

**Standards Sub Committee**  
**DECISION NOTICE**



**Code of Conduct Complaint**

**Reference: CES / 001520**

**FINDINGS / DETERMINATION**

Date of Sub Committee Hearing	25 <sup>th</sup> February 2021
Subject Member	Councillor Simon Alexander
Council or Parish Council	Steyning Parish Council
Complainant	Councillor Paul Campbell
Council or Parish Council (If a Councillor)	Steyning Parish Council
Membership of Standards Sub Committee	Cllr Brian Donnelly (Chair) Cllr Karen Burgess Cllr Jim Sanson
Monitoring Officer & Legal Advisor to Sub-Committee	Sharon Evans, Head of Legal & Democratic Services
Investigating Officer	Natasha Rafatnia, Litigation & Governance Solicitor
Summary of complaint	<p>Allegations were that Councillor Simon Alexander ('Subject Member') breached Steyning Parish Council's Code of Conduct ("the Code") through his alleged involvement with the 'Steyning Justice' group and the materials posted on Facebook and Vimeo, harassing Councillor Paul Campbell and other Steyning Parish Councillors.</p> <p>In particular, the group named 'Steyning Justice' have been involved in posting numerous inappropriate, offensive and somewhat threatening videos, posts and material to social media. The allegation is that the Subject Member is involved in or is part of this group and responsible for these posts.</p> <p>The relevant paragraphs of the Code state:</p> <p>3(1) You must treat others with respect</p> <p>3(2)(b) You must not bully any person</p> <p>5 You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office or authority into disrepute.</p>

Standards Sub Committee decision on whether or not there has been a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and reasons for their decision

The Standards Sub Committee decided the following:

The Subject Member has **NOT** failed to comply with the following paragraphs of the Code:

3(1): You must treat others with respect;

3(2)(b): You must not bully a person;

5: You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office into disrepute.

The Standards Sub Committee considered the complaint, the response to the complaint, the Independent Persons Report, the Parish Representatives Report and the Investigation Officers Report, including further comments from both the subject member and the complainant.

A full bundle of papers detailing the evidence, reports and comments was considered and further, the Sub Committee took advice from the Monitoring Officer after hearing representation from the Investigating Officer at the Standards Sub Committee hearing.

The 'circumstantial evidence' put forward of the connection of the Subject Member to the Steyning Justice Group was considered together with the fact that the police decided there was insufficient evidence to make the Subject Member a suspect in their investigation into this matter and the police are taking no further action in this case. Whilst the significant difference in the burden of proof was distinguished between a criminal matter and this code of conduct complaint, the Sub Committee could not on the balance of probabilities establish the required connection between the Subject Member and the inappropriate, offensive and somewhat threatening videos, posts and material to social media, via the Steyning Justice Group.

It cannot be said that the Subject Member was responsible for these posts and that he has breached the code of conduct. So there is no finding or a determination of any breaches of the code of conduct in relation to this complaint.

The Standards Sub Committee noted the sinister nature of the various materials posted and the type and levels of intimidation within and were glad to note that all posts and materials appear to have been removed from the internet and there is no further posts or current sign of Steyning Justice.

Any mitigating circumstances taken into account	N/A
Sanctions	N/A
Additional comments	<p>The Parish Council or individual Councillors should not be subject to this kind of abuse by members of the public or any groups. If this happens again, or there is any resurgence please refer to the Monitoring Officer immediately.</p> <p>Although the Monitoring Officers powers are very limited in these circumstances, we will do everything that we can to assist, especially with trying to help with the removal and taking down sites where appropriate.</p>

Signed: **SIGNATURE REDACTED**

Sharon Evans  
Monitoring Officer and  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Date: 9th March 2021