

MONITORING OFFICER DECISION NOTICE

Complaint Number COC045
Councillor Ewen Sinclair of Ledbury Town Council

COMPLAINT

In August 2023, the Council received a complaint that included a number of allegations against Councillor Ewen Sinclair. These are listed below along with the outcome of the investigation into each one.

DECISION

That Councillor Sinclair **DID** breach Ledbury Town Council's Code of Conduct in relation to the following sections:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play (at (iii) below).

2.2 I do not harass any person.

4.1 I do not disclose information (a) given to me in confidence by anyone (b) acquired by me which I believe, or ought responsibly to be aware of is of a confidential nature.

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

The general principle 'I act with integrity and honesty' was also breached.

That Councillor Sinclair **DID NOT** breach Ledbury Town Council's Code of Conduct in relation to the following sections (at (ii) below) :

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

PROCEDURE

An Investigator was asked to carry out an investigation into the facts. The evidence collected and used to form the finding and conclusions was:-

- Chronology of events
- Interview with Complainant
- Interview with Councillor Sinclair
- Complaint dated 18.07.23 and supporting documents
- Response from Councillor Sinclair dated 05.10.23 and supporting documents
- Minutes of Finance and General Provision Committee 23.03.23
- Minutes of Council meeting 30.03.23

- Minutes of council meeting 25.05.23
- Comments received from the Complainant and Subject Member on the draft report

INVESTIGATOR'S REPORT & FINDINGS

The background to the complaints arose from the following events.

In 2020, Councillor Sinclair became concerned about the quality of workmanship undertaken on the Ledbury Town War Memorial, by a local contractor. Councillor Sinclair was at that time a resident and raised his concerns in a number of ways, including raising local awareness and approaching the Town Council and requesting information from the Council through a Freedom of Information request. In October 2021, Councillor Sinclair became an elected member of Ledbury Town Council, standing on a manifesto of uncovering the truth behind what had happened in relation to the repairs to the war memorial.

In May 2022, Councillor Sinclair approached West Mercia Police, asking them to investigate the issues he had raised. In July 2022 West Mercia Police informed Councillor Sinclair that the police had not identified any wrongdoing on the part of the contractor nor by Ledbury Town Council. The police considered the matter to be a civil one and informed Councillor Sinclair that they would not be taking the matter any further.

In September 2022, Ledbury Town Council entered a confidential agreement with the contractor for works on the Ledbury War Memorial, settling all claims in relation to the works undertaken.

At its meeting on 18.08.22 Ledbury Town Council resolved to commission a report seeking to understand what had gone wrong in relation to the commissioning of works on the war memorial so that lessons may be learned.

In March 2023 the internal auditor, responding to the request for a report commissioned, subsequent to Full Council's resolution on 18.08.22, expressed the view that such a report: 'could, perhaps, provide the wrong conclusion' and declined the request for a report to be commissioned, saying that, although a review of events exposed systematic failing on the part of Ledbury Town Council over a prolonged period, the structure of the requested report would not address the key issues. This response was considered by the Town Council 30 March 2023 (agenda item C717).

Also in March 2023, Councillor Sinclair raised an agenda item at the Finance and General Provision Committee of Ledbury Town Council, about the same contractor, believing that invoices to the contractor had been overpaid. Councillor Sinclair remained concerned about the events surrounding the commissioning of the works on the Ledbury War Memorial and he did not accept the conclusion reached by West Mercia Police.

Ledbury Town Council met on 30.03.23 and the issue was raised again (agenda item 721) with a resolution to pursue an overpayment. It was raised that the content of the agreement should be checked in relation to this.

Ledbury Town Council next met on 25.05.23 and by resolution, gave Councillor Sinclair authority to refer the matter to West Mercia Police (agenda item C16).

Councillor Sinclair duly referred the matter to West Mercia Police and shared with the Town Council the detail of this referral, which in turn made reference to his referral to the police in 2022.

Ledbury Town Council met on 29.06.23 and made resolutions rescinding the authority given to Councillor Sinclair on 25.05.23, and authorising the Clerk to contact West Mercia Police to withdraw

the request for a further investigation to take place (agenda item C33 minutes 29.06.23). West Mercia Police subsequently confirmed their view that this was a civil matter and not for the police to investigate.

On 18.08.23 complaint was made that Councillor Sinclair had breached Ledbury Town Council's Code of Conduct.

The complainant alleged that Councillor Sinclair had failed to observe the Code of Conduct for members, adopted by Ledbury Town Council, by the following alleged conduct:

- (i) That Councillor Sinclair abused an authority given to him by full Council (Ledbury Town Council) on 25 May 2023 to act on behalf of Ledbury Town Council; and that he sought to further pursue his own campaign to uncover wrongdoing in connection with works carried out on the town's war memorial;**

Ledbury Town Council did give Councillor Sinclair authority to refer the matter to the police by resolution of full council on 25.05.23; the authority was given following debate and a vote that was unanimous, save for the Complainant's abstention.

The minutes of the meeting of Ledbury Town Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 23.03.23 note that 'It was discussed that there should be a written request with what Ledbury Town Council would like the police to investigate, Councillor Sinclair agreed to work (sic) provide this.'

Recommendations were made as follows:

- 1. That a recommendation be submitted to Full Council at its meeting on 30 March 2023, that Ledbury Town Council pursue the repayment of the overcharge from the Stone Workshop for the full amount as detailed in the report provided to Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee.*
- 2. The Councillor Sinclair provide a written request to full council at its meeting on 30th March 2023 detailing what Ledbury Town Council should request the Police to investigate in respect of the war memorial.*

Councillor Sinclair did not in the event provide a written statement to full council on 30.03.23 but read a statement that included the following (minutes at page 7):

'If the information from the two local contractors had been available, the Police may have looked at the case differently.'

Opportunity appears to have been missed, particularly at the full council meeting on 25.05.23, to define the manner and detail of the referral which the Town Council authorised Councillor Sinclair to make to West Mercia Police, and this resulted in a strongly worded resolution:

'That Councillor Sinclair be authorised to take evidence to West Mercia Police, on behalf of Ledbury Town Council, and ask them to open a fraud investigation with regards to the War Memorial.'

My view is that Councillor Sinclair considered himself to be acting within his authority when he referred the matter to the police in June 2023.

The minutes of Full Council meeting 29.06.23 include the following (pages 5-6):

‘Councillor Harvey reminded Members that it is not appropriate for an individual Councillor to be given authority to undertake something that is within the remit of the Proper Officer, such as this, and pointed out that the Clerk should have been instructed to carry out this task on behalf of the Council. She advised that the action taken by those Members giving Councillor Sinclair the authority to do this, and the content of the information provided to the Police, could potentially put the Council in a position which could result in legal action being taken against the Council.

Councillor Chowns expressed his regret for his part in granting the authority to Councillor Sinclair, outlining his reasons for having voted for it at the time, noting that it now emerges that not all information was made available to Members at that meeting of which Councillor Sinclair intended to forward to the Police. In light of this he proposed that the Council should step back from this as Councillor Harvey suggested in her email. Councillor Sinclair spoke on the matter further giving his reasons for pursuing the matter in the manner that he had. Further discussion took place whereby Councillor Howells also expressed his concerns over the issues raised by Councillor Harvey. During the debate Councillor Hughes advised that he wished to mirror some of Councillor Chowns’ comments. He stated that had it been disclosed to him and other Members what was to be referred to the Police, he would not have proposed that authorisation be given to Councillor Sinclair to approach the Police on the Council’s behalf. He advised that in hindsight he agrees that all approaches of this sort should be made by the Proper Officer and not a Councillor and apologised for his naivety in this matter.’

Notwithstanding the fact of the authority given by the Council, Councillor Sinclair did not disclose to members the full detail of the referral to the police in 2022, even though debate referenced the previous discussions with the police. He was aware that the Complainant knew about the referral but, equally, knew that she was not aware of the detail, nor the outcome. It is clear from the minutes of the full council meeting on 30.03.23 that members were aware, or ought to have been aware of the previous referral to the police (minutes 30.03.23 at page 7). Debate led to a resolution upon Agenda item C721 of the Full Council Meeting on 30.03.23 that:

‘3. Councillor Sinclair provide an evidence pack to the next Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee, which will be in the new Administration which will provide evidence for the Finance, Policy and General Purposes Committee to review prior to it being sent to the Police.’

However, the need to see an evidence pack, prior to a submission being made to the police, appears not to have been subsequently followed up. The Complainant said that, in May (2023), full council once again requested that a written report be provided for approval before any approach to the police was made but it was noted that the minutes of the Full Council meeting of 25.05.23 do not reflect a further request for a written report.

Councillor Sinclair engaged in debate upon the matter and in my view, relied on this cursory reference to the 2022 referral but omitted to provide the Council with the fullest possible information upon which to base the authority given by the resolution. In the subsequent meeting of Full Council on 25.05.23 where the resolution passed, there is no record of the previous police referral. The minutes reflect, at item C16 (ii), that:

‘Councillor Hughes proposed that members authorise Councillor Sinclair to take evidence to West Mercia Police and ask them to open a fraud investigation with regards to the War Memorial. Councillor Bradford seconded the motion, a vote took place 4 members were in favour of this proposal with one absention.’

There followed the resolution:

'3 That Councillor Sinclair be authorised to take evidence to West Mercia Police, on behalf of Ledbury Town Council, and ask them to open a fraud investigation with regards to the War Memorial.'

Councillor Sinclair's response to this allegation focused on his strongly held belief about potential fraud and a belief in Ledbury Town Council's wrongdoing. However, in my view, in giving authority for the referral to the police in 2023, the Council should have been able to rely on a full and accurate context, ie. that a previous police referral, investigation and outcome had taken place in 2022, which Councillor Sinclair failed to provide.

My view, on the balance of probabilities, is that Councillor Sinclair omitted to detail what is clearly a material point and allowed scant understanding of the detail of the previous police referral by the Council, when seeking authority to refer the matter to the police again in 2023. I find that he did so in order to pursue his own concerns about the renovation works on the town's War Memorial.

However, I also found that Ledbury Town Council had at its disposal the fact of a police referral in 2022; it could, and should, have taken steps to fully understand the extent and outcome of that referral prior to its resolution to refer the matter to the police on 25.05.23. I consider this to mitigate the finding below.

The Complainant told me that she was aware that Councillor Sinclair had referred his concerns to the police in 2022 and she believed this was well known in the community. She said that although she knew of the police referral, she did not know the details around the date of the referral, the content of the letter to West Mercia Police in May 2022, nor the subsequent police consideration and assessment of the issue. At that time, she was not an elected member of Ledbury Town Council.

From the Subject member's perspective, I found that he was aware that the Complainant knew about the referral but, equally, knew that she was not aware of the detail, nor the outcome.

I DO find this to be a BREACH of paragraph 6.1 of the Code of Conduct: 'I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.'

- (ii) That, in seeking the Council's authority to act on its behalf and to approach the police Councillor Sinclair did not disclose the relevance of this authority in the context of his earlier complaint and sought to usurp the role of the Clerk as the Council's Proper Officer;**

The Clerk was present at Ledbury Town Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 23.03.23; and at the full Council meetings on 30.03.23 and 25.05.23. Councillor Sinclair made the observation that:

'I fail to see how I am usurping the Clerk as the council's Proper Officer. She was present at all the meetings where events were discussed and could have pointed this out.'

I find that, both members of the Town Council and the Clerk as the Town Council's Proper Officer, knew, or ought to have known that the Clerk was the correct person to make the referral to the police in 2023. Having been present at the three relevant meetings, the Clerk and members did have the opportunity to raise this point had the error been realized. If they did not realise this, I find that it would be unfair to expect Councillor Sinclair to have realised it.

I found that there was ample opportunity for Ledbury Town Council to identify the proper route for a referral to the police by the authority it gave on 25.05.23. The issue had been discussed at the meetings mentioned in the above paragraph and opportunities to ensure the correct route would be used, were missed.

This allegation specifically included the point that the Complainant said that Councillor Sinclair sought to usurp the role of the Clerk as the Council's Proper Officer and, therefore, required specific focus on that issue.

No criticism at all is made of the Clerk but her role as Proper Officer is acknowledged. I considered the possibility that the Clerk felt unable to raise the point at the Full Council meeting on 25.05.23.

However, further reflection on the evidence suggested that concerns about the appropriateness of the action taken (at Full Council on 25.05.23) first arose as a result of an email from Councillor Harvey, to the Clerk and members, in June 2023, in which she posed a number of questions, that were discussed and referenced at Ledbury Town full Council meeting on 29.06.23.

My observation is that it appears to have been Councillor Harvey who first raised concerns about the authority given to Councillor Sinclair, and that the evidence does not support a suggestion that the Clerk was cognisant of an error in procedure but felt unable to iterate the correct approach in the face of the meeting on 25.05.23. In my view, it would not be unreasonable to think that, if the Clerk had been concerned, the point could have been raised with members after the meeting.

On a balance of probabilities I therefore find it more likely that the point about the role of the Proper Officer was, presumably in error, simply missed at the meeting of 25.05.23.

I therefore confirm my finding that, if the Clerk and other members did not realise the error, it would be unfair to expect Councillor Sinclair to have realised it.

I DO NOT find this to be a breach of 1.2: 'I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.'

(iii) That the submission Councillor Sinclair made to the police harassed the Clerk;

Councillor Sinclair refuted these allegations. He said in his response to this allegation that he had not made repeated allegations against the Town Clerk personally and he expressed the view that:

'In none of this correspondence do I accuse the Town Clerk of anything'

Councillor Sinclair also described the Complainant's description of accusations and harassment of the Clerk as *'unfounded'*.

However, Councillor Sinclair's own evidence contradicted this view and my finding here is that Councillor Sinclair considered there had been wrongdoing on the part of the Clerk. This view runs counter to the view of the police, who have twice concluded this is a civil matter; and the view of the internal auditor, who expressed the view:

'I am concerned that preparing the report in the structure provided could, perhaps, provide the wrong conclusion, that it was individual failings, or failure by specific individuals that caused this problem, rather than it being a systematic failure by the entire Council over a number of years.'

In reaching my findings on this allegation, I gave particular regard to the relevant case law (Heesom).

I considered that criticism of the Clerk went beyond what a non-elected public servant should reasonably be expected to experience. I found that Councillor Sinclair's criticism of the Clerk fell outside the protection afforded to him by Article 10; it was not, in my view, protected by the mantle of political debate.

Therefore, on a balance of probabilities, I found that Councillor Sinclair's expressed views about the Clerk amounted to a breach of the Code of Conduct.

I DO find this to be a BREACH of paragraph 2.2 of the Code of Conduct: 'I do not harass any person'; and I Do find this to be a BREACH of paragraph 1.2: 'I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.'

- (iv) **That Councillor Sinclair did not disclose to councillors the extent of his previous allegations, nor the outcome reached by the police in 2022 (that they considered the matter to be a civil one), when he has sought authority to report fraud to the police on behalf of the council in 2023. In doing so, it was alleged that Councillor Sinclair sought to gain advantage for his personal campaign in relation to the works on Ledbury's War Memorial;**

I considered this to be substantially the same as allegation (i) above and adopted the reasoning applied in relation to that allegation.

Accordingly, I found, on the balance of probabilities, that Councillor Sinclair omitted to detail the material point of his previous referral to the police, allowing a scant understanding of the detail of that previous police referral by the Council, when seeking authority to refer the matter again in 2023; and that he did so in order to gain advantage for his personal campaign in relation to the renovation works on the War Memorial.

I DO find this to be a BREACH of paragraph 6.1 of the Code of Conduct: 'I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.'

- (v) **That Councillor Sinclair tried to hide the extent of his previous referral to the police in 2022, by altering the text of his original letter and that he attempted to pass off the altered document as the original;**

The Complainant provided documentary evidence of this allegation, which, juxtaposed with investigation of the evidence, caused me to find that the text had been altered as alleged.

Councillor Sinclair conceded that the versions differed in the way described. His explanation for this difference was that he knew councillors would accuse him of removing these words and therefore he deliberately removed them, expecting and anticipating their response, which he says was exactly what happened. Councillor Sinclair's explanation, that the editing was a deliberate, anticipatory

ploy, aimed at exposing the Complainant's prejudgment of his position was detailed, and he referred to his thought process, borne of his own experience as an investigator in the armed forces.

Having considered the evidence in relation to this allegation, on the balance of probabilities, I found Councillor Sinclair's explanation lacked coherence and credibility. I found that this is likely to have been done in anticipation that editing the version supplied to Ledbury Council would avoid causing him difficulties in explaining his original words.

I DO find this to be a BREACH of one of the general principles of the Code of Conduct: 'I act with integrity and honesty.'

(vi) That Councillor Sinclair involved a third party in sensitive correspondence with the police, when acting on behalf of the council;

This allegation was not disputed by Councillor Sinclair. In his initial response to the complaint, he was of the view that disclosure was justified. However, in commenting on the draft report, Councillor Sinclair acknowledged an error of judgement in having involved a third party.

I DO find this to be a BREACH of 4.1: 'I do not disclose information (a) given to me in confidence by anyone (b) acquired by me which I believe, or ought responsibly to be aware of is of a confidential nature.'

(vii) That Councillor Sinclair acted in a manner which placed the Council at risk of legal action so far as the Clerk is concerned;

In my view, this aspect of the complaint was not within the Monitoring Officer's remit under the Code of Conduct process.

I therefore DO NOT make any finding in respect of this allegation.

(viii) That Councillor Sinclair's conduct in approaching the police in May 2022 put the council at risk of legal action as a consequence of potentially breaching the terms of a binding legal agreement entered into confidentially with an independent contractor, regarding works carried out on the town's war memorial;

The dispute with the independent contractor culminated in a legal agreement, in September 2022 in settlement of all potential claims. Thus, when Councillor Sinclair referred the matter to the police, in May 2022, no agreement was in effect. The police reached an outcome to that referral which also pre-dated the agreement.

A further issue was raised about an overpayment to the same contractor, in relation to the works on the war memorial at Ledbury Town Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 23.03.23 (agenda item F579).

In my view, the minutes demonstrate a clear note of caution from members and the Clerk when the issues came under scrutiny in 2023, which did not appear to result in the same attention to the potential risk, when full council gave Councillor Sinclair authority to refer the matter to the police on 25.05.23.

It appeared to me, from the evidence, that Councillor Sinclair was cognisant of the agreement to no greater or lesser extent than other members of Ledbury Town Council. He viewed the attempt

to blame him for this, 'after the horse had bolted', as 'grossly unfair'. When I interviewed Councillor Sinclair, he re-iterated this point without prompt, saying that he 'absolutely' would not have made the referral, had he understood the risk in relation to the agreement.

My finding is that, when the issue of reclaiming an overpayment from the contractor was raised in March 2023, all members of Ledbury Town Council were aware, or ought to have been aware, of the potential risk of raising the issue in light of the agreement.

I noted, in the minutes of Full Council on 30.03.23 (page 9) that:

'Councillor Hughes advised that the wording of the agreement should be checked, however he did not believe that this would prevent the Council from writing to TSW making them aware that there had been an overpayment and requesting that this money be paid back to the Council. He pointed out that it is the moral duty of the Council to seek repayment of those monies.'

Councillor Hughes proposed that members authorise Councillor Sinclair to take evidence to West Mercia Police and ask them to open a fraud investigation with regards to the War Memorial. Councillor Bradford seconded the motion, a vote took place 4 members were in favour of this proposal with one abstention.'

I find that, having sounded a note of caution about the risk to the Council in light of the settlement agreement, the opportunity to understand the extent of that risk, prior to pursuing the overpayment, or referring the matter to the police, was missed by Ledbury Town Council as a whole. Accordingly, I find that Councillor Sinclair's awareness of the potential risk here could not be expected to be any more heightened than that of the other members of Ledbury Town Council.

I DO NOT find this to be a BREACH of 5.1: 'I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.'

(ix) That Councillor Sinclair made repeated and unsubstantiated allegations against members and former members of the Town Council, regarding the handling of the restoration and repair work on the town's war memorial;

On a balance of probabilities, I found that Councillor Sinclair had made repeated allegations about Councillor Howells and Bannister. I found no evidence of repeated allegations against Councillors Morris and Manns.

Councillor Sinclair's justification for his conduct was that he strongly believed that some members of Ledbury Town Council were guilty of wrongdoing, so far as the management of the works on the War Memorial are concerned.

In reaching my findings on this allegation, I had particular regard to the case law so far as it relates to Councillor Sinclair's Article 10 right to freedom of expression.

I did not find that Councillor Sinclair's publicly expressed concerns, at Ledbury Town Council meetings were in breach of the Code of Conduct; I considered the minutes of the relevant meetings and, whilst Councillor Sinclair's views were strongly expressed, I considered that he could expect the enhanced protection afforded to the expression of political opinions on matters of public interest.

However, by including elected members of Ledbury Town Council in his referrals to the police in the manner that he did in 2023, when acting upon the Council's authority, it is my finding that Councillor Sinclair's Article 10 rights may justifiably be interfered with, where those referrals to the

police include the possibility of criminal activity. In my view these fell outside the sphere of 'political' debate.

I DO find this to be a BREACH of paragraph 1.1: I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect; and paragraph 5.1: I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

(x) That Cllr Sinclair referred to the Complainant as 'stupid' in an email exchange in August 2023.

Councillor Sinclair was honest about his meaning in the email in question. He readily admitted that he was referring to the Complainant and he expressed his frustration, at what he perceived to be poor treatment by Ledbury Town Council, and by the Complainant in particular, as his reason for saying this, and as a measure of justification for his choice of words. Upon reflection, Councillor Sinclair said that he probably would have ideally used different language.

I do not condone, nor consider that Councillor Sinclair's use of the word 'stupid' in reference to the Complainant can be justified; in my view it is disrespectful and has no place in communications in professional or public life.

Nevertheless, applying the case law in relation to Councillor Sinclair's right to freedom of expression, particularly the enhanced protection accorded to freedom of expression in the political sphere, I do not find that the language used is such that his Article 10 rights in this instance should be interfered with.

I DO NOT find this to be a BREACH of paragraph 1.1 of the Code of Conduct: 'I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.'

MONITORING OFFICER'S DECISION

In accordance with S28(7) Localism Act 2011 I have sought and taken into account the views of two Independent Persons appointed by Herefordshire Council for the purposes of the Act. The Independent Persons agree that Cllr. Sinclair has breached parts 1.1, 2.2, 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1 of the Ledbury Town Council Code of Conduct.

In accordance with the procedure for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints, the Monitoring Officer has the following options upon completion of a formal investigation:

1. There has been no breach and therefore no further action will be taken;
2. There have been one or more breaches, but no further action is needed;
3. There have been one or more breaches, but the matters should be resolved in a way other than by a hearing; or
4. That the matters be referred to a hearing.

In light of the specific recommendations for resolution in the final report, I proposed resolution, in accordance with point 3, that there have been one or more breaches, but that matters should be resolved in a way other than by a hearing, by way of Councillor Sinclair accepting and acting upon the recommendations.

Albeit reluctantly, Councillor Sinclair did accept the recommendations made in the investigator's final report, as follows:

- (i) Councillor Sinclair should make a private, written apology to the Town Clerk for his conduct towards her in relation to the renovation of the War Memorial.
- (ii) Councillor Sinclair should apologise to Ledbury Town Council for his conduct, in particular in not taking steps to ensure members understood the full context of his seeking authority to refer the matter to the police from March to June 2023, and such apology should be minuted at the next Full Council meeting, drawing a line under the issues for the benefit of residents.
- (iii) The Complainant should, following the above actions, if accepted and completed, provide an update to the Town Council confirming the final position in relation to the War Memorial renovations, such that the Town Council can make resolutions to reassure residents that the Town Council has dealt with all outstanding issues and can move on, this being in the public interest.

Councillor Sinclair subsequently made apologies under paragraphs (i) and (ii) above. The detail of the apologies was not considered by the Clerk and the Complainants to adequately address the above breaches and I considered their representations. However, my decision is that no further public interest would be served by referring the matter to Standards Panel. Accordingly, this decision notice will be published.

There is no right of appeal against this decision notice.



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Monitoring Officer

Dated: 14th February 2024