

STANDARDS COMPLAINT DECISION NOTICE

Complaint ref	C0C0005
Subject Member	Councillor W Wilding
Council	Herefordshire Council
Date of decision	23/09/2022
Breach of the code (Y/N)	Yes

DECISION

Background to Complaint

Summary

This is a complaint made by Mr Spreckley (the complainant), Planning Consultant and Agent for the Applicant regarding planning application at Bush Bank and comments made by Cllr William Wilding (the subject member) at the Planning Committee on 6th May 2022.

In providing his comments on the application, Cllr Wilding in referring to the opinion of Mr Spreckley said ‘that’s a bit like Vladimir Putin saying he is eradicating Nazis from wherever he’s going’. This can be seen in the YouTube footage at 32.34 minutes.

The Chair at approximately 35.39 minutes asked Cllr Wilding to keep his comments to Planning Policy and the reference to President Putin was not appropriate. Cllr Wilding said that he refused to do this.

The complainant says he wants:

‘Councillor Wilding’s comments on the YouTube recording of Planning Committee to be permanently redacted. A formal apology from Councillor Wilding in writing and in person, a further apology to Planning Committee and his formal withdrawal of his comments from the Minutes of the meeting. Consideration of Councillor Wilding’s fitness for office in general, and fitness to sit on Planning Committee in particular, given his assertion that he will not limit his comments to planning matters and policy’

Reasons

In considering the complaint and the way forward, the Monitoring Officer had regard to the Council’s Arrangements for dealing with Complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members and has determined the matter bearing in mind the following Criteria:

- Whether the allegation discloses a potential breach of the code of conduct, but the complaint is not serious enough to merit any recommendation other than an apology;
- The resources needed to investigate and determine the complaint are wholly disproportionate to the allegations;

In responding to Mr Spreckley in the way the Subject Member did, as set out above, and also in challenging the Chair when asked to follow Planning Policy when responding to applications, it has been concluded that there has been a breach of the Herefordshire Council Code of Conduct

. In particular, the principles of Selflessness, and Leadership. There is an expectation on Councillors that they will uphold the Code of Conduct and will not undertake any action that might bring the Council, Members or Officers into disrepute and also to treat everyone they deal with equally and with respect and courtesy. It has been concluded that Cllr Wilding did not uphold the high standards required of him at the Planning Committee Meeting on 6th May 2022.

Before determining the complaint the Monitoring Officer sought the views of the Statutory Independent persons who agreed with the Monitoring Officer that the **complaint is upheld**. It has therefore been determined that Councillor Wilding is to make a written apology to Mr Spreckley about the comments he made at the Planning Committee on 6th May 2022.

Note: the footage is no longer available on YouTube.