

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Code of Conduct complaint

I write in respect of the Code of Conduct complaint which was made against me by Cllr Derbyshire.

I wish to apologise for my conduct on 11 and 12 January 2022, in particular, for making the decision to disclose information concerning the full Council meeting on 20 January 2022 to The Hitchin Nub and The Comet.

By way of an explanation, but not as an excuse, I want to make clear that at the time I was deeply distressed by the death of my deputy leader, Cllr Paul Clark, who passed away due to Covid-19 in December 2021. Around the time of his passing, there were serious concerns regarding the new strain of Covid-19, OMICRON, and, during the closed meeting of the Council's Response and Recovery Board on 7 January 2022, myself and other senior Members and Officers discussed how this new health risk would impact the safety measures to be taken during the full Council meeting on 20 January 2022.

At the time, I was frustrated and upset by the Conservative Group's view that the meeting on 20 January could take place with all Members in attendance. I felt that a decision to hold a meeting with all Members in attendance could pose a serious health risk due to the rise in numbers of those infected with Covid-19 at the time.


However, I fully accept that, as set out in the external Investigator's [Ms Wenham's] report, I should not have disclosed confidential information to The Hitchin Nub and The Comet on 11 and 12 January 2022 respectively, in particular, details of the discussion held during the Council's Response and Recovery Board meeting on 7 January 2022 as well as the subsequent email correspondence between myself and Cllr Strong and other Councillors.

I appreciate that it is important that closed meetings held by the Council remain confidential (as appropriate in the circumstances) to allow Members to discuss matters freely and to work together on a cross-party basis. And I accept in retrospect that my actions at the time were unacceptable. As I explained to Ms Wenham during the course of the investigation into this complaint, I have had time and space to reflect on these issues and have taken learning from this experience

I note that Ms Wenham's investigation report concluded that my conduct could reasonably be regarded as bringing my office of Councillor into disrepute. I regret any negative impact that my conduct has had in respect of the public's perception of my role as a Councillor, this was certainly not my intention.

I am also sorry if my conduct on 11 and 12 January 2022 has caused offence to Cllr Strong, it was not my intention to cause any such offence. I trust that, going forwards, we can continue to work together as senior Members of the Council.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Elizabeth Denning-Harburg