

## Decision Notice

This Decision records the outcome of the Tendring District Council's Standards Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in accordance with the District Council's arrangements for dealing with complaints against Councillors.

The Complaints Procedure was approved by full Council on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

### COMPLAINT:

An allegation that a Member of District Council has failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

<b>Date of the Committee:</b>	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2016
<b>Subject Member:</b>	District Councillor Mick Skeels Snr  (apologies given to the Monitoring Officer before the meeting and did not attend)
<b>Complainants:</b>	Three complaints had been received from members of the public, Ms C. Button and Mr J. Freebody and the third from Mr William Hones himself.
<b>Membership of Standards Committee:</b>	District Councillors R Heaney (Chairman), P Honeywood, J Brown, G Steady, F Nicholls, J Broderick and A Porter;
<b>Independent Person:</b>	Mr J Wolton
<b>Monitoring Officer:</b>	Mrs Lisa Hastings
<b>Summary of Complaint:</b>	The complaints alleged that Councillor Mick Skeels Snr had breached the Tendring District Council Members' Code of Conduct. The alleged breaches related to paragraphs 3.1, 3.2, 3.4(a) and 3.5(b)(ii) of the Code. The complaints all related to the same incident, i.e. the manner in which Councillor Mick Skeels Snr had spoken to Mr William Hones outside the Town Hall prior to the Council meeting. The conversation between the two parties had been captured on film by Mr Hones and was available to view on YouTube. The video contained footage of Councillor Mick Skeels Snr using obscene language directed to Mr Hones and followed by a threat of violence.

<b>Any declarations of interest:</b>	None
<b>Hearing in public/availability of relevant documents for public inspection:</b>	The Committee was held in public and agenda papers were made available. The Committee meeting was adjourned for the members to consider and discuss their decision in private, the outcome of which was repeated in the public meeting once it was convened.
<b>Written Representations received</b>	Written apologies had been issued by Councillor Mick Skeels Senior and the text of those apologies was contained within the body of the Monitoring Officer's report. In addition, Councillor Mick Skeels Senior had provided written acknowledgement to the Monitoring Officer that his conduct had fallen short of the standards required by the Members' Code of Conduct, and therefore an investigation into the matter had not been required.
<b>Council's Standards Committee decision on sanctions, following an acknowledgement that there had been a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and reasons for their decision:</b>	<p>The Committee considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Report of the Monitoring Officer, including details of the complaints and link to the Youtube video footage;</li> <li>• the views of the Independent Person (contained within the committee report); and</li> <li>• the written apologies and acknowledgement that the Code of Conduct had been breached, received from Councillor Skeels Senior (contained within the committee report).</li> </ul> <p>The Committee unanimously decided to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) note that three complaints have been received by the Monitoring Officer concerning the conduct of Councillor Mick Skeels Snr towards an individual outside of the Town Hall on 5 April 2016 prior to the meeting of full Council;</li> <li>(b) note that this conduct was filmed, is available for the public to view and has received media interest;</li> <li>(c) note that written apologies have been issued by Councillor Mick Skeels Snr to the individual himself and all Councillors;</li> <li>(d) welcome the acknowledgement by Councillor Mick Skeels Snr that he has</li> </ol>

- breached the Code of Conduct;
- (e) endorse the referral to the Committee to consider the sanctions; and
  - (f) in determining the sanctions available to them, the Committee stated that it was appalled by the disgraceful behaviour of an elected member of the Council, which was unnecessary and exhibited a lack of self-control. Those actions brought the Council into disrepute and the positions of all Portfolio Holders are very important. The Committee therefore recommended to the Leader of the Council that Councillor Mick Skeels Snr is removed from the Cabinet and all outside bodies connected with the Council with immediate effect; and
  - (g) instructed the Monitoring Officer to report the outcome of the findings of the Committee to Council and to publish this decision on the Council's website.



**Signed:**

**Lisa Hastings, Monitoring Officer (in accordance with the delegation and on behalf of the Standards Committee)**

**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

**Background Paper – Published Report to Standards Committee 12.05.16**