

Standards Hearings Sub-Committee
06/November2025



COTSWOLD
District Council

Minutes of a meeting of Standards Hearings Sub-Committee held on Thursday, 6 November 2025

Members present:

Nigel Robbins

Helene Mansilla

Len Wilkins

Michael Paget-Wilkes
(Independent Person)

Officers present:

Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services

Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)

Amanda Dobinson, Investigation and Enforcement Officer

Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Kate Seeley, Investigation and Enforcement Manager

Leonie Woodward, Head of Legal

Tyler Jardine, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

Matt Morris, Investigation and Enforcement Officer

Also present:

Councillor Nick Bridges (observer); Michael Allchin, Bob King, Richard Orr, Sally Lindner, Keyna Doran, Phillip Smith, Ann Taylor and John Ellis (complainants); Michael Haines and Christopher Jones (Subject Members); and Patrick Spink (Subject Member representative).

1 Apologies

Upon being proposed and seconded, Cllr Nigel Robbins was elected chair of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee for the remainder of the 2025/26 civic year.

The Chair welcomed attendees who were invited to introduce themselves.

2 Substitutions

There were no substitutions.

3 Declarations of Interest

The members of the Sub-Committee declared for transparency that they knew Andrea Pellegram who was mentioned in the report.

4 Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules

The Chair drew the Sub-Committee's attention to the procedure rules. The Head of Legal Services explained the procedure to be followed.

The Chair emphasised that the standards hearing was not a court of law and the Sub-Committee would need to make its determinations on the balance of probabilities.

It was clarified that the complainants would have the opportunity to ask questions as that had been agreed by the Monitoring Officer and aligned with common practice although it was not explicitly set out in the Procedure Rules.

5 Exclusion of the Press and Public

The Sub-Committee voted to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the basis that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, with the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighing the public interest in disclosure.

6 Determination of Alleged Breaches of Code of Conduct Case references 571 and 574

A public summary of the key points is below. This is not intended to be a verbatim record of everything that was said.

The Investigating Officer explained the background to the complaints.

Patrick Spink on behalf of Cllr Haines said that he felt that comments provided to the Monitoring Officer had not been included in the pack. The Chair clarified that the comments had been received and acknowledged. An explanation was sought as to why these had not been included. The Investigating Officer said that some of the amendments related to comments made by third parties which the Investigating Officer had been reluctant to amend.

Bob King on behalf of the complainants said that a report submitted in February highlighting errors in the Investigating Officer's report had not been reflected in the final report. The Chair confirmed that the Sub-Committee was sighted on this report

which had been included in the pack as Annex H. The Investigating Officer confirmed that the indication that a comment was just a joke had been incorporated in the report.

Patrick Spink said the key witnesses had remained anonymous and that under the rules of natural justice anonymity was only given if there was concern about violence and retribution. This meant the Subject Members had been unable to properly respond to the allegations. The Legal Advisor stated that the hearing was not a court of law. Natural justice did apply but the Investigating Officer had considered the best interests of the case.

Complaint 571 - Cllr Haines

The Investigating Officer presented the case against Cllr Haines stating that the main allegations relating to not declaring interests and a comment in a public setting about removing the a former Town Council employee.

Cllr Haines was asked to present his case to the Sub-Committee. Patrick Spink represented Cllr Haines and said that:

1. The document pack had not been received until early on Tuesday (although substantially the same pack had been circulated previously).
2. The nature of the multiparty complaint with various strands suggested a "shotgun" approach by the complainants.
3. The complaints could be considered "tit for tat", unsubstantiated and based on hearsay as the complainants had no direct knowledge of the events in question.
4. Councillor Haines had served on the Council for over 30 years.
5. There had been no intention to breach the code of conduct and there was a lack of advice and guidance about the option of requesting a dispensation where a councillor had an interest in a matter the Town Council was considering.
6. Cllr Haines had heard the comment about the former employee but it was maintained that Cllr Haines had not said the comment at a time when he was in a position of trust with regards to the former employee. The timeline given in the Investigating Officer's report was disputed.

The Investigating Officer asked a question about the frequency of social engagements held in the pub.

The Sub-Committee asked about the perceptions of bystanders who would have heard the comment about the former employee. The Sub-Committee also noted that the responsibility was on the individual member to declare their interests and that a dispensation, if requested, may not have been granted.

The Investigating Officer summed up the case against Cllr Haines stating that:

1. Cllr Haines had declared an interest and then proceeded to vote on the matter.
2. The comment was considered to be disparaging towards the former employee at a particularly sensitive time.

Patrick Spink on behalf of Councillor Haines summed up by saying that the Town Council had addressed the points about interests. The comment had been made by Cllr Jones not Cllr Haines in July 2022 (which pre-dated Cllr Haines' duty of care towards the former employee), not in November 2022.

Complaint 574 - Cllr Jones

The Investigating Officer presented the case against Cllr Jones. There were five main allegations which related to disregarding advice, bullying and harassment, conduct of the former employee's appraisal, a reference to secret meetings, changing minutes, comments about the former employee, and disrespect. The central allegations related to a reference to secret meetings and bullying and harassment.

Cllr Jones was invited to present his case. Cllr Jones explained the context of his relationship with the former employee which dated back to 2002/03, stating that:

1. When conducting the former employee's appraisal in February 2022 he had made a foolish remark about her weight which did not amount to bullying in the context of their longstanding relationship. He had later apologised.
2. The former employee was not a complainant.
3. Subsequent comments by the former employee about the appraisal process were made much later in May 2023 as part of a grievance after their relationship had become troubled.

The Investigating Officer asked questions and it was noted that:

1. The grievance process had not resulted in a finding of bullying.
2. A further comment made about the former employee was described by Cllr Jones as a humorous comment designed to lighten the mood.
3. Cllr Jones and the former employee were no longer friends and had not spoken since September 2022.
4. Cllr Jones believed there was no evidence that the former employee had been distressed by his comments. This was contested by the complainants.
5. Cllr Jones had not been involved in the former employee's reinduction following sick leave and did not know the reasons for their resignation.

The Sub-Committee asked questions and noted that:

1. It was custom and practice for the Chair to undertake the former employee's appraisal. However, it was also stated that the former employee had wished to have additional councillors involved in undertaking her appraisals.
2. Relationships had become blurred.
3. Cllr Jones was aware of the duties and procedures relating to employees. He felt that neutrality was a key principle and that the former employee had not remained neutral.

4. Cllr Jones said there were no secret meetings held by a clique on the Council or evidence for them other than hearsay; a comment made to a member of the public had been clearly intended as a joke.

The Investigating Officer summed up the case against Cllr Jones stating that:

1. The comment about a secret meeting was inappropriate and damaging to Council's reputation.
2. Collectively the remarks about the former employee could be considered to amount to bullying. The intent to bully may not have been there but given the individual's circumstances the impact on them may have been more detrimental.

Cllr Jones' case was summed up as follows:

1. A HR specialist, independent of this Code of Conduct investigation and process, had determined that there was no evidence of bullying, either directly or indirectly.
2. There was no evidence of any secret meetings.

The Chair invited the Independent Person to give their views as to whether or not the Code of Conduct had been breached. The Independent Person observed that:

1. It was a complex complaint in which various details were disputed.
2. There was some substance to the allegations, but the extent and detail was difficult to discern.
3. There was a need to consider both what was said and what was heard, which could be very different, giving rise to misinterpretations and misunderstandings.
4. The complaints highlighted deeper issues on the Town Council which needed to be addressed; there was a need for more humility in relationships.

The Chair commented that there was a need to bring people together and not to make the situation worse.

The Sub-Committee then retired with the Legal Advisor to determine the outcome of the complaints.

The meeting reconvened and the Chair relayed the Sub-Committee's decisions (see also the decision notices attached to these minutes):

Decision in relation to Cllr Haines

1. Participating and voting in a matter having declared an interest was a breach of the Code of Conduct.
2. Participating in a discussion about the former employee's removal was a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Decision in relation to Cllr Jones

1. The treatment of the former employee was a breach of the Code of Conduct.

2. The comment about a "secret meeting" did not amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The Chair invited the complainants to give a statement as to the effect of the conduct which was found to have breached the Code of Conduct. The complainants stated that they had deep concerns about the Town Council and the behaviour of Cllr Jones in particular. Relationships with the former employee had broken down and their resignation had been a direct result of their treatment, which had been rude, humiliating and bullying. There had been no conciliation process. It was suggested that Cllr Jones should no longer be Chair and that Cllr Haines should be subject to a lower punishment such as a reprimand.

The Investigating Officer said that she respected the decisions, which broadly aligned to the recommendations in her report, and drew the Sub-Committee's attention to the suggested sanctions within the report.

Patrick Spink on behalf of Cllr Haines disputed the complainants' narrative and highlighted the need to protect councillors. There was a cohort of former Town Councillors who were not prepared to accept the majority of decisions taken by the Town Council.

Cllr Jones also didn't recognise the complainants' narrative. He accepted that it had been a difficult situation with the former employee but was disappointed with the finding of bullying and believed that sanctions would not be appropriate.

The Independent Person provided their view and said that it had been a costly process which everyone would be unhappy with for one reason or another. A new start was required at the Town Council and the strongly held and embedded views had not been addressed, which was a pity. Everyone had to be prepared to hear other people and to find understanding.

The Sub-Committee retired with the Legal Advisor to reach a decision on sanctions to be recommended to Chipping Campden Town Council.

Recommended sanctions for Cllr Haines

- That the Subject Member undertakes training on the declaration of interests.
- That the Subject Member apologises in writing to the former employee and apologises at a meeting of full Council.

Recommended sanctions for Cllr Jones

- That the Subject Member undertakes training on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- That the Subject Member undertakes training on chairing and councillor responsibilities.

Standards Hearings Sub-Committee

06/November2025

- That the Subject Member is removed from Committees and Sub-Committee until they have completed the recommended training.

Other recommendation to Chipping Campden Town Council

- That the Town Council undertakes independent training to improve culture of the organisation so people can work together more effectively.

The Chair closed the meeting.

The Meeting commenced at 11.00 am and closed at 4.50 pm

Chair

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COTSWOLD
District Council

**Cotswold District Council
Standards Hearings Sub-Committee
Determination of Code of Conduct Complaint
Hearing date: 6 November 2025**

Reference: 571

Subject Member: Councillor Michael Haines, Chipping Campden Town Council

Complainants: Sally Lindner, Ann Taylor, Bob King, Michael Allchin, John Ellis, Richard Orr, Philip Smith, Keyna Doran and Christina Kingsmill (deceased)

Independent Person: Michael Paget-Wilkes

BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOUND

Complaint

The following allegations were referred to the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee for determination by the Council's Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person:

- Around May 2022, the Subject Member declared an interest and subsequently participated in discussion and voted in respect of this matter.
- In 2022, whilst in a public space, the Subject Member said that "the Clerk might sometime have to go". The Subject Member later claimed that the comment "was just a joke".

Decision

The Standards Hearings Sub-Committee considered the reports of the Director of Governance and Development and the Investigating Officer to determine the allegations in accordance with the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee Procedure Rules (agreed by full Council on 25 September 2024). The Sub-Committee considered representations on behalf of the Subject Member and representations from the complainants. The Sub-Committee also heard and took account of the views of the Independent Person.

The Sub-Committee determined that in respect of the two allegations the Subject Member had breached the Code of Conduct.

Reasons

The Sub-Committee considered that declaring an interest and then participating in, and voting on, the matter was a breach of the following provisions of the Chipping Campden Town Council Code of Conduct:

Part VI 10 Declaration of Interests and Restrictions on Participation

Where a decision on the matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting, to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of other Council taxpayers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the Ward affected by the decision, your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a member of your family, or any person with whom you have a close association, or who has a contractual relationship (including employment) with yourself, member of your family or close associate, arises at a meeting at which you are present, or where you become aware that you have such an interest in any matter to be considered or being considered at the meeting:-

(1) **Do** ensure that you disclose the interest to the meeting. If the Monitoring Officer considers it a sensitive interest, you must declare that you have an interest but do not need to disclose the nature of the interest.

(2) **Do** leave the meeting and **do not** vote on the matter, participate, or participate further, in any discussion of the matter at the meeting (unless a dispensation has been granted or it is an excepted function), if,

(a) it affects the financial position of an interest specified in Appendix B (other registrable interests)

(b) it affects your financial position or well-being or that of a member of your family, or any person with whom you have a close association, or who has a contractual relationship (including employment) with yourself, member of your family or close associate
or

(c) it relates to the determination of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in (a) and (b) above

and a reasonable member of the public knowing the facts would reasonably regard it as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

The Sub-Committee considered that the comment about the removal of the Clerk was inappropriate, insensitive and created an unfortunate impression. It was therefore found to have breached the following provisions of the Chipping Campden Town Council Code of Conduct:

Part IV Rules of Conduct

7 (1) **Do** treat everyone with respect.

10 Do not behave in a manner which brings your role or the Authority into disrepute.

Sanctions

The Sub-Committee agreed to recommend the following sanctions to Chipping Campden Town Council:

- Subject Member to undertake training on the declaration of interests.
- Subject Member to apologise in writing to the former Town Clerk and to apologise at a meeting of full Council.

Appeal

Subject to judicial review or a decision of a Local Government Ombudsman, there is no right of appeal against the decision of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee.

The Standards Hearings Sub-Committee

Councillor Nigel Robbins (Chair)

Councillor Helene Mansilla

Councillor Len Wilkins

Michael Paget-Wilkes (Independent Person)

Dated

21 November 2025

To:

The Subject Councillor

The Complainants

Councillor Michael Haines

Sally Lindner

Ann Taylor

Bob King

Michael Allchin

John Ellis

Richard Orr

Philip Smith

Kenya Doran

Clerk to Chipping Campden Town Council

John Dooley (Acting Clerk)

Angela Claridge

Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)

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COTSWOLD
District Council

**Cotswold District Council
Standards Hearings Sub-Committee
Determination of Code of Conduct Complaint
Hearing date: 6 November 2025**

Reference: 574

Subject Member: Councillor Christopher Jones, Chipping Campden Town Council

Complainants: Sally Lindner, Ann Taylor, Bob King, Michael Allchin, John Ellis, Richard Orr, Philip Smith, Keyna Doran and Christina Kingsmill (deceased)

Independent Person: Michael Paget-Wilkes

BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOUND

Complaint

The following allegations were referred to the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee for determination by the Council's Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Independent Person:

- Several allegations relating to the treatment of a former Town Clerk, primarily in respect of bullying/mistreatment and the mishandling of a grievance.
- A comment made to a member of the public about a "secret meeting".

Decision

The Standards Hearings Sub-Committee considered the reports of the Director of Governance and Development and the Investigating Officer to determine the allegations in accordance with the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee Procedure Rules (agreed by full Council on 25 September 2024). The Sub-Committee considered representations from the Subject Member and the complainants. The Sub-Committee also heard and took account of the views of the Independent Person.

The Sub-Committee determined that in respect of some of the allegations, the Subject Member had breached the Code of Conduct.

Reasons

The Sub-Committee determined that:

- Taken together, the allegations relating to the Subject Member's treatment of the former Town Clerk was undermining, misjudged and pressurising. It was therefore found that to have breached of the following provisions of the Chipping Campden Town Council Code of Conduct:

Part IV Rules of Conduct

- (1) **Do** treat everyone with respect.
- (2) **Do not** bully any person.
- (3) **Do not** harass any person.
- The comment about a "secret meeting" was considered to be a "throwaway remark" which did not amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Sanctions

The Sub-Committee agreed to recommend the following sanctions to the Town Council:

- That the Subject Member undertakes training on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- That the Subject Member undertakes training on chairing and councillor responsibilities.
- That the Subject Member is removed from Committees and Sub-Committee until they have completed the recommended training.

Appeal

Subject to judicial review or a decision of a Local Government Ombudsman, there is no right of appeal against the decision of the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee.

The Standards Hearings Sub-Committee

Councillor Nigel Robbins (Chair)

Councillor Helene Mansilla

Councillor Len Wilkins

Michael Paget-Wilkes (Independent Person)

Dated

21 November 2025

To:

The Subject Councillor
The Complainants

Councillor Christopher Jones
Sally Lindner
Ann Taylor

	Bob King
	Michael Allchin
	John Ellis
	Richard Orr
	Philip Smith
	Kenya Doran
Clerk to Chipping Campden Town Council	John Dooley (Acting Clerk)

Angela Claridge
Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)

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