also attended court at the sentencing hearing in February 2015 where the barrister for the defence made comment in open court that Councillor Chaudhry was present as Mayor.

The Sub-Committee carefully considered a report of the Investigating Officer appointed to look into the complaint. The report concluded that Councillor Chaudhry was acting in his capacity as a member by submitting a letter of support and attending court and therefore had failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct. The report concluded that Councillor Chaudhry had acted in a manner that a reasonable person would consider had affected the reputation and integrity of the Council and/or its members, and/or undermined the Council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of its members.

Following sentencing of the convicted on 16th February 2015, Councillor Chaudhry resigned from his position as Mayor on 18th February 2015 and on the same day submitted a Code of Conduct Complaint Form, in which he referred himself to be the subject of the standards process of the Council.

After consideration of all the evidence, the Sub-Committee found that Councillor Chaudhry had breached Points 2.3 and 2.4 of the Code of Conduct by submitting a letter of support for the defendant and attending court. Members were also of the view that Councillor Chaudhry had failed to avoid conflict between his personal interest and the public interest - Point 2.7 of the Code of Conduct.

Further, having accepted the apology of Councillor Chaudhry, the Sub-Committee has decided to take the following action:

- To publish the finding that Councillor Chaudhry had acted in a manner that a reasonable person would consider had affected the reputation and integrity of the Council and undermined the Council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.
- To report the findings to the next meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.
- Recommend to the Leader of the Labour Group that in the light of the findings, the Labour Group considers the capability and credibility of Councillor Chaudhry when assessing his suitability for future positions of portfolio or profile within the Council.

Whilst noting Councillor Chaudhry's submission that an error of judgement had been made, the Sub-Committee were of the view that the Council had provided sufficient training to members regarding their roles and responsibilities in relation to the safeguarding of children.

The Council takes very seriously the safeguarding of children at all times and believes that Councillor Chaudhry's actions may have undermined trust and confidence in the Council's ability to safeguard children.

The Sub-Committee also acknowledged the community pressure that may have been exerted on Councillor Chaudhry to provide a letter of support in this case. However, Councillors are in office to uphold public interest over personal interest at all times and therefore the Sub-Committee strongly recommend that Councillors equip themselves with strategies to deal with community pressures in order that they can uphold the public interest at all times.

The Standards (Determination) Sub-Committee comprised:

Councillor Nazir (Chair)
Councillor Amarpreet Dhaliwal
Councillor Mansoor
Mr Graham Davies (Independent Co-opted Member)
Mr Alan Sunderland (Independent Co-opted Member)

Also in attendance:

Dr Louis Lee (Council's Independent Person)

Kevin Gordon
Monitoring Officer

Date: 24 June 2015