

FINAL Investigation Report prepared by Verina Wenham for the Monitoring Officer, Blaby District Council

7 August 2025

Sapcote Parish Council - complaint of breach of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Paul Taylor – reference number

Commission

1. The Investigating Officer is Verina Wenham. I am a Solicitor (currently non practising), and I have nearly fourteen years' experience as a Monitoring Officer with a district council and over twenty years local government experience.

Investigation

2. I was appointed by the Monitoring Officer of Blaby District Council in January 2025 to investigate the above complaint following her decision to refer the complaint for investigation.

3. In summary, the complaint, submitted by Councillor Laura Badland ("the Complainant") is that on 28 November 2024 Councillor Paul Taylor ("the Subject Member) posted a comment on a local community Facebook page called "Sapcote News" that he had seen a white van in the area and he described the passengers as "foreign". There was a subsequent exchange between Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor in which Councillor Badland was critical of Councillor Taylor's post particularly his reference to "foreigners". At the subsequent Sapcote Parish Council ("SPC") meeting on 5 December 2024 Councillor Badland alleges that Councillor Taylor's behaviour towards her both during the meeting and immediately after the meeting in the car park, was aggressive, intimidating and that she was scared for her personal safety as he allegedly confronted her about her criticism of him on "Sapcote News". The complaint is set out in detail in paragraph 10 of this report.

4. As part of my investigation, I have interviewed Councillor Badland, the Complainant and Councillor Atkinson who witnessed the incident in the car park and the Parish Clerk who was present during the meeting on 5 December 2024.

5. Councillor Taylor, the Subject Member was asked to attend an interview on a number of occasions but has not responded to those requests. He has submitted comments to both the Monitoring Officer and me which are referred to in this report.

6. They have also commented on my notes of their respective interviews and have provided additional information. I would like to put on record my thanks to them for their cooperation.

Factual Context

7. Councillor Paul Taylor is a parish councillor on SPC and has been for a number of years.

8. At the time of submitting the complaint Laura Badland was a councillor on SPC however resigned her position during the course of this investigation.

9. On 5 December 2024 SPC held a parish council meeting which commenced at 7.30 pm. A copy of the agenda is attached as Appendix A and a copy of the approved minutes is attached as Appendix B.

The Complaint

10. The complaint submitted by (former) Councillor Badland is set out below:

...." On 28th November, Cllr Paul Taylor posted on a local community group "Sapcote News" that he had seen a white van acting suspiciously. He described the passengers as "foreign", and I responded by commenting "Paul, I implore you to change your description of the individuals here – you cannot possibly know someone's nationality based on their appearance". This seemed to spark a huge response from the admin of the page, who subsequently deleted and blocked me from the group. I believe that they are friends with Paul.

On Thursday 5th December, myself, Paul, and fellow councillors, as well as others were at the Sapcote Parish Council meeting held at Sapcote Pavilion. During Ryan Keane's report (our PCSO), Cllr Taylor asked if the white van that he had recently posted about on Facebook had been involved in any of the recent crimes in the area. This was the first that Ryan had heard of such a van. Cllr Taylor proceeded to explain that he had posted it on Facebook, and he'd been called out or that I had been interfering, whilst looking and pointing at me. He was aggressive and I wanted to diffuse the situation, so I said nothing. He raised the point again to say that I had called him out unnecessarily and described to the whole room how you know if someone is foreign based on how they look. Cllr Taylor was shouting and clearly very aggravated and so, once again, I didn't say anything.

There were other comments and questions from fellow councillors before I asked Ryan whether it would be advisable that if anyone in the village sees any suspicious behaviour, that we can report it to him/the police. I was speaking directly to Ryan but Cllr Taylor clearly had so much anger towards me that he started shouting at me declaring "do you know how hard it is to get hold of the police?!" and then proceeded to shout "stay out of my business, you need to stay out of my business" whilst pointing his finger and gesticulating across the tables. Once again, in an attempt to diffuse the anger, I didn't rise to Cllr Taylor's attempt to cause an argument or debate. Nothing else was said on the issue in the meeting.

After the meeting finished, I was chatting with fellow councillors and helping pack away tables/chairs. Cllr Taylor left around 5-10 minutes before I had done, and I was chatting to the last few councillors and staff members that were there.

As I came out of the pavilion door into the pitch-black rec ground and heading towards the car park, Cllr Taylor leapt out of his car and charged towards me. Cllr Taylor is at least 6ft3/6ft4 and was stood over me in the dark, which I found very intimidating. He was shouting at me and gesticulating aggressively such as pointing his finger at me in a sharp motion. He shouted, "keep your nose out of my business" and also shouted "I'm warning you" repeatedly. I found this very threatening and was

worried for my safety. I looked back to the pavilion in the hope I could go back in there but unfortunately the door had just been locked. I felt harassed and scared for my personal safety.

Cllr Atkins was stood next to me, as Cllr Requena and Ellie Grimsley were locking up the door of the pavilion. I worry for how the situation might have escalated further if I had been on my own or if I'd responded differently. I'm really frightened by the fact that he chose to wait until I'd be on my own in the dark before wanting to intimidate and threaten me. Since then, I've been anxious to go to our local co-op or other village spaces in case I bump into him. I have young children and one of them is disabled; I feel really scared and vulnerable in my community because of Cllr Taylor's actions"

The Code of Conduct

11. SPC has adopted a Code of Conduct ("the Code") in accordance with the requirements of Section 27(2) the Localism Act 2011. The current Code, which was adopted by SPC on 5 May 2024 can be found on the Council's website.

12. It is necessary to establish which parts of the Code may be engaged by the allegations set out in the complaint.

13. (Former) Councillor Badland has not identified which parts of the Code of Conduct Councillor Taylor may have been breached, however from the detail of the complaint, I consider that paragraphs 1 and 2 are engaged.

14. Paragraph 1.1 states that as a Member "I will treat others with respect".

15. Paragraph 2.1 states that as a Member "I will not bully any person" and paragraph 2.2 states that "I will not harass any person".

16. The Code is only engaged by a member when he/she is acting in their official capacity as an elected member and not in their private capacity. There is no definition of what the role of a councillor is, but SPC's states that the Code of Conduct applies when..." you act in your capacity as a member or co-opted member of the Council; and conduct the business of the Council"

17. In my conclusions I will address whether I consider Councillor Taylor was acting in his official capacity with respect to his post on "Sapcote News" of 28 November 2024, his alleged conduct during the SPC meeting and his alleged conduct in the car park of the Pavillion after the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024.

Evidence

Evidence of the Complainant – (former) Councillor Laura Badland was interviewed as part of the investigation and set out below is a summary of what I consider to be the relevant parts of her interview. A copy of the interview in full is attached as Appendix C.

18. Councillor Badland referred to the post by Cllr Taylor on “Sapcote News” on 28 November 2024. She said that Cllr Taylor’s post said that he had seen a white van in the area acting suspiciously. She said that Cllr Taylor commented that the people in the van looked “foreign”.

19. She subsequently posted asking Cllr Taylor to adapt his language. She said that this was a catalyst. She said that after she posted her comments that she was “blocked” from “Sapcote News”.

20. Councillor Badland explained that the “Sapcote News” page was a community page and was often used by the parish council to post items.

21. Councillor Badland referred to the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024 and specifically about the attendance of Ryan Keane the PCSO (“RK”). She said that RK had not attended a parish council meeting for a long time but that he was always invited to attend and report. Councillor Badland said that his report was not a standing item on the parish council agenda.

22. Councillor Badland said that RK did attend the meeting on 5 December 2024, and he was reporting on the main crimes in the area and what the parish council could do by way of messages to support its local community. She said that as RK was addressing the meeting about the local crimes that Councillor Taylor turned towards her and said that he had posted about seeing a white van in the area but that he had been “called out”. Councillor Badland said that this was aimed at her but that she did not respond at this point as she did not want to make an issue of it.

23. Councillor Badland said that RK asked another question and then Cllr Taylor said to her that she had “called him out” about the posting about the white van and she said that he then said to her that ... “you need to keep out of my business”. She said that Councillor Taylor turned towards the participants in the room and explained how you can tell someone is “foreign” just by looking at them. She said that she did not engage with Councillor Taylor on this, as he was clearly very angry, and she decided that he would not be receptive to her discussing this with him at this time.

24. Councillor Badland said that this incident made her feel embarrassed and that she apologised to RK for Councillor Taylor’s response. She said she also felt threatened and intimidated, but she was trying to diffuse the situation. She said that Councillor Taylor’s body language was aggressive and that although he was seated, he was pointing his finger towards her as he was talking to her.

25. Councillor Badland said that she then asked RK whether the parish council should encourage residents to report any issues they have direct to the Police and not

just post something on "Sapcote News". She said that at this point Councillor Taylor shouted at her from across the room that did she know how hard it was to get hold of a police officer. She said that she was making a general point that concerns should be raised with the Police as well as on Facebook. She said that she was making a general point and did not refer specifically to the "white van" incident.

26. Referring to Councillor Taylor's behaviour after the meeting, Councillor Badland said that to get to the car park from the meeting room at the Pavilion, that you have to walk down a path and then you have to walk through a gap in a fence to get to the car park. She said that there was only one streetlamp.

27. She said that she left the meeting with the Vice Chairman, Cllr Peter Atkinson, and that the Chairman and the Parish Clerk were behind them initially, although they had stopped, so Cllr Badland continued walking to the car park with Cllr Atkinson.

28. Councillor Badland said that Councillor Taylor came out of his car and that he came "charging towards her" waving his hands and pointing at her. She said that his behaviour was very personal and overwhelming and scary, and that Councillor Taylor was blocking her route to her car and that the only option for her was to turn around and go back into the Pavilion, however she said she could not as the Clerk was now locking the door. She said that she felt that she had no escape route.

29. Councillor Badland said that Cllr Taylor almost came out of nowhere, it was so fast. She said that Cllr Taylor got out of his van made direct eye contact with her and came straight "at her". Cllr Badland said that she tried to diffuse the situation and that she kept saying to Cllr Taylor ..."I'm not engaging with this". She said that Cllr Taylor kept shouting at her "I'm warning you" "I'm warning you" "stay out of my business" "stay out of my business". She said that Cllr Taylor became agitated and that he told her to "stop commenting on Facebook" "stop commenting on Facebook".

30. Councillor Badland said that in an "act of madness" that she then responded to Councillor Taylor "freedom of speech" at which Councillor Taylor seemed taken aback. Councillor Badland said that she then said to Councillor Taylor "that enough Paul" and at that point her stepped back and she could get to her car and the situation ended. Councillor Badland said that Councillor Taylor then left the car park.

31. Cllr Badland said that when she arrived home that she just burst into tears. She said that she found the situation terrifying and that Cllr Taylor was so aggressive that, in that moment, she was scared about what could happen. She said that the incident has had an impact on her private life, and that she is scared that she might bump into Cllr Taylor in the village and that she is too scared to go to the local shop. She said that it was always on her mind that Cllr Taylor may appear.

Evidence of the Subject Member – Councillor Taylor declined to be interviewed as part of the investigation, but did provide initial comments to the Monitoring Officer and myself and these comments are set out below.

32. On 11 December 2024, in response to the Monitoring Officer notifying him of receiving a complaint against him, Councillor Taylor said :” This is an absolute joke she got confrontational in a message that I had warned people of the village about a suspicious van driving round the village she got took of the Sapcote page because of her and her partner’s comments she had a go at me in the meeting and I was waiting for my windows to clear on my van when she appeared out side with the clerk and chair man present all I said to her was to keep out of my business and she replied freedom of speech I’ll do what I want her and her partner are always going on the pages anonymous he called me zippi putting a picture up all I did was warn people of the village about a suspicious van it had nothing to do with her it’s just a gang thing with the idiots we have on the council at the moment I’m being maid (sic) out to be the baddy here yet again ABSOLUTE JOKE.

33. On 12 December 2024 Councillor Taylor emailed the Monitoring Officer as follows: “Hi Gemma may I just state that missis badland was not alone when I told her to stay out of my business so there was no threat from me there was others near bye she is such a liar and trouble maker I have a freedom of speech and tried to have a quiet word but she excavated it to make me look bad in front of everybody I’m absolutely disgusted in the women’s actions and her partner calling me zippy and to top it all my daughter being broken into by two masked men on the same night so what is wrong with me letting people no (sic) there is a dodgy van going about and that same van was seen with the occupants breaking into a house in the next village she has been band from Sapcote news for being a pain in the but so has her partner causing trouble so I rest my case “

34 On 9 January 2025 the Monitoring Officer shared Councillor Taylor’s initial response to the complaint with Councillor Badland. The response is as follows:

“Firstly, I categorically refute any accusations of aggressive or inappropriate behaviour towards Councillor Badland, either during or after the Parish Council meeting on December 5th. At no point did I act in a manner that could be considered harassing, threatening, or intimidating. My intention during the meeting was to raise legitimate concerns about interference regarding a matter I had posted about on social media. I regret if my tone was misconstrued as confrontational, but I maintain that my comments were within the bounds of respectful debate.

Secondly, the assertion that I waited outside the meeting for Councillor Badland and behaved aggressively is untrue. This is a serious accusation that I strongly deny. In fact, I have felt increasingly targeted by Councillor Badland due to her ongoing criticism of my social media post concerning the white van I had deemed suspicious. I believe her behaviour towards me has been unnecessarily personal and unfair, which has caused me undue stress.

I request that these allegations be examined thoroughly, and I would appreciate the opportunity to provide any further clarification or evidence, should it be required. I also request that any records, witnesses, or accounts supporting the claims made against me be shared so that I can respond to them appropriately.

Finally, I would like to formally raise my own concerns regarding what I feel to be an attempt to undermine or intimidate me through this complaint. It is important that all councillors can express their views without fear of personal attacks or unwarranted allegations."

35. In response to being notified by the Monitoring Officer that the complaint from Councillor Badland was to be investigated, on 10 January 2025, Councillor Taylor said. "That's fine but why are my complaints been no brushed under the carpet and it's all a way of trying to get rid of me . Jake has gone dormant on this my points don't matter and I'm sick to death of all this hand bag rubbish. This is like being at school again why are you not taking what I am saying as being serious. They have there (*sic*) own little click ,I'm about to take this all to the papers and let the people of the village come to terms with what is going on . You obviously believe in what rubbish Badland is dictating to you and her lies and her friends will obviously back her up in so discussed in how I'm being treated hear (*sic*) it's gone past a joke now"

36. On 13 January 2025, Councillor Taylor emailed the Monitoring Officer as follows: "First and foremost the complaint I put in about miss badland was not addressed and that was a breach of code of conduct witch got swept under the carpet and now she is retaliating by making it worse than it looks . I have a freedom of speech and as I said to her to keep out of my business. Also her whiteness are the ones that I have already complained about and they will lie just to back her story even though they came out as the conversation was just ending lol . So nothing to report there "

38. On 20 January 2025, Councillor Taylor emailed the following comments to me after I had informed him of the investigation: "I will not be doing any thing till you address my earlier complaint against miss badland . This is why it has been addressed by my self so you need to look into these complaints that have been sent . If it was addressed properly the first instance by your office I would not have had to tell her to keep her nose out of my business . This is pure discrimination against me and she has also done it to other members. Now she is making a big thing of nothing".

39. Councillor Taylor sent a further email on 20 January as follows: "And another thing you need to take a look into is the fact she has been causing problems on the Sapcote facebook page and been band (*sic*) because of her causing issues and her husband .so don't have a go at me and defend her I will not be replying to any more messages until I get an apology from her this is discrimination".

40. I have not been instructed to investigate Councillor Taylor's complaint and any concerns or issues he has about his complaint referred to in paragraph 44 above should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Blaby District Council.

Other Evidence – Councillor Peter Atkinson has been interviewed, however, during the course of the investigation he resigned as a councillor. Former Councillor Atkinson has not formally responded to approve his interview summary; however, I am satisfied that they are an accurate record of our interview. What I consider to be the relevant extracts from his interview are set out below and a copy of the interview is attached as Appendix D to this report.

45. Councillor Atkinson said that he had been a parish councillor on Sapcote Parish Council (the Council) since 2020 and had lived in the village for 15 years.

46. Councillor Atkinson said that there had been an exchange between Councillor Taylor and Councillor Badland, on the local “Sapcote News” Facebook page prior to the Council meeting on 5 December 2024. Councillor Atkinson said that Councillor Badland had asked Councillor Taylor to moderate his language as he referred to a white van that he had seen in the village which was he said was being driven by “foreigners”. Councillor Badland asked Councillor Taylor not to use the term foreigners.

47. With regards to the parish council meeting on 5 December 2024, Councillor Atkinson said that he was present for the whole of the parish council meeting as he had unlocked the building prior to the start of the meeting. He said that he was present during the section of the meeting that Ryan Keane, the local PCSO addressed the Council about recent alleged criminal activities in the area. He said that during this address he could recall that Councillor Taylor had the opportunity to “have a go” at Councillor Badland about her comments on “Sapcote News”.

48. Councillor Atkinson said that he recalled that what Councillor Taylor said was inappropriate, that he said that he has a right to his own opinions, and he can say what he likes on “Sapcote News”. Councillor Atkinson said that he could not recall any further detail of the exchange during the meeting.

49. Councillor Atkinson said that at the end of the meeting after the public had left, Councillor Taylor also left the building. However, Councillor Atkinson, Councillor Badland, Councillor Requena and the Parish Clerk remained in the building for another 15 or 20 minutes.

50. Councillor Atkinson said that they then left the building. He was with Councillor Badland and he said that Councillor Requena and the Parish Clerk left the building after he and Councillor Badland, as the Parish Clerk was locking up the building. He said that he and Councillor Badland were walking towards her car in the car park to the Pavillion. It was dark at this time. Councillor Requena and the Parish Clerk were a few minutes behind them.

51. He said that Councillor Taylor was sitting in his van in the car park when he saw Councillor Badland get to the car park. He said that Councillor Taylor got out of

his van and that he started shouting at Councillor Badland and waving his finger in her face. Councillor Taylor then said to Councillor Badland “don’t talk about my family”. Councillor Atkinson said that Councillor Taylor was pointing at her and that he was “right in her face”.

52. Councillor Atkinson said that councillor Taylor is a “big man and that he was saying things about Councillor Badland’s husband and that he should not be saying things about his (Councillor Taylor’s) family.

53. Councillor Atkinson said that Councillor Taylor “marched towards” Councillor Badland and was shouting at her. Councillor Atkinson said that at this point he interjected and said to Councillor Taylor that he should not speak to Councillor Badland like that and that her husband was entitled to support her.

54. Councillor Atkinson said that Councillor Taylor did not respond to him and that he kept “going on at” Councillor Badland, telling her not to come near him, and ... “I’m warning you, keep your nose out of my business” and “don’t say anything about my family”. Councillor Atkinson said that after the exchange, which lasted a few minutes, Councillor Taylor got back into his van and drove away.

55. Councillor Atkinson said that Councillor Badland was clearly shaken by the exchange and that she said to him that she was glad he was there. Councillor Atkinson continued by saying that Councillor Badland did try to respond to Councillor Taylor but that he did not listen to her. Councillor Atkinson said that he texted Councillor Badland later that evening after the meeting to see how she was, as he was concerned about her after the exchange with Councillor Taylor.

56. Councillor Atkinson said that all of this arose out of postings on Facebook. He said that Councillor Taylor used Facebook continually in his personal capacity for self-promotion and that he used it for his business. Councillor Atkinson said that Councillor Taylors Facebook posts were in his personal capacity, but that everyone in the area knows that he is a councillor.

Elinor Grimsley, the Parish Clerk (who was acting Parish Clerk at the time of the complaint) was interviewed as she was present during the Parish Council meeting on 5 December 2024. The relevant extracts from her evidence are set out below and a copy of her interview is attached as Appendix E to this report.

57. The Parish Clerk said that she was present for the whole of the meeting on 6 December 2024. She said that she opened and closed the building, The Pavillion, for the meeting.

58. The Parish Clerk provided her recollections of the meeting on 5 December 2024 specifically about the alleged interaction between Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor during the update being provided to the meeting by Mr Ryan Keane the local PCSO (RK).

59. The Parish Clerk said that Mr Keane attended a parish council meeting once a year to provide local crime statistics to the parish council. She said that these would be reported in the minutes and that she would then circulate the minutes. She confirmed that this was not an agenda item and that it was not formal council business, although it was an update on local policing that she would report on the Sapcote Parish Council page, and she would also place on the local community page "Sapcote News" as it was widely used in the community.

60. The Parish Clerk said Mr Keane was communicating the statistics for the parish and the local area to the meeting, when Councillor Taylor interrupted and said..." what about the white van that has been driving around suspiciously. I've posted about it on Facebook have you seen it or are you aware". She said that Councillor Taylor's tone was abrupt, but that was quite normal.

61. The Parish Clerk said that Mr Keane responded that he was not aware of this. EG said that at that point Councillor Badland spoke and asked RK whether Facebook was monitored by the Police, and she asked would the Police have seen this post or should Councillor Taylor have reported it to the Police.

62. The Parish Clerk said that at that point Councillor Taylor said to Councillor Badland that "I'm not speaking to you; you keep your nose out of my business. I'm not talking to you". She said that Councillor Taylor's tone was abrupt and that when he spoke to Councillor Badland, he was pointing his finger at her. She said that Councillor Taylor was clearly addressing Councillor Badland

63. The Parish Clerk said that she had some hearing impairment however she could clearly hear Councillor Taylor.

64. She said that then Councillor Badland tried to defend herself and to diffuse the situation by saying that she was not referring to the Facebook interaction, but that she was just asking if the Police monitored Facebook and should it be raised with the Police.

65. The Parish Clerk then said that she considered that Councillor Taylor had "retasked" his description of the drivers of the van that he had posted on Facebook. She said that she thought Councillor Taylor was now insinuating that as he knows so many people in the area that he knows if people are local or not, and it appeared that he was referring to them as local or not as opposed to being "foreign" which is what he posted on Facebook. EG said that she thought he was trying to "disguise" what he was saying about where the people in the van were from.

66. The Parish Clerk said at that point Councillor Badland said, "let's just stop" and she apologised to RK as the discussion had been confrontational.

67. She said that Councillor Badland had been calm and collected throughout the interaction and was using a calm tone of voice, however, after this and for the rest of the meeting she was withdrawn and quiet.

68 The Parish Clerk confirmed that the meeting finished at 21.06 hours, and that it was dark outside. She said that Councillor Taylor left a couple of minutes later and that he did not stay to put away the tables and chairs. She said that they all left the building at around 21.20 or 21.25.

69. The Parish Clerk said that she did not witness anything in the car park after the meeting as she was locking the door of the building. She said she was not aware anything had happened until Councillor Badland said, "did you just see that, I can't believe it has happened". She said that Councillor Badland was physically shaken, upset and distressed.

Findings of Fact

This section addresses the specific issues raised by the Complainant and the Subject Members response as well as the evidence given by the Complainant and other witnesses. Section 2, Factual Context, contains the relevant facts which are on the record.

70. On 28 November 2024 Councillor Taylor posted on a local community group page called "Sapcote News". Whilst this is not a SPC page, it is used by SPC to post items of interest and updates from SPC to the wider community.

71. In her complaint, Councillor Badland states that Councillor Taylor posted that ..." he had seen a white van acting suspiciously and that ..." He described the passengers as "foreign".

72. Councillor Taylor, by his own admission, said that ..." The post highlighted the fact that there was a van patrolling the village and was meant as a warning to local people to be vigilant. These people are Romanians and they're well known locally for entering people's properties and stealing things".

73. Subsequently, Councillor Badland posted a response to Councillor Taylor on "Sapcote News" as follows:

"Paul, I implore you to change your descriptions of the individuals here – you cannot possibly know someone's nationality based on their appearance".

74. Councillor Badland was subsequently deleted and blocked from "Sapcote News" by the administrators of the group.

75. SPC held a council meeting on 5 December 2024 at the Pavilion in Sapcote. The meeting started at 7.30pm. The approved minutes record that Councillor Badland, Councillor Taylor and Councillor Atkinson were in attendance.

76. The local PCSO Mr Ryan Keane attended the meeting to provide members with an update on the local crime statistics. This report was not listed as an agenda item and the Parish Clerk confirmed that Mr Keane is invited on an annual basis to

attend a council meeting to update SPC, but that it is not part of SPC formal council business.

77. During Mr Keane's update to the meeting, Councillor Taylor interjected and asked if he (Mr Keane) was aware of a white van that had been driving around the area. Mr Keane responded that he was not aware of any reports of a white van.

78. There are some inconsistencies as to the order of events during the following discussion.

79. In her evidence Councillor Badland states that whilst PCSO Mr Ryan Keane was addressing the meeting that Councillor Taylor turned towards her and the meeting that he has posted about seeing a white van in the area and that he had been "called out" about his comments. Councillor Badland said that this comment was aimed at her.

80. Councillor Badland said that PCSO Mr Ryan Keane asked another question, and that Councillor Taylor said again that she had "called him out" about the post about the white van and that he said to her "you need to keep out of my business".

81. Later during this part of the meeting, Councillor Badland said that she asked PCSO Mr Ryan Keane whether SPC should encourage residents to report concerns direct to the Police, as opposed to just posting on Facebook and that Councillor Taylor interrupted her and asked if she knew how difficult it was to get hold of a Police Officer.

82. In her evidence, the Parish Clerk said that she recalled that during the PCSO's address to the meeting that Councillor Taylor said to Councillor Badland..."I'm not speaking to you, keep your nose out of my business. I'm not talking to you"...

83. In their evidence both Councillor Badland and the Parish Clerk stated that at some point during Mr Keane's update that Councillor Taylor told Councillor Badland to "keep her nose out of my business" and that his tone when addressing her was aggressive and that he was pointing his finger at her.

84. By his own admission, Councillor Taylor said that he told Councillor Badland to "keep her nose out of my business" and he prefers "plain speaking" "face to face". Therefore, on balance I find that Councillor Taylor did tell Councillor Badland to "keep her nose out of my business" and that when saying this his voice was raised and he was pointing his finger at Councillor Badland.

85. The meeting finished at 9.21 pm and Councillor Taylor left the Pavillion straight away.

86. Councillor Badland left the Pavillion approximately 15/20 minutes after the end of the meeting, as she had been helping to put away the table and chairs after the meeting.

87. It was dark when Councillor Badland left the Pavillion. She left the building at the same time as the Chairman, the Parish Clerk and Councillor Atkinson. The

Chairman and the Parish Clerk were locking up the building and Councillor Badland and Councillor Atkinson were in front of them.

88. Councillor Badland walked towards her car in the car park. Councillor Atkinson was with her.

89. Councillor Taylor was still in the car park in his van when Councillor Badland approached her car.

90. Councillor Taylor got out of his vehicle and approached Councillor Badland. By his own admission, Councillor Taylor accepts that he told Councillor Badland to "stay out of my business". Councillor Taylor also states that Councillor Badland was "not alone" in the car park and that because of this his actions towards her were "not a threat".

91. Taking into account the evidence of both Councillor Badland and Councillor Atkinson, I find on balance that Councillor Taylor shouted at Councillor Badland, pointed his finger at her and said "I'm warning" before he said "stay out of my business" during the exchange with Councillor Badland.

Comments on the Draft Report

92. The Draft Report has been peer reviewed by Hoey Ainscough Associates Ltd who are nationally recognised experts on Code of Conduct related matters to ensure consistency of approach with such other reports nationally.

93. The Draft Report was reviewed by the Monitoring Officer prior to submission to (former) Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor

94. (Former) Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor have been given an opportunity to comment on the Draft Report.

95. In response (former) Councillor Badland made the following request to the Monitoring Officer ..."I would request that in Point 73 - "identity" is changed to "nationality" to reflect the original comment". The Report has been duly amended to reflect this.

96. Councillor Taylor has made no detailed comments on the Draft Report, however, requested that two members of the public, who were in attendance at the meeting on 5 December 2024 were contacted to provide witness evidence.

97. I have contacted one of the members of the public who kindly agreed to be interviewed as part of the investigation. For the purposes of this report the member of the public will be identified as Witness X.

98. The relevant extracts from Witness X's evidence are set out below.

99. Witness X said that they were sure that they were present at the council meeting of 5 December 2024.

100. Witness X said that they could recall there was an exchange between the two of them (*Councillors Badland and Taylor*)*(my insertion)* Witness X said that they recalled Councillor Badland saying to Councillor Taylor that he could not say what he did about the white van in the area and that Councillor Taylor responded by saying that he was only making people aware. Witness X recalled that the tone of the exchange was “lively” but that it was not a heated discussion.

101. Witness X said that they would always stay until the end of the meeting and that they would have left the meeting on 5 December at the end. Witness X recalled leaving the meeting once it had finished and that they left the Pavillion at the same time as Councillor Taylor and Councillor Badland and that as soon they were outside of the door of the Pavillion that Councillor Taylor said to Councillor Badland to keep her nose out of his business. Witness X said that they found the incident quite amusing and there were no raised voices. Witness X said that after this initial contact, which happened right outside the front door they Witness X left.

102. Witness X provided some background information to the parish council.

103. Witness X said that about six months ago a lot the councillors resigned from Sapcote Parish Council and that there was a lot of history between these councillors and Councillor Taylor. Witness X said that these councillors were trying to “bully” Councillor Taylor off of the parish council before they resigned, but that now some of those former councillors were back on the parish council.

104. Witness X has corroborated the evidence of those interviewed that there was an exchange between (former) Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor about the presence of a white van in the village during the meeting. Witness X's recollection is that (former) Councillor Badland said that Councillor Taylor should not say what he did about the white van and that Councillor Taylor responded by saying that he was just making people aware. Witness X provides no other detail regarding the content of the exchange.

105. With regards to the alleged exchange between (former) Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor after the end of the meeting Witness X said that they left the meeting at the same time as Councillor Badland and Councillor Taylor and that the exchange between them took place right outside of the door of the Pavillion.

106. However, in the evidence of Councillor Badland, the Parish Clerk, Councillor Taylor left the meeting immediately after the meeting has finished but that the other councillors, including Councillor Badland stayed to clear the room and did not leave the Pavillion for further 15/20 minutes.

107. (Former) Councillor Atkinson's evidence is that Councillor Badland was walking towards her car in the car park when Councillor Taylor got out of his car and approached Councillor Badland.

108. Councillor Taylor himself, in his email to the Monitoring Officer of 11 December 2024, said ...”she (*Councillor Badland my insertion*) had a go at me in the meeting and I was waiting for my windows to clear on my van when she appeared

outside with the clerk and the chairman present all I said to her was keep your nose out of my business"...

109. From the evidence, Councillor Taylor did not leave the Pavillion at the same time as (former) Councillor Badland and the exchange between the two took place in the car park at least 15/20 minutes after the meeting ended. Witness X appears to be mistaken in their recollection of the events, which is not surprising taking into account that they were not put forward as a witness, and were not interviewed until some seven months after the meeting took place.

110. Taking into account the additional information provided, my conclusions remain unchanged and are as set out below.

Conclusions

111.. As referred to in paragraph 21 of this report, to establish whether Councillor Taylor's behaviour is in breach of the Code, it must first be established whether he was acting in his official capacity as a councillor at the material times.

112.. The Complaint is effectively separated into three allegations.

113.. The first allegation relates to the post made by Councillor Taylor on 28 November 2024 on "Sapcote News" the details of which are detailed in paragraph 10 of this report.

114. The second allegation relates to Councillor Taylors alleged behaviour towards Councillor Badland during the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024 and the third allegation relates to Councillor Taylor's behaviour towards Councillor Badland in the car park after the meeting had finished.

Post of 28 November 2024

115.. The comment posted by Councillor Taylor on "Sapcote News" on 28 November 2024 referred to a white van he had seen in the village and which he stated was occupied by "foreigners".

116. "Sapcote News" is a community page and not an official SPC webpage. From the evidence I have seen, notably the response to this post by Councillor Badland, Councillor Taylor and indeed Councillor Badland were posting using their private accounts.

117. To establish whether Councillor Taylor was acting in his official capacity, it must be shown that he was conducting council business or acting as a representative of council, as a distinction has to be drawn between the councillor as a councillor and a councillor as an individual. Behaviour that could be viewed as reprehensible or even unlawful, may not be covered by the Code, if it is carried out in a private capacity and not as a councillor.

118. The post of 28 November 2024 is clearly not linked to council business, and in my view, it is clearly made by Councillor Taylor in his private capacity and not in his role as a councillor, and as such the Code of Conduct is not engaged.

119. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could not reasonably be regarded as acting in his official capacity when he posted the comments on “Sapcote News” on 28 November 2024.

SPC meeting on 5 December 2024

120. Councillor Taylor attended the council meeting on 5 December 2024 in his capacity as a councillor.

121. The alleged behaviour towards Councillor Badland took place during the presentation of PCSO Mr Ryan Keane's report to the meeting in respect of local crime statistics. Whilst this was not a formal item of business on the agenda, PCSO Mr Ryan Keane had been asked to attend the meeting by the Parish Council and from the evidence of the Parish Clerk this was an annual request. Therefore, I consider that the exchange took place during a discussion on an item that SPC had requested and as such at the material time of the alleged incident, that Councillor Taylor was conducting council business.

122. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could reasonably be regarded as acting in his official capacity when discussing the report of PCSO Mr Ryan Keane during the SPC council meeting of 5 December 2024.

Alleged incident after the SPC meeting of 5 December 2024.

123. As set out in paragraph 16 of this report, to establish whether Councillor Taylor was acting in his official capacity, it must be shown that he was conducting council business or acting as a representative of council, as a distinction has to be drawn between the councillor as a councillor and a councillor as an individual. Behaviour that could be viewed as reprehensible or even unlawful, may not be covered by the Code, if it is carried out in a private capacity and not as a councillor.

124. From the evidence Councillor Taylor did approach Councillor Badland in the car park of the Pavilion after the SPC meeting ended. From his own evidence, Councillor Taylor said that he told Councillor Badland to “keep her nose out of my business” relating to the comments he made on the “Sapcote News” page.

125. However, to establish whether the Code of Conduct applies to his alleged behaviour, Councillor Taylor has to be acting in his official capacity and there must be a link to council business.

126. Whilst this incident happened in the car park of the Pavilion after the SPC meeting had concluded, Councillor Taylor himself had brought this dispute into the meeting and made the matter council business. The car park incident is essentially a continuation of the confrontation between Councillor Taylor and Councillor Badland in

the council meeting, and as such, I consider that it is reasonable to conclude that Councillor Taylor was acting in his official capacity when he confronted Councillor Badland in the car park.

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127. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could reasonably be regarded as acting in his official capacity during the exchange with Councillor Badland in the car park of the Pavilion after the conclusion of the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024.

128. This report will therefore focus on the alleged behaviour of Councillor Taylor towards Councillor Badland during the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024 and after the meeting in the car park.

SPC Council meeting on 5 December 2024

Respect

129. Paragraph 1.1 of the Code states that as a “I will treat others with respect” ...

130. The Code continues by stating that:

“Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a member, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions, and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack. In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public’s expectations and confidence in members. In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and notify them to the Council, the relevant social media provider, or the police. This also applies to fellow members, where action could then be taken under the Member Code of Conduct, and council officers where concerns should be raised in line with the council’s member-officer protocol.

131. Standards for England (SfE) which was the body responsible for the oversight of the code of conduct before the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 published guidance, which whilst it is not binding on cases under the Localism Act, where the Code has similar provisions (which is the position here) it provides useful assistance.

132. The Standards for England Case Review 2010 (updated and issued in 2011) is clear that a ...” very clear line has to be drawn between the Code of Conducts’

requirement of respect for others...and the freedom to disagree with the views and opinions of others" ...

133. It also provides a useful "rule of thumb" that the expression ..." *You're talking drivel*" is likely to be an acceptable expression of disagreement. Calling someone an incompetent moron", on the other hand, is more likely to be a failure to comply with [paragraph 3.1].

We can see that the first comment is aimed at the expression of an idea or argument. The second is aimed at the person and their personal characteristics".

134. The Local Government Association also published its own guidance, in July 2021 to be read alongside its Model Code of Conduct, which says that ... "it is only where councillors conduct is unfair, unreasonable or demeaning that the Code will be relevant. If a councillor's criticism is abusive or offensive, it is likely to breach the Code". The Code adopted by SPC broadly follows the Model Code of Conduct, and as such the guidance is relevant as it relates to the standards regime since the introduction of the Localism Act 2011, and they have a similar provision in their Code.

135. From the case law and the guidance, it would be fair to say that individuals should not be subjected to unreasonable or excessive personal attack, however the threshold for what is "disrespectful behaviour" is set at a relatively high bar.

136. The view taken by the former Adjudication Panel in *Capon v Shepway District Council [2008] APE0399* is that the .."Threshold for a failure to treat another with respect has to be set at a level that allowed for the passion and frustration that often accompanies political debate and the discussion of the efficient running of a council within the context of those involved in the exchange." The Tribunal felt that it was important that ..." members should be able to express in robust terms concerns that they have about any aspect of the running of the council, and this can include criticism of the way in which an officer handles particular matters".

137. In that particular case, the councillor made comments about the town clerk at a parish meeting saying that an officer found her "difficult to get on with". He added that "this is also the view of many towns people who say that when they try to contact the town clerk, she is downright rude to them". The Appeals Panel considered that the Town Clerk who had been in post since 1999 (the complaint was made in July 2006) was ..." clearly very experienced in her dealing with the councillors ...and given her seniority within the administration of the council was clearly able to defend her position" ... From this it is clear that the more senior the officer "the broader shoulders" he or she is expected to have with regards to members conduct.

138. Consideration must also be given to the right to freedom of expression, and in particular political comment, under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

139. In *Heesom v Public Service Ombudsman for Wales* Mr Justice Hickinbottom considered a councillor's right to free speech in some detail. His considerations drew attention to a number of earlier cases in which the following propositions could be derived:

- a. While freedom of expression is important for everyone, it is especially so for an elected representative of the people. He represents his electorate, draws attention to their preoccupations and defends their interests.
- b. The enhanced protection applies to all levels of politics, including local.
- c. Article 10 protects not only the substance of what is said, but also the form in which it is conveyed. Therefore, in the political context, a degree of the immoderate, offensive, shocking, disturbing, exaggerated, provocative, polemical, colourful, emotive, non-rational and aggressive, that would not be acceptable outside that context, is tolerated.
- d. Whilst, in a political context, article 10 protects the right to make incorrect but honestly made statements, it does not protect statements which the publisher knows to be false.
- e. The protection goes to "political expression"; but that is a broad concept in this context. It is not limited to expressions of or critiques of political views but rather extends to all matters of public administration and public concern including comments about the adequacy or inadequacy of performance of public duties by others.
- f. Past cases draw a distinction between fact on the one hand, and comment on matters of public interest involving value judgment on the other. As the latter is unsusceptible of proof, comments in the political context amounting to value judgments are tolerated even if untrue, so long as they have some – any – factual basis. What amounts to a value judgment as opposed to fact will be generously construed in favour of the former; and, even where something expressed is not a value judgment but a statement of fact (e.g. that a council has not consulted on a project), that will be tolerated if what is expressed is said in good faith and there is some reasonable (even if incorrect) factual basis for saying it, "reasonableness" here taking account of the political context in which the thing was said
- g. As article 10(2) expressly recognises, the right to freedom of speech brings with it duties and responsibilities. However, any restriction must respond to a "pressing social need".
- h. Politicians are required to have a thick skin and be tolerant of criticism and other adverse comment. Civil servants are, like politicians, subject

to the wider limits of acceptable criticism. However, unlike politicians they are involved in assisting with and implementing policies, not making them. As such they must enjoy public confidence in conditions free from perturbation if they are to be successful in performing their tasks and it may therefore prove necessary to protect them from offensive and abusive attacks when on duty.

140. It is clear from Article 10 and the above judgment that the right to freedom of speech is a qualified right. That is, that it does not give you the right to say anything, no matter how offensive, without comeback. There are duties and responsibilities and the law, for example, does not allow you to incite racial hatred nor to discriminate unlawfully nor to make defamatory comments.

141. This complaint is a result of what I consider to be an escalation of a personal dispute on a community Facebook group. However, for the reasons set out in paragraphs 101 and 102 of this report, in my opinion, the comments directed at Councillor Badland by Councillor Taylor during the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024 do engage the Code of Conduct.

142. It is clear from the evidence that Councillor Taylor told Councillor Badland to “keep your nose out of my business” during the discussion about PCSO Keane’s report on local crime statistics. On balance, I also consider that Councillor Taylor raised his voice and pointed his finger at Councillor Badland during this exchange, which took place in front of other councillors and members of the public.

143. Councillor Badland clearly felt embarrassed and surprised at the outburst by Councillor Taylor, which is understandable.

144. As highlighted in the *Heesom* case, ...” a degree of the immoderate, offensive, shocking, disturbing, exaggerated, provocative, polemic, colourful, non-rational and aggressive is to be tolerated” ... and that ...” Politicians are required to have a thick skin and be tolerant of criticism and other adverse comment”

145. The threshold for failure to treat another with respect is set at a relatively high bar, and the key elements for a failure are that the comments are personalised, unreasonable and unwarranted.

146. Councillor Taylor has declined to be interviewed as part of my investigation, despite a number of requests and despite his assurance in his email to the Monitoring Officer referred to in paragraph 40 that he would ...“would appreciate the opportunity to provide any further clarification or evidence should it be required”...

147. In the same email Councillor Taylor states that...” My intention during the meeting was to raise legitimate concerns about interference regarding a matter I had posted about on social media. I regret if my tone was misconstrued as confrontational, but I maintain that my comments were within the bounds of respectful debate.

148. I disagree.

149. In my view, it was totally inappropriate to raise any concerns about what was a personal exchange on social media, during a public meeting of SPC.

150. With regards to the comments about “keeping your nose out of my business” these are neither polite nor courteous. I consider them to be personalised and aimed at Councillor Badland. Taking into account that Councillor Taylor raised his voice towards Councillor Badland and pointed his finger at her, I consider that this amounted to a “personal attack” on her. Councillor Taylor himself recognises that the exchange could have been seen as confrontational as he expresses his “regret” if it had been “misconstrued” as such.

151. Therefore, whilst the threshold for disrespectful behaviour is set at a relatively high bar, the fact that these comments were personalised and the tone of the exchange, I consider that Councillor Taylor has not treated Councillor Badland with respect when he told her to “keep her nose out of my business” during the SP meeting of 5 December 2024.

152. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could reasonably be regarded as having breached Paragraph 1.1 of the Code of Conduct in that he did not treat Councillor Badland with respect when he told her to “keep your nose out of my business” and in the manner and tone with which he spoke to her during the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024.

Bullying and Harassment

153. Paragraph 2.1 of the Code of Conduct states that as a member, “I will not bully any person” and paragraph 2.2 states that “I will not harass any person”.

154. The Code goes on to state that:

“The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person”.

155. Referring to bullying, whilst there is no legal definition of bullying, the Independent Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) describe it as:

“Unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:

- Offensive, intimidating or insulting.

- An abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or causes physical or emotional harm.”

156. In 2021, the Local Government Association (LGA) issued guidance on its Model Code of Conduct. SPC has adopted a Code of Conduct significantly the same as the Model Code, therefore, the guidance, provides useful assistance.

157. The LGA guidance expands upon what physical and emotional harm is, which includes making a person feel vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened. It goes on to state that bullying behaviour may be obvious or hidden and insidious. Bullying behaviour is usually a pattern of behaviour and does not have to be in person, but can be via telephone, in writing, which includes emails or social media.

158. However, the LGA guidance goes on to state that:

“Bullying behaviour should be contrasted with the legitimate challenges which a councillor can make in challenging policy or scrutinising performance. An example of this would be debates in the chamber about policy or asking officers to explain the rationale for the professional opinion they have put forward. You are entitled to challenge fellow councillors and officers as to why they hold their views. However, if your criticism is a personal threat or abusive or offensive in nature, you are likely to cross the line of what is acceptable.”

159. In October 2023, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Panel, when dismissing Gavin Williamson’s appeal against a finding of bullying behaviour, set out the following four stage test for identifying bullying behaviour.

- Did the subject member’s conduct involve offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour? If a reasonable person wouldn’t regard it as offensive the test stops there.
- If it was, was an abuse or misuse of power involved in that behaviour?
- Was the complainant left feeling vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened? This has to be a subjective test and has to take into account the Heesom test, that councillors must have a thick skin; and
- Was it reasonable for the complainant to have perceived the subject member’s behaviour as bullying? This is the key subjective test.

160. As with the cases referred to regarding respect, account has to be taken of the protection given to political comment under Article 10 and the relatively high threshold that needs to be reached for members behaviour to constitute bullying.

161. The personal comments, that in my view, “crossed the line” into disrespect have to constitute a personal threat or be abusive, offensive or intimidating in nature to constitute bullying.

162. The question to be addressed is did Councillor Taylor's behaviour in telling Councillor Badland to "keep your nose out of my business" and his demeanour and tone satisfy the criteria for bullying behaviour.

163. In my view, it is clear that Councillor Badland was upset and embarrassed regarding Councillor Taylor's behaviour towards her, and I also consider that there is a tacit acceptance by Councillor Taylor that his behaviour was "confrontational" as he says in his evidence that he "regrets" if it has been construed as such.

164. As with respect, members are expected to have a "thick skin" with regards to behaviour they are expected to tolerate and the threshold for what is bullying behaviour is set at a relatively high bar.

165. Bullying is usually a pattern of behaviour, however as set out in SPC Code of Conduct it can be a one-off incident. I consider that the comments made by Councillor Taylor were a personal attack on Councillor Badland, which were unnecessary and inappropriate to raise in the forum of a council meeting and were meant to upset and undermine Councillor Badland. In my opinion, Councillor Taylor's behaviour towards Councillor Badland during the meeting on 5 December 2024 has "crossed the line" and constitutes bullying behaviour.

166. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could reasonably be regarded as being in breach of Paragraph 2.1 of the Code when he told her to "keep your nose out of my business" and in the manner and tone with which he spoke to her during the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024.

Alleged incident after the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024

Respect

167. A member's obligation under paragraph 1.1 of SPC's Code are set out in paragraph 129 of this report, and what constitutes conduct that breaches that obligation is detailed in paragraph 130.

168. The Code of Conduct applies to members when they are acting in their official capacity, and in my view, and as set out in this report, it is reasonable to conclude that Councillor Taylor's behaviour towards Councillor Badland was a continuation of the confrontation during the meeting.

169. The threshold for what constitutes a failure to treat others with respect is set at a relatively high bar. and the key elements for a failure are that the comments are personalised, unreasonable and unwarranted.

170. The former Adjudication Panel in *Capon v Shepway District Council (2008) APE 3099* considered that the threshold for a failure has to be set at a level that allows for the passion and frustration that often accompanies political debate and discussion of the efficient running of a council.

171. In addition, and again as set out earlier in this report, it is necessary to consider the right to freedom of speech with respect to political comment which is afforded to members under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is detailed in paragraph x of this report.

172. For reasons only known to Councillor Taylor, he felt that it was appropriate to continue this “debate” connected to the local crime statistics and the comments on “Sapcote News” in the car park after the meeting had finished.

173. From the evidence, it seems clear that Councillor Taylor had been in or at his vehicle in the car park for around 20 minutes when Councillor Badland walked to her car in the company of Councillor Atkinson. It was around 21.20/21.25 hours and as it was December it was very dark.

174. Councillor Taylor made a considered decision to get out of his car and say again to Councillor Badland to “stay out of my business”. In addition, I am persuaded by both Councillor Badland and Councillor Atkinson’s evidence that Councillor Taylor said to Councillor Badland “I’m warning you” “stay out of my business”.

175. In my opinion, Councillor Taylor’s behaviour towards Councillor Badland in the car park after the meeting was a continuation of his behaviour during the meeting. His comments were personal to Councillor Badland and as with the comments made during the meeting were unreasonable and unwarranted, particularly when you consider that Councillor Taylor made a conscious decision to confront Councillor Badland in the car park and repeat his comments. In my view, Councillor Taylor’s behaviour crossed the threshold and was disrespectful towards Councillor Badland

176. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could reasonably be regarded as breaching paragraph 1.1 and that he did not treat Councillor Badland with respect when he approached Councillor Badland in the car park after the SPC meeting on 5 December 2024 when he walked over to her in the car park and said “I’m warning you” “stay out of my business”.

Bullying

177. As set out in detail in paragraphs 153-161 of this report for a member’s behaviour to constitute bullying it has to constitute a personal threat or be abusive, offensive or intimidating in nature. Whilst bullying is usually a pattern of behaviour it

can be a on-off incident and can be face to face, social medial or verbal and written communications.

178. It is accepted that the threshold for what constitutes bullying behaviour is set at a high bar and that members are expected to have a “thick skin”, however in my opinion, Councillor Taylor’s behaviour towards Councillor Badland in the car park crossed that line.

179. Councillor Taylor made a conscious, premeditated decision that he would go and confront Councillor Badland about the post on “Sapcote News”. He again told Councillor Badland to “stay out of my business” but this came with a warning from him. Councillor Taylor had already said this in the council meeting, why say it again.

180. However, the behaviour in the car park, in my opinion, was worse than during the meeting, when there is an argument that the exchange between them was during the course of a debate about the crime statistics. Councillor Taylor approached Councillor Badland in the dark, when she would not have known he was still in the car park, and was not expecting to see him, which she herself has described as frightening. The fact that Councillor Taylor believes that as Councillor Badland was not by herself when he told her “To stay out of my business” meant his behaviour was not a threat, is very concerning. In my opinion, Councillor Taylor’s behaviour towards Councillor Badland was intimidating and can only be interpreted as seeking to humiliate her and undermine her. The impact of Councillor Taylor’s behaviour that evening on Councillor Badland is clear in her evidence, particularly paragraph 31 of this report and taking this into account, I have concluded that Councillor Taylor has bullied Councillor Badland.

181. I conclude that Councillor Taylor could reasonably be regarded as breaching paragraph 2.1 of the Code of Conduct when he approached Councillor Badland in the dark in car park after the council meeting on 5 December 2024, when he told her to “stay out of my business” and the manner and tone with which he made those comments.

Verina Wenham

Investigating Officer

SCHEDULE OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – AGENDA COUNCIL MEETING 5 DECEMBER 2024

APPENDIX B- APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MEETING 5 DECEMBER 2024

**APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW SUMMARY COUNCILLOR BADLAND
(COMPLAINANT)**

APPENDIX D – INTERVIEW SUMMARY – COUNCILLOR ATKINSON

APPENDIX E – INTERVIEW SUMMARY – PARISH CLERK