

West Suffolk Council's Standards Procedures for Handling Complaints

Decision notice

Member:	Councillor Andy Drummond
Council:	Newmarket Town Council
Complainant:	
Monitoring Officer:	Teresa Halliday
Independent person:	Ms Susan Putters
Complaint (as received):	First Complaint letter details: I write to make a formal complaint under the Members' Code of Conduct concerning the behaviour of Councillor Andy Drummond, in his capacity as a Town / (County) Councillor for Newmarket & Red Lodge Division. I believe his response to me, a constituent, has breached several provisions of the Code, and I ask you to consider investigating. Background & Facts On Sunday 14 September, I wrote to Councillor Drummond and other ward councillors raising concerns about England flags being attached to public lamp posts, which I believe is causing a feeling of intimidation and a misuse of public infrastructure. On Tuesday 16 September, Councillor Drummond responded with an email that included statements such as: "if this upsets you, you are part of the problem", "it's your problem, not mine", "this is England - these are our flags ..." etc. I believe his reply does more than express disagreement: it dismisses my concerns, uses insulting / demeaning language, and fails to address the issue I raised in a respectful or substantive way. Code of Conduct Provisions I Considered Breached: Based on Newmarket's Members' Code of Conduct (C1 - adopted 28 May 2019) I believe the following clauses may have been breached:

	You must treat others with respect. His language is disrespectful; it includes personal comments and dismissiveness. You must not — Bullying any person; Intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person; Do anything which may cause the council to breach its duties under the Equality Act 2010. The tone of his email could reasonably be seen as bullying or intimidating, especially in the way it dismisses concerns and uses charged language. You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or council into disrepute. A public reply from an elected representative using insulting or dismissive language may lower public confidence in the council's fairness and capacity to engage with constituents. You must not use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly... Although this is less direct, his instruction to leave public property flags in place and dismiss concerns - without apparent consideration - may reflect misuse of his role to dismiss legitimate constituent concerns rather than treating them impartially. Outcome sought: An acknowledgement that Councillor Drummond's response was inappropriate in tone and content. An apology from Councillor Drummond for the personal and dismissive nature of his response. Assurance that the council will consider the matter I raised (public flags on public lampposts) in a fair, transparent manner, and clarify the policy or steps the council will take. Possibly training or reminder of behavioural standards for councillors in their communications with constituents. I would be grateful if you could let me know whether you consider this complaint admissible, and what the process will be, including an estimated timeline. I sent this directly as an email, but to ensure a proper follow up, I am submitting via this form. Following on from the complaint I made, I received a further email from Councillor Drummond, here is my second email to you: Following my initial communication, Councillor Drummond has sent me a second email (below) in which he repeats dismissive and derogatory remarks such as "if it upsets people that's their problem, not mine" and "This is England. Stand up for your country." I consider this further evidence of: Failure to treat others with respect, Dismissal of legitimate
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	concerns without courtesy, Conduct likely to bring his office into disrepute. In addition, I note that Councillor Drummond was found in 2024 by West Suffolk Council's Standards Committee to be in serious breach of multiple rules including bullying, discrimination and harassment (see Suffolk News coverage here: https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/haverhill/news/twocouncillors-found-in-serious-breach-of-multiplerules-9374917/). This background, combined with his continuing behaviour toward me, demonstrates a pattern of disregard for the code of conduct and reinforces why this complaint requires investigation. Please confirm receipt of this additional material and advise how it will be taken into account as part of my confidentiality ongoing complaint. Second Complaint letter details: Further to my earlier complaint regarding Councillor Andy Drummond's conduct, I wish to bring an additional matter to your attention. In his first reply to me (dated 16 September), Councillor Drummond chose to copy in [name provided], Editor of the Newmarket Journal. At no point did I copy in members of the press myself. My original email was sent only to elected councillors, in good faith, as a private and legitimate constituent concern. I consider this a serious breach of trust. By involving the press without my knowledge or consent, Councillor Drummond: 1. failed to respect the confidentiality of constituent correspondence 2. created a situation that could reasonably be seen as intimidating or retaliatory, and 3. acted in a manner likely to bring his office into disrepute. This behaviour compounds the concerns already raised in my original complaint. Constituents should feel safe in contacting their councillors without fear that their personal communications will be shared inappropriately or used to undermine them. I therefore ask that this additional incident be formally considered as part of my ongoing complaint. I am happy to provide copies of the relevant email chain for your review (copies provided).
Relevant parts of the code alleged to have been breached:	1.1. I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect. 2.1. I do not bully any person 2.3. I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against 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 reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it ii. I am required by law to do so iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person, or iv. the disclosure is: 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and 3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release. 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.
Capacity:	The correspondence referred to within the complaint was sent to Councillor Drummond in his official capacity so I am satisfied the code of conduct was engaged at the time.
Consideration:	On the 6 October 2025 I wrote to Councillor Drummond to inform him of the complaint and request his response. The letter was sent by email. Councillor Drummond replied by return: 'Thank you Teresa I have nothing to say about this and will happily accept my punishment - but on this occasion please don't expect an apology.' I have inferred from Councillor Drummond's response that he accepts that he has breached the code of conduct. In considering this matter I have looked at the Guidance on Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct: Respect: Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by being polite and courteous, listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks and being kind. In a local government context this can mean using appropriate language in meetings and written communications, allowing others time to speak without interruption during debates, focusing any criticism or challenge on ideas and policies rather than personalities or personal attributes and recognising the contribution of others to projects. Disrespectful behaviour is subjective and difficult to define.

However, it is important to remember that any behaviour that a reasonable person would think would influence the willingness of members of the public to speak up or interact with an elected member because they expect the encounter will be unpleasant or highly uncomfortable fits the definition of disrespectful behaviour.

Examples of disrespect in a local government context might include use of inappropriate language in written communications such as swearing, ignoring someone who is attempting to contribute to a discussion, attempts to shame or humiliate others in public, nit-picking and fault-finding, the use of inappropriate sarcasm in communications and the sharing of malicious gossip or rumours.

I consider that Councillor Drummond's response to the complainant's original email meets the threshold for being disrespectful in that it dismissed her concerns and accused her of being 'part of the problem'.

Bullying and discrimination:

Like disrespectful behaviour, bullying can be difficult to define. When allegations of bullying are considered consideration is given to both the perspective of the alleged victim, and whether the councillor intended their actions to be bullying. Consideration is also given to whether the individual was reasonably entitled to believe they were being bullied.

Conduct is unlikely to be considered as bullying when it is an isolated incident of a minor nature, where it is targeted at issues, rather than at an individual's conduct or behaviour, or when the behaviour by both the complainant and councillor contributed equally to the breakdown in relations. However, the cumulative impact of repeated 'minor' incidents should not be underestimated.

I do not consider there was any intention on Councillor Drummond to bully the complainant and am satisfied this is an isolated incident of a minor nature. I therefore do not consider that Councillor Drummond has breached this part of the code.

Disclosure of confidential information:

As part of their role, councillors will receive personal information. They should seek to ensure they are familiar with how the Data Protection Act applies to their role in handling such information through training, and if they are not sure, to seek advice from an appropriate officer in the council.

Although councillors are not required to register as a data controller, they will receive personal information from residents in their area. They should only use it for the purpose for which it has been given and must ensure this information is held securely and only share with others that are entitled to it.

Personal information is defined within UK GDPR as meaning 'any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'); an identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person'.

Councillor Drummond shared the complainant's email which identified them by name and included their personal email account with a third party, namely the editor of the Newmarket Journal, without the consent of the complainant. This is in breach of the Data Protection Principles and in breach of this part of the code of conduct.

Disrepute:

Councillors are trusted to make decisions on behalf of their community and their actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to freedom of expression, and political speech as a councillor is given enhanced protection but this right is not unrestricted.

In general terms, disrepute can be defined as a lack of good reputation or respectability. In the context of the code of conduct, a councillor's behaviour in office will bring their role into disrepute if the conduct could reasonably be regarded as either:

- reducing the public's confidence in them being able to fulfil their role, or
- adversely affecting the reputation of the authority's councillors, in being able to fulfil their role.

Conduct by a councillor which could reasonably be regarded as reducing public confidence in their local authority being able to fulfil its functions and duties will bring the authority into disrepute.

For example, circulating highly inappropriate, vexatious or malicious e-mails to constituents, making demonstrably dishonest posts about the authority on social media or using abusive and threatening behaviour might well bring the role of councillor into disrepute. Making grossly unfair or patently untrue or unreasonable criticism of the authority in a public arena might well be regarded as bringing the local authority into disrepute.

I consider that Councillor Drummond's response to the complainant was disrespectful but I do not consider that this, alone, has brought his office into disrepute. I further, do not consider that his conduct has been such that it has brought the council into disrepute.

Independent person's view:	I've now reviewed the materials you attached. I see that Cllr Drummond acted within his capacity as a Councillor when responding to the complainant. It is also clear there was a lack of respect in the language used in the response to her complaint and having copied the journalist in, is certainly a breach of confidentiality as well. Thus I do not see any point in further investigation as the breach has been established and agreed to by Cllr Drummond. A formal resolution is the way forward.
Decision:	By way of formal resolution, I have determined that Councillor Drummond has breached parts 1.1 and 4.1 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors adopted by Newmarket Town Council
Sanctions:	In noting Councillor Drummond's refusal to apologise to the complainant, I recommend the Newmarket Town Council censures Councillor Drummond for the breaches at their next ordinary meeting of the town council.

This decision is final and there is no right of appeal

Date: 27 October 2025

Signed: Teresa Halliday
Monitoring Officer