

COMPLAINT CONCERNING COUNCILLOR CONDUCT: COUNCILLOR JEREMY RAWLINGS OF OLNEY TOWN COUNCIL

DECISION: COMPLAINT REJECTED

PARTICULARS OF THE COMPLAINT

It has been alleged that Councillor Jeremy Rawlings (the 'Subject Member') breached the Olney Town Council Code of Conduct by failing to treat the Complainant with respect and civility during an email exchange in March and September 2020. The Complainant indicates that he feels this conduct amounted to bullying and harassment.

The complaint was made by Councillor Colin Rodden (the 'Complainant').

SUBJECT MEMBER RESPONSE

The Subject Member disputes the allegation that the Code of Conduct has been breached and has provided an explanation to each email submitted by the Complainant.

DECISION

The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that at the time of the alleged breach the Subject Member was acting in his capacity as a Councillor.

In considering the complaint the Monitoring Officer has consulted with the Independent Person. The Independent Person states that: *"I am unable to find any part of the emails from the Subject Member which lack civility. They are couched in terms of advice concerning actions taken by the Complainant which had been causing difficulties at Olney TC. The Subject Member, as Mayor, clearly has a responsibility to give such advice when necessary and to ensure the staff at Olney TC are not put into any difficult positions, actual or perceived."*

In respect of the email chain from September 2020, the Independent Person advises that *"these (emails) concern the process for laying Motions before the Town Council and the decision to enforce a part of the Standing Orders as to how this is to be done, via the Proper Officer, who indicated a willingness to assist in the correct drafting of such Motions. I have read through the six emails concerned and can find no evidence of a breach of any of the standards contained in the Code of Conduct."*

Overall, the Independent Person has advised the Monitoring Officer that he does not consider that the Subject Member has breached the Code of Conduct and recommends that no further action is taken.

The Monitoring Officer has considered the complaint, the Subject Member's response and the view of the Independent Person. The Monitoring Officer is of the view that the Subject

Member had properly asked the Complainant to cease some of his communications and requests and advised him to use the council's formal procedures. Whilst the tone of the Subject Member's emails is robust in places, the behaviour complained of is minor in nature and does not constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct applicable to members of Olney Town Council. The Monitoring Officer considers that an investigation of the complaint would not be in the public interest.

The Monitoring Officer has decided to reject the Complaint and therefore no further action will be taken.

Sharon Bridglalsingh

Monitoring Officer of Milton Keynes Council

24th February 2021