

Decision Notice: Potential Breach – Informal Resolution

Reference: STD005231

Complaint

On 23rd March 2026, the Monitoring Officer, Francesca Whyley, in consultation with the Independent Person, David Walsh considered a complaint from a Gedling Borough Councillor, (“the complainant”) regarding an alleged breach of the St Albans Parish Council Member Code of Conduct by Councillor Boulby a parish councillor at St Albans Parish Council.

The complainant complains about the behaviour of Councillor Boulby as follows:

The complainant has complained that Councillor Sam Boulby of St Albans Parish Council has made posts on face book about the complainant that cast doubt on the complainant’s ability as a Councillor due to the complainant’s registered disability which Councillor Boulby has put in the public domain.

The complainant feels that the posts amount to harassment and discrimination and are contrary to the Equality Act 2010. The complainant has asked for an apology and for the messages to be deleted and this has been refused.

The complainant is also concerned that Councillor Boulby publicly states in his posts that 'Parish Councils are crap!' This does nothing to maintain the public trust and the complainant feel these actions fall well below the standard required by Councillor Boulby’s office.

The complainant has alleged that he feels the comments by Councillor Boulby show a lack of respect and amount to bullying and harassment and discrimination. In addition the complainant the comments about parish council’s cast doubt on such authorities abilities to function and may amount to disrepute. As such I consider that the rules of the Code of Conduct relevant to this complaint are as follows: para 7 rule 2:

2. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person

I have also considered para 7 rule 1.

1. Respect

As a councillor:

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

And rule 5:

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

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

Decision

Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 requires all relevant authorities to "adopt a code dealing with the conduct that is expected of members and co-opted members of the authority when they are acting in that capacity."

St Albans Parish Council has adopted such a Code of Conduct which reflects this and states:

"5.2 This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor.

5.3 The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements, and comments.

The conduct complained about arose from social media posts. The posts, whilst not clearly made by Councillor Boulby as a parish councillor initially do follow a thread where the complainant references that Councillor Boulby is a parish councillor and that is accepted.

Given that the comments stem from reference to Councillor Boulby's role as a parish Councillor and his view on the complainant's attendance at parish meetings, it is clear from the exchange that Councillor Boulby is a parish councillor and his continued engagement on that basis would give the impression that he was acting in his capacity as a councillor.

In accordance with Sections 28 (6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011, having carefully considered the allegation in accordance with the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about breach of the Code of Conduct, and taking into account:

- a) The complainant's account and social media posts
- b) Councillor Boulby's response
- c) The St Albans Parish Council Code of Conduct
- d) The Local Government Associations Guidance on Code of Conduct
- e) Relevant case law and Article 10 right to freedom of expression

I have determined that on balance, there is a potential breach of the Code of Conduct in this instance. Councillor Boulby has made comments about the complainant's ability to perform his role as a Councillor due to PTSD and whilst I have considered Councillor Boulby's right to freedom of expression and the higher threshold extended to Councillors in line with case law, I do consider the comments are personal and suggest that the complainant is incapable due to his PTSD which is on balance disrespectful and does not promote equality, such comments could also potentially be considered discriminatory.

I also consider that the comment made about parish councils being "crap" undermines the public's confidence in the effectiveness of parish councils and could on balance bring the authority into disrepute, as could the disrespectful comments about PTSD.

I do not consider that a further investigation is necessary into this matter as the complaint relates to posts which have been provided. Investigation is disproportionate in light of the resources required which would likely come to the same conclusion.

I consider that this matter can be resolved through a public apology. I would also suggest that Councillor Boulby attend some training in relation to social media usage and equality, diversity and inclusion and how both link to the Code of Conduct.

Decision Notice: Potential Breach Informal Resolution

Reference: STD005462

Complaint

On 30th March 2026, the Monitoring Officer, Francesca Whyley, in consultation with the Independent Person, David Walsh considered a complaint from a St Albans Parish Councillor, Councillor King ("the complainant") regarding an alleged breach of the St Albans Parish Council Member Code of Conduct by Councillor Dylan Jones a parish councillor at St Albans Parish Council

The complainant complains about the behaviour of Councillor Jones is summarised below:

Councillor Jones has made comments on social media which are contrary to the code of conduct and this is following a previous finding of potential breach against Councillor Jones in February 2025.

The complainant has submitted posts to support his complaint which are attached. The complainant alleges that the use of vulgar language and criticism of Council officers could bring the Council into disrepute.

In one post Councillor Jones identifies himself as the Chair of the parish Council then uses the word "shite" in the post.

In a further post Councillor Jones states:

"Council officers went to stop us planting flowers and making areas look nice we just rise up and fight back. For some reason they have a hate boner against beautifying areas that have been neglected and full of weeds and litter."

The complainant has alleged that he feels the comments by Councillor Jones show a lack of respect and bring the Council into disrepute. As such I consider that the rules of the Code of Conduct relevant to this complaint are as follows: para 7 rule 2:

I have also considered para 7 rule 1.

2. Respect

As a councillor:

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

And rule 5:

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

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

Decision

Acting in capacity as a Councillor

Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 requires all relevant authorities to "adopt a code dealing with the conduct that is expected of members and co-opted members of the authority when they are acting in that capacity."

St Albans Parish Council has adopted such a Code of Conduct which reflects this and states:

"5.2 This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor.

5.3 The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements, and comments.

The conduct complained about arose from social media posts. In one of the posts, Councillor Jones does indicate that he is the Chair of the parish Council and uses the word "shite". I am satisfied that Councillor Jones does not give the impression he is acting in his capacity as a Councillor and as such the Code of Conduct is engaged.

Another post is made on the Be Kind in Bestwood, Top Valley and Rise Park page. This is specifically in reference to planting flowers which Councillor Jones frequently posts about in his capacity as Councillor. Again, it is not clear in what capacity this particular post was made and the post has since been edited to remove reference to the offensive terms. I recognise that Councillor Jones is the administrator of the page so would have had opportunity to edit it. Again, looking at the post and the context I have considered whether he is acting in his capacity as a Councillor or whether he "appears" to the public to be doing so. It is unclear who he is referencing as "us" in the post and which Council officers he refers to, although it appears to relate to the City Council. I do consider the language used in the post to be inappropriate and offensive and disrespectful to officers of whichever authority. On balance, given that he is talking about planters in the parish and the post makes reference to "us" and that within this particular page he appears to be referring to Council business that he could be perceived by the public as acting in his capacity as a Councillor.

In accordance with Sections 28 (6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011, having carefully considered the allegation in accordance with the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about breach of the Code of Conduct, and taking into account:

- f) The complainant's account and social media posts and messages
- g) The St Albans Parish Council Code of Conduct
- h) The Local Government Associations Guidance on Code of Conduct
- i) Relevant case law and Article 10 right to freedom of expression

I have determined that on balance, there is a potential breach of the Code of Conduct in this instance. Councillor Jones's language on social media, predominantly his use of a swear word and inappropriate language in a post in which he identifies himself as a parish councillor shows a lack of respect to the wider public. By extension, this undermines public confidence in his office and as such potentially brings his role and his Council into disrepute.

In addition, a post he makes about planting flowers in which he refers to council officers having a "hate boner" does, demonstrate a potential lack of respect as this terminology is unprofessional and offensive. In addition, as the comment is made about council officers (although unclear which council) this could bring that authority into disrepute and, as a Councillor, using such offensive terminology reflects negatively on the office of Councillor and arguably brings that office into disrepute.

I have considered what action to propose in relation to this complaint. I am concerned, as is highlighted by the complainant that this is not the first finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct in relation to this Councillor and whilst previously (February 2025) an informal resolution including an apology was given, the same issue was being considered, essentially inappropriate and disrespectful language used on social media.

I am, however, acutely aware that as of 31st March 2026 St Albans Parish Council will be dissolved and Councillor Jones will no longer be a parish councillor. In considering whether this matter should proceed to full investigation, I was mindful that any investigation and ultimately any hearing would not conclude until after 31st March 2026 investigations can take up to six months. In addition, whilst ultimately an investigation and hearing panel (if called) may find a breach and recommend sanctions, it is only the Parish council who can ultimately agree and impose sanctions on parish councillors under the current regime.

In the absence of the current St Albans Parish Council for which Councillor Jones is a Councillor and without the knowledge as to whether Councillor Jones would be a Councillor in the future, whilst full investigation may have been warranted, at this stage it is unclear whether any sanctions would be realistic.

I do consider that the behaviour falls below the standard expected of a councillor and given current circumstances I do consider it appropriate that some action is taken in relation to this matter. Under the options available to me given the dissolution of the parish I propose that this matter be dealt with by way of local resolution. I recommend that Councillor Jones expresses his regret and apology publicly for his use of disrespectful language on social media.

I also recommend that Councillor Jones attends training on the Code of Conduct including the use of social media if he is to continue as a parish Councillor. The decision in relation to this matter will be published at the next Standards Committee. Whilst I appreciate Councillor Jones may not be a Councillor at that point, I do consider that it is in the public interest for his conduct in office to be reported publicly to the Standards Committee.

Decision Notice: Potential Breach Informal Resolution

Reference: STD005509

Complaint

On 25th March 2026, the Monitoring Officer, Francesca Whyley, in consultation with the Independent Person, David Walsh considered a complaint from a resident, (“the complainant”) regarding an alleged breach of the St Albans Parish Council Member Code of Conduct by Councillor Dylan Jones a parish councillor at St Albans Parish Council

The complainant complains about the behaviour of Councillor Jones as follows:

The complainant has complained that Councillor Jones of St Albans Parish Council has made a number of posts on social media which are offensive due to the language used. The complainant has also alleged that the Councillor Jones directly messaged a comment which was of a sexual nature and amounts to sexual harassment of the complainant.

In response to the complaint Councillor Jones has demonstrated remorse for his actions. He has accepted that some of his language in the social media posts was not as measured as it should have been and he regrets that. He explains that the comments on social media were as a result of an increasingly heated discussion with the complainant on local issues.

In relation to the allegation of sexual harassment, Councillor Jones does not accept his conduct amounted to sexual harassment. He states it was an isolated comment made in the context of a heated exchange. He indicated it was a flippant remark, a sarcastic use of a turn of phrase and not as a genuine or serious comment. Councillor Jones states he accepts it may have been misinterpreted and regrets any offence caused.

Councillor Jones recognises that ongoing engagement via private messaging was not appropriate, accepts it was a mistake and states that he will ensure his future use of social media reflects the standard expected of his role.

The complainant has alleged that he feels the comments by Councillor Jones show a lack of respect and amount to sexual harassment. As such I consider that the rules of the Code of Conduct relevant to this complaint are as follows: para 7 rule 2:

2. Bullying, harassment, and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person

I have also considered para 7 rule 1.

3. Respect

As a councillor:

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

And rule 5:

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

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

Decision

Acting in capacity as a Councillor

Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011 requires all relevant authorities to "adopt a code dealing with the conduct that is expected of members and co-opted members of the authority when they are acting in that capacity."

St Albans Parish Council has adopted such a Code of Conduct which reflects this and states:

"5.2 This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- you misuse your position as a councillor
- your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor.

5.3 The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements, and comments.

The conduct complained about arose from social media posts and private messages. In the posts, Councillor Jones does indicate that he is a Councillor and whilst the discussions relate to local issues, and aren't all specifically linked to parish matters, Councillor Jones has made his role clear. It is following on from public posts that Councillor Jones moves to privately messaging the complainant. I am satisfied that Councillor Jones does give the impression he is acting in his capacity as a Councillor and as such the Code of Conduct is engaged.

In accordance with Sections 28 (6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011, having carefully considered the allegation in accordance with the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Complaints about breach of the Code of Conduct, and taking into account:

- j) The complainant's account and social media posts and messages
- k) Councillor Jones's response
- l) The St Albans Parish Council Code of Conduct
- m) The Local Government Associations Guidance on Code of Conduct
- n) Relevant Case law and Article 10 right to freedom of expression and the Equality Act 2010

I have determined that on balance, there is a potential breach of the Code of Conduct in this instance. Councillor Jones's language on social media, predominantly his repeated use of swear words in posts and the way he addresses the complainant publicly calling him a strange fella is not appropriate, shows a lack of respect to the complainant and the wider public and by extension undermines public confidence in his office and as such brings his role and his Council into disrepute. In addition Councillor Jones makes comments about officers (linked to St Albans Parish council) which are not respectful.

In addition, on balance, Councillor Jones's private messages to the complainant asking whether the complainant "had the hots" for him, could be considered to amount to sexual harassment and as such would potentially amount to a breach of the Code of conduct. In addition, throughout the private messages, whilst the complainant may have been persistent in his exchanges, the response from a Councillor in public office was disproportionate and showed a continued lack of respect to the complainant which could also be perceived as bullying.

I have considered Councillor Jones's right to freedom of expression and the higher threshold extended to Councillors in line with case law, however, whilst these comments in some instances may have been linked to political debate, this was not a Council debate but an interaction both publicly and privately with a member of the public and I consider, the comments were contrary to the Code of Conduct.

I have considered what action to propose in relation to this complaint. I recognise that Councillor Jones has expressed remorse for his actions in his response to the complaint, I also recognise that it was not his intention to sexually harass the complainant. Whilst this is some mitigation, I am concerned that this is not the first finding of a breach of the Code of Conduct in relation to this Councillor and whilst previously (February 2025) an informal resolution including an apology was given, the same issue was being considered, essentially inappropriate and disrespectful language used on social media.

I am concerned that any local resolution to this matter may be inadequate given that Councillor Jones does not appear to have learned from previous decisions and resolutions.

I am, however, acutely aware that as of 31st March 2026 St Albans Parish Council will be dissolved and Councillor Jones will no longer be a parish councillor. In considering whether this matter should proceed to full investigation, I am mindful that any investigation and ultimately any hearing would not conclude until after 31st March 2026. In addition, whilst ultimately an investigation and hearing panel (if called) may find a breach and recommend sanctions, it is only the Parish council who can ultimately agree and impose sanctions on parish councillors under the current regime.

In the absence of the current St Albans Parish Council for which Councillor Jones is a Councillor and without the knowledge as to whether Councillor Jones would be a Councillor in the future, whilst full investigation might have been warranted, at this stage it is unclear whether any sanctions would be realistic.

I do consider that the behaviour falls below the standard expected of a councillor and given current circumstances I do consider it appropriate that some action is taken in relation to this matter. Under the options available to me given the dissolution of the parish I propose that this matter be dealt with by way of local resolution. I recommend

that Councillor Jones expresses his regret and apology publicly for his use of disrespectful language on social media. I also recommend that Councillor Jones issues a private written apology to the complainant through the Monitoring Officer.

I also recommend that Councillor Jones attends training on the Code of Conduct including the use of social media. The decision in relation to this matter will be published at the next Standards Committee. Whilst I appreciate Councillor Jones may not be a Councillor at that point, I do consider that it is in the public interest for his conduct in office to be reported publicly to the Standards Committee.

Decision Notice: Potential Breach Informal Resolution

Reference: STD005267

Complaint

On 2nd March 2026, an officer appointed by the Monitoring Officer to carry out an initial assessment in consultation with the Independent Person David Walsh, considered a complaint from the Locum Clerk of St Albans Parish Council (“the complainant”) regarding an alleged breach of the St Albans Parish Council Code of Conduct by Councillor Jason King a parish councillor of St Albans Parish Council.

The complaint is, in summary, that Councillor King has engaged in a sustained pattern of disrespectful, intimidating and inappropriate behaviour towards the complainant in his capacity as Clerk to the Council. The complainant alleges that Councillor King’s conduct has undermined his professional integrity, caused personal distress, and contributed to a hostile and unsustainable working environment and that Councillor King’s behaviour amounts to bullying and harassing the clerk.

The complainant provided evidence to support his allegations including recordings of a parish council meeting in which the complainant was absent but Councillor King challenged the complainant’s advice and his appointment as clerk. In addition email evidence was submitted which in some instances had been sent to a number of other parish councillors.

Decision

Acting in Capacity

Section 28(2) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to adopt a code of conduct “dealing with the conduct that is expected of members ... when they are acting in that capacity”. The Council’s code is expressed to apply whenever a member is acting in the capacity as a member or co-opted member or claiming to act or giving the impression of acting as a representative of the authority.

The complaint relates to emails sent by Councillor King and his conduct in Parish Council meetings. The majority of emails are sent by the subject member using his email address and on the occasions when he uses his business email address he copies in his councillor email address. Correspondence is signed off as “Councillor Jason King St Albans Parish Council.” The subject member was accordingly clearly acting in an official capacity as a parish councillor in his email exchanges with the clerk, and the Code of Conduct was accordingly engaged. Similarly, when he commented in parish council meetings he was acting as a parish councillor and the code was engaged.

Bullying and harassment

Whilst the content of each email, if taken in isolation, might potentially be considered to be raising legitimate concerns as to parish council matters, I consider that the scale of the exchanges, their frequency, their tone and their content could be considered to constitute bullying and harassment particularly given the frequent “demands” for the clerk to act in accordance with the subject member’s directives within specified timescales and

the fact that the clerk's advice and actions are frequently questioned (in one instance writing WRONG in capital letters).

In addition, the subject member's actions in undermining the clerk at public meetings, in one instance doing so in his absence, could also be deemed to constitute bullying and harassment.

The code gives the following guidance on bullying:

"Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour, an abuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened".

Examples of bullying behaviour include overbearing or intimidating levels of supervision, inappropriate comments about someone's performance, abuse of power, such as placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities or hours of work or coercing someone to meet such expectations and sending detrimental material. On occasion the subject member copied others into his email exchanges. The clerk pointed out to the subject member that his was only a part time role. The frequent "demands" to take specified actions and the frequency of those demands could therefore be deemed to be unreasonable.

Raising concerns as to the clerk's performance in shared email exchanges and in public meetings was not the appropriate manner in which to do so.

The guidance goes on to say that *"such conduct is usually part of a pattern of behaviour which attempts to undermine an individual or group of individuals, is detrimental to their confidence and capability and may adversely affect their health."*

I have concluded that the conduct described by the complainant falls within the description of bullying set out in the guidance to the code.

The code suggests that a protocol be adopted by parish councils including acceptable times to contact the clerk. Had the Parish Council not been impacted by the community governance review this would have formed a recommendation to the parish council arising from the consideration of the complaint.

The guidance to the code provides that harassment can include unnecessarily repetitive, intrusive questioning, intimidation and overbearing or intimidating levels of supervision together with inappropriate comments about someone's performance and placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities, hours of work, or coercing someone to meet such expectations, all of which are described by the complainant and evidenced in the email exchanges.

Respect

The content of the email exchanges, including questioning the clerk's advice and describing it as "wrong" and describing his actions in the budget process as "inadequate", and the subject member's actions in "advising" the clerk on procedural matters, together with the subject member's conduct in publicly seeking to undermine the complainant in meetings could amount to a failure to treat him with respect.

The code provides that *"failure to treat others with respect will occur when unreasonable or demeaning behaviour is directed by one person against or about another."*

In some cases that criticism took place in the public domain at public meetings. Some email exchanges were copied to other councillors and third parties. Failure to treat with respect can include nit picking and fault finding.

The guidance states “ *recent case law has confirmed that local authority officers should be protected from unwarranted comments that may have an adverse effect on good administration and states that it is in the public interest that officers are not subject to offensive, abusive attacks and unwarranted comments that prevents them from carrying out their duties or undermine confidence in the administration.*”

Disrepute

I am further of the view that the subject member’s conduct could amount to disrepute. The constant references to procedural irregularities, potential fraud and flawed advice, in the public domain and to third parties in email exchanges, in the absence of evidence to substantiate those references, could impact on the reputation of the council and reduce public confidence in councillors and the council being able to fulfil their role.

Conclusions

I have concluded there is prima facie evidence of code of conduct breaches on the part of the subject member, namely failing to treat the clerk with respect, bullying and harassment and disrepute.

Whilst I would normally have recommended that the complaint be referred for formal investigation, I am mindful that St Albans Parish Council will cease to exist on 31st March 2026 and it is unlikely that an investigation would be completed prior to its dissolution. Given the particular circumstances, I have considered whether informal resolution might be appropriate, rather than recommending that the complaint be referred for formal investigation at this stage.

Informal Resolution

The Council’s arrangements provide that, in appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for a formal investigation. The arrangements provide as follows:

Such *informal resolution may involve the Subject Member accepting that his/her conduct was unacceptable;*

- *offering an apology;*
- *agreeing to attend a training course;*
- *agreeing to engage in a process of conciliation; or*
- *the Council introducing some other remedial action (such as changing procedures).*

Where the Subject Member makes a reasonable offer of informal resolution, but the Complainant is not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

Where the Monitoring Officer recommends informal resolution, but the Subject Member is not willing to accept his/her conduct was unacceptable or not willing to accept the informal resolution proposed, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

Conclusions

Whilst my recommendation would normally have been to refer the complaint for formal investigation, I am mindful that St Albans Parish Council will cease to exist on 31st March 2026.

In the circumstances my recommendation is that informal resolution be explored.

I consider that an appropriate remedy would be for the subject member to offer a formal apology to the complainant.

Should informal resolution not be successful the initial assessment decision will need to be revisited with a view to deciding on next steps.

NB Councillor King did submit late representations he also would not agree to apologise. Given the dissolution of the parish the decision was taken not to investigate.