

Essex County Council

Report On Allegation of a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members

Complainant : Councillor Michael Hoy
Subject: Councillor Carole Weston
Investigating Officer: Mrs Joanna Boaler

July 2018

1. Complaint

I have been asked by Mr Paul Turner, Essex County Council's Director, Legal and Assurance and the Essex County Council Monitoring Officer, to investigate a complaint made by Mr Michael Hoy against Cllr Carole Weston. I have investigated this complaint in my capacity as Deputy Monitoring Officer.

The complaint is set out at [Appendix 1](#) of this report. The complaint relates to the inappropriate use of Hullbridge Library, Ferry Road, Hullbridge on 28 April 2018 in the run up to the Rochford District Council elections in May 2018. The complaint is that Cllr Weston breached the ECC Member Code of Conduct by using her position as a County Councillor to book the library in the run up to the election with the aim of providing a platform for Cllr Angelina Marriott who was standing as a candidate in the District Council elections and therefore giving her an advantage over the other candidates standing.

The complainant has asked for this to be investigated as a breach of the Council's code of conduct for members because:

- He considers that Cllr Weston breached the Member Code of Conduct by booking the library for an additional surgery during the pre-election period
- He considers that the additional surgery was advertised in Cllr Marriott's election literature and therefore was a planned electioneering event
- He believes that Cllr Marriott's agent was handing out election literature outside of the library whilst Cllr Marriott and Cllr Weston were inside.

The complainant believes that the following paragraphs of the Code have been breached:

You must:

- (i) not use or attempt to use your position as a Member improperly to confer on or to secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage - financial or otherwise;*
- (ii) when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Authority,*
 - a. ii. ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes).*

2. Code of Conduct

Local authorities are required by the Localism Act 2011 to have a code of conduct for their elected members and a system for investigating alleged breaches of that Code.

Essex County Council adopted its Code of Conduct at a meeting of the full Council on 16 October 2012. The Code was adopted under the provisions of part 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

Cllr Weston was first elected to Essex County Council in May 2017 and attended training on the code of conduct and standards on 15 May 2017 by Mr Paul Turner.

The Council has a Standards Sub-Committee; only that committee can make a formal determination that there has been a breach of the Code.

However, the Council has authorised the Monitoring Officer to decide whether or not a complaint ought to be referred to the Standards Sub-Committee, after consulting an Independent Person.

3. Investigation

I have undertaken a thorough investigation into this complaint.

I obtained a copy of the election literature referred to in the complaint. This is set out at [Appendix 2](#).

I also acquired the emails in relation to the booking of the surgery at Hullbridge Library, this is set out at [Appendix 3](#).

At [Appendix 4](#) the notice of election agents for the election of a district councillor for the Hullbridge ward, Rochford District Council, 3 May 2018 can be found.

As part of my investigation I interviewed the following individuals:

- Cllr Michael Hoy, formal complainant, Hullbridge Ward Councillor, Rochford District Council and Hullbridge resident ([Appendix 7](#))
- Cllr Carole Weston, Essex County Councillor, divisional member for Hullbridge (Rochford West) and member complaint is made against ([Appendix 6](#))
- Ms Amanda Studd, Hullbridge resident ([Appendix 8](#))
- Tracy Potter, Libraries Face to Face Area Manager, Essex County Council ([Appendix 9](#))
- Carol Rotheram, Library Customer Service Assistant, Essex County Council ([Appendix 9](#))
- Cllr Angelina Marriott, Chairman of Hullbridge Parish Council and Conservative candidate for Hullbridge on Rochford District Council on 3 May 2018 ([Appendix 10](#))
- Mr Peter Hennessey¹, Election Agent for Cllr Marriott and Chairman of the Rayleigh and Wickford Conservative Association ([Appendix 11](#))

I also visited Hullbridge Library, Ferry Road, Hullbridge to see the locations referred to in the complaint and my investigation and the general position of the library in Hullbridge. I visited the area used for the surgery by Cllrs Weston and Marriott, the outside forecourt and the enquires desk.

4. Issues

The Code of Conduct for Members has been designed to create specific obligations where a breach would be significant enough to justify a finding of misconduct against a member. The purpose of this investigation is to consider whether or not there has been a breach of the Essex County Council Code of Conduct for Members.

¹ <https://www.rayleighandwickfordconservatives.com/association-officers>

The complainant has identified paragraph 24.4 of the Code of Conduct which he considers has been breached.

I have considered whether the complaint is a breach of any part of paragraphs 24.4 of the Code which sets out the general standards of behaviour expected of Councillors.

Paragraph 24.4.1 states that Councillors must:

- (iii) not use or attempt to use your position as a Member improperly to confer on or to secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage - financial or otherwise;
- (iv) when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Authority,
 - a. ii. ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes).

5. Findings

The first allegation is that the complainant considers that an additional surgery was booked in the name of Councillor Weston during the pre-election period as an electioneering event.

In my investigation, I can confirm that an additional surgery was booked in the name of Cllr Weston, the surgery was booked by Cllr Marriott. I have also found out that Hullbridge Parish Council website² says that surgeries are held by Cllr Weston and a representative from Hullbridge Parish Council (Cllr Marriott) on the first Saturday of February, April, October and December between 10:00 and 12:00 at Hullbridge Library. Essex County Council's website³ says that a surgery is held monthly with Cllr Weston.

Cllr Weston has informed me, that she holds the surgery at Hullbridge Library with Cllr Marriott on the first Saturday of every month, she confirmed surgeries were held on 3 February, 7 April, 28 April and 5 May. Therefore, this additional surgery on 28 April was put in place just a week before the next surgery on 5 May and in advance of the District Council elections.

Cllr Weston, Cllr Marriott and Mr Hennessey informed me that this additional surgery was held because Cllr Weston had been informed by Cllr Marriott that there had been complaints that no one in Hullbridge knew who Cllr Weston was on social media, so this surgery was to try to combat that. I was unable to find these posts on Facebook due to access permissions.

With regard to the surgery being held as an electioneering event, I found out that Cllr Marriott advertised the opportunity to meet her at the library on 28 April 2018 between 10:00-12:00 on her election literature. Both Mr Hennessey, the agent and Cllr Marriott have acknowledged that this was a mistake that was not picked up in proof reading,

² <https://www.hullbridgepc.co.uk/information-about-your-council/next-surgery-29-03-14/>

³ <http://libraries.essex.gov.uk/library-locations-and-opening-times/hullbridge-library/>

due to pressures of preparing for the election. Mr Hennessey also confirmed to me this was the first time he had been an election agent.

I am aware that Mr Hennessey, Cllr Marriott's election agent was in attendance outside of the library on 28 April 2018 between 10:00-12:00, however he informed me he has attended two other surgeries to act as an usher to encourage and assist people to visit the two councillors, he unfortunately could not recall the dates of these surgeries.

The second allegation is that the complainant believes the candidate, Cllr Marriott's election agent (Mr P Hennessey) was clearly handing out election literature on the library premises whilst Cllrs Weston and Marriott were inside.

The complainant, witness and library staff were all aware that a man, believed to be Mr Hennessey (Cllr Marriott's agent) was present at the library on Saturday 28 April 2018. He is alleged to have had election literature in his coat pocket which he was said to be handing out outside the library whilst Cllr Weston and Cllr Marriott were inside.

Mr Hennessey has told me he had no election literature with him on the 28 April and was just directing residents into the library to discuss issues with Cllrs Weston and Marriott.

Neither Cllrs Weston or Marriott were aware that election literature had been handed out, they were engaged in the library at the time with residents.

I have only the statement of Ms Studd's who drove past the library on Ferry Road on the Saturday late morning, who alleges to have seen Mr Hennessey handing out literature, I have no other witnesses to any literature being handed out or it being in Mr Hennessey's possession.

Therefore, based on the evidence I have, I am unable to conclude that election literature was handed out on Saturday 28 April at Hullbridge Library between 10:00 and 12:00.

Finally, the third allegation is that this surgery was held for the purposes of holding an electioneering event on the Saturday before the election for the purposes of providing a platform for Cllr Marriott.

It was noted by library staff that Cllr Marriott did not join the surgery until after Councillor Weston in the morning at around 10:15, but Cllr Weston was joined by Cllr Marriott's agent Mr Hennessey at the start.

Cllr Weston has been supported at the surgeries by Cllr Marriott since she was elected to Essex County Council in May 2017, this is because Cllr Weston is not a resident of the village and therefore does not know the village as well as Cllr Marriott.

The library staff have confirmed that Cllr Marriott did seem to be doing a lot of the talking whilst the surgery was taking place, but why this was cannot be determined and it is acknowledged that Cllr Marriott is involved in the village as a parish councillor and resident.

In her election literature, Cllr Marriott specifically mentioned that she would be at Hullbridge Library between 10:00 and 12:00 on Saturday 28 April 2018.

It is fact that Cllr Marriott was present at the surgery on 28 April, it is also fact that she booked the surgery for Cllr Weston and a surgery was held one week later at the same location after the election took place and three weeks before on 7 April 2018.

Cllr Michael Hoy⁴ who made the complaint was the former County Member for the Rochford West division, a position he lost in May 2017 when Cllr Weston was elected. Cllr Hoy is a Green Party Member on Rochford District Council, first elected in May 2010 for Hullbridge ward along with his wife, Mrs D Hoy⁵, a Green Party Member first elected on 16 June 2011.

Both Cllr Hoy and Amanda Studd made the complaint against Cllr Weston; Hullbridge is a small village and in discussions I have been informed that Amanda Studd was, at the time of the election in a personal relationship with Cllr SA Wilson⁶, the Green Party member who was re-elected to Hullbridge Ward on Rochford District Council on 3 May 2018. This is not a point I have discussed with anyone apart from the library staff.

6. Conclusion

I have considered this complaint against paragraphs 24.4 of the Code of Conduct.

Paragraph 24.4.1 (i) states that Councillors must not use their position as a Member improperly to confer or to secure for themselves or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage, financial or otherwise.

Paragraph 24.4.1 (ii) states that Councillors must when using or authorising use by others of the resources of the Authority,

- i. act in accordance with the Authority's reasonable requirements; and
- ii. ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes).

My conclusion is that Cllr Weston booked the additional surgery following the discussion with Cllr Marriott and that she did not consider that this additional surgery was a breach of the code of conduct. However, by holding this additional surgery, it is my view that she was in fact conferring an advantage on Cllr Marriott as the candidate for the Rochford District Council elections that took place five days later. I do believe that this surgery did provide an advantage to Cllr Marriott.

4

https://rochford.cmis.uk.com/rochford/Members/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_Person/mid/480/id/239/ScreenMode/Ward/Default.aspx

5

https://rochford.cmis.uk.com/rochford/Members/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_Person/mid/480/id/253/ScreenMode/Ward/Default.aspx

⁶https://rochford.cmis.uk.com/rochford/Members/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_Person/mid/480/id/280/ScreenMode/Ward/Default.aspx

Although the complaint could be interpreted as being politically motivated, I still believe there has been a breach of the member Code of Conduct because it is my opinion that Hullbridge Library was used for party political purposes and this conferred an advantage on Cllr Marriott.

It is clearly legitimate for elected members to hold surgeries in their communities throughout their term of office and as Head of Democracy and Transparency I encourage this. If this surgery had been a regularly scheduled surgery like the other dates if Cllr Weston had booked the surgery and it had not been referred to in Cllr Marriott's literature, it would have been acceptable for the surgery to take place. However, because it was an unplanned surgery held during the pre-election period, referred to in election literature, not booked by Cllr Weston and with limited legitimate justification for an extra one to be held, given the scheduled surgeries on 7 April and 5 May, I do believe that it was politically motivated with the intention of Cllr Marriott seeking additional votes in the district council election.

My recommendation to the Monitoring Officer is that further action should be taken in connection with this matter because there is evidence of the breach of the code of conduct by Cllr Weston.

In addition, as the Head of Democracy and Transparency I propose that I write to all members reminding them of their responsibilities when using Council resources, including premises for their surgeries and also issue guidance to all buildings who host such sessions.

Joanna Boaler
Investigating Officer

July 2018

List of appendices:

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[Appendix 5 – Map of Hullbridge showing location of the library](#)

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[Appendix 11 – Statement by Mr Peter Hennessey](#)

**ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS
COMPLAINT FORM**

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011 Essex County Council ('the Council') has a Code of Conduct for Members ('the Code') and arrangements for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code. Please note that the Code only applies to Councillors of Essex County Council when they are acting in that capacity.

Please read the Code and the Council's arrangements for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code before filling in this form. If you do not have a copy you can get them from the address below. Once completed the form should be returned to:

**Monitoring Officer
Essex County Council
County Hall
Chelmsford
CM1 1QH**

Email: Monitoring.Officer@essex.gov.uk

1. YOUR DETAILS

Title:	Cllr
First Name:	Michael
Last name:	Hoy
Address:	3 Abbey Close Hullbridge Hockley Essex SS5 6DL
Daytime telephone:	01702 232614
Evening telephone:	01702 232614
Mobile telephone:	07939 246352
Email address:	michael.hoy@btinternet.com

We will normally tell the following people that you have made this complaint:

- The member(s) you are complaining about.
- The Essex County Council's independent person.
- The Joint Standards Committee.

We will tell them your name and give them a summary of your complaint. We will give them full details of your complaint where necessary or appropriate to be able to deal with it. If you have serious concerns about your name and a summary, or details of your complaint being released, please complete Section 3 below requesting that your identity is kept confidential..

Please indicate which category best describes you:

- Member of the public
- An elected or co-opted member of an authority
- Member of Parliament
- Local authority monitoring officer
- Other council officer or authority employee
- Other (please state)_____

2. WHO YOUR COMPLAINT IS ABOUT

Please provide us with the name of the member(s) (ie Councillors) you believe have breached the Code of Conduct for Members.

Title	First name	Last name
Cllr	Carole	Weston

Please explain in the box below (or on separate sheets) what the member has done that you believe breaches the Code. It is important that you identify which part(s) of the Code you believe have been breached and how it is that you think that their behaviour breaches the Code. Please note, we can only investigate complaints alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct. If your complaint relates to something else then please contact the monitoring officer for advice.

If you are complaining about more than one member you must explain what each individual person has done.

It is important that you provide all the information you think the Monitoring Officer should consider when they are deciding whether to take any action on your complaint. For example:

- You should be specific about exactly what you are alleging the member said or did. For instance, instead of writing that the member 'insulted you', you should state what they said and when they said it.
- You should provide the details of the alleged incidents wherever possible. If you cannot provide exact dates it is important to give a general timeframe.
- You should confirm whether there are any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their names and contact details if possible.]

vote **ANGELINA MARRIOTT** 3rd May 2018

Conservative

WORKING for Hullbridge

PLANNING APPLICATIONS ARE NOT A MATTER FOR POLITICS but are in the nature of an application of the law with only limited options for Councillors to apply discretion.

I am listening to and engaging proactively with residents, helping them understand the issues we face, together with the options that may resolve them, whilst identifying possible solutions. Talk to me for the full and honest facts. Do not rely on second hand misinformation.

Your Local Conservative administration is currently talking with fellow Conservatives in Government and County Council to provide co-ordinated major infrastructural investment, something a coalition of small parties and independent Councillors may find impossible.

I support the "Memorandum of Understanding" signed by Essex County Council together with all South Essex local councils. This new association will be adopting a joint approach to Government, emphasising the need for upfront infrastructure prior to any major development.

MY PLEDGE TO HULLBRIDGE

I will ensure that agreements made by the developer of **MAYLONS FARM** to provide infrastructure and amenities are carried out in full.

I do this in my role within the Parish Council, however being a District Councillor would give me more power to work for, and help achieve what you, the residents, want.

Thank you
Angelina

**Vote Conservative
Angelina MARRIOTT
3rd May 2018**

Polls open at 7am and close at 10pm

vote

ANGELINA
MARRIOTT

3rd May 2018



Conservative

WORKING for Hullbridge

Angelina Marriott

Tel: 07958 351181

Email: Angelina.marriott@hotmail.com



Dear Residents

I have been a resident in Hullbridge for over 40 years.

A Parish Councillor for Hullbridge since 2004.

Served on all the committees in that time.

Chairman from 2009 - 2016.

Currently the Vice-Chairman.

Vice-chairman and trustee of the Hullbridge community Association.

Member of the Patient Participation Group of Riverside Medical Centre.

Member of Friends of Hullbridge Library.

Chairman of Rochford Hundred group of Parish Councils.

Attending surgeries with our local County Councillor Mrs C Weston on a bi-monthly basis at the Hullbridge Library.



My aims are for strong and effective policing of our neighbourhood;

a clean, safe and pleasant environment to live in, with an infrastructure that is fit for purpose.



I will engage with all parts of our community including Parish Council, business and residents, to encourage the most efficient way to provide services and to help create full employment helping to ensure a bright and secure future for our children.

Vote Conservative
Angelina MARRIOTT
3rd May 2018

However I can't do anything without you! You will be asked to go to the polls on 3rd May 2018 to vote for your District Councillor. I hope that you will vote for me the Conservative Candidate who has the experience and proven ability to get the job done!

Thank you
Angelina

vote

ANGELINA MARRIOTT

3rd May 2018



Conservative

WORKING for Hullbridge

Angelina Marriott

Tel: 07958 351181

Email: Angelina.marriott@hotmail.com



Dear Residents

If elected, I will engage with all parts of our community, including the residents, the Parish and County Councils, and local businesses, to encourage the most efficient way to provide services, and to create full employment, helping to ensure a bright and secure future for our children.

My aims are for strong and effective policing of our community, and a clean, safe and pleasant environment to live in. With an infrastructure that is fit for purpose.

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION YOU CAN EMAIL ME AT

angelina.marriott@hotmail.com

OR YOU CAN ASK ME IN PERSON

I will be at Hullbridge library from 10.00 to 12.00 on Saturday 28th April 2018.

You will be asked to go to the polls on 3rd May 2018 to vote for your District Councillor. I hope that you will vote for me, the Conservative Candidate.

Best Regards
Angelina

**Vote Conservative
Angelina MARRIOTT
3rd May 2018**

Polls open at 7am and close at 10pm

vote

ANGELINA
MARRIOTT

3rd May 2018



Conservative

WORKING for Hullbridge

Housing and planning

Rochford District Council is following government guide lines by a call for sites where landowners, residents and businesses put forward any site where they would like to see development. The consultation period associated with this call closed in March. There will be a further public consultation with respect to the Council's preferred options in due course.

homelessness

This is a growing challenge. New focused units in Rayleigh and Rochford have increased the availability of this much needed accommodation. Our homeless residents now have a better chance to remain in the locality maintaining important ties with family and friends.

Police and crime

There are 150 extra police officers being trained for the Rochford District. I will see that Hullbridge receives a fair allocation of this new resource. This area has the lowest crime rate in Essex; however pockets of anti-social behaviour persist and need to be dealt with effectively. There are regular meetings between the public and the police, I would urge you to attend one of these if you have any specific concerns.

Public toilets

The new toilet block at Pools Lane car park is finished. The Parish Council has agreed a ten year lease with Rochford District Council ensuring the long term security of this valuable facility.

Highways

Essex County Council has launched a consultation on the proposed improvement to the Fairglen Interchange on the A127. More information can be found at

<http://www.essexhighways.org/uploads/Highway-Schemes/Major-Schemes/A127-A130-Fairglen/Information%20Leaflet-LO.pdf>

This will affect a vast area of South East Essex. Please make yourselves aware of the proposals, and submit any comments you may have. I will be fighting to obtain the greatest benefits I can for Hullbridge.

vote

Angelina Marriott

Conservative



Polls open at 7am and close at 10pm

vote

ANGELINA MARRIOTT

3rd May 2018



Conservative

WORKING for Hullbridge

Dear Resident

On Thursday 3rd May we have an election in the Hullbridge Ward of Rochford District Council. In this leaflet I set out ten good reasons why I am asking you to vote Conservative on polling day.

- One:** The Conservatives run an efficient resident focused Council which supplies first class services.
- Two:** The Conservatives have a proven track record of managing finances with balanced budgets. No loans or debt.
- Three:** The Conservatives protect the green belt, save in exceptional circumstances.
- Four:** The Conservatives lead the way on flood control.
- Five:** We work with Southend Airport and the related business parks, to establish over 7000 local jobs.
- Six:** We ensure the supply of quality social housing, and accommodation for the homeless.
- Seven:** We are the second best Council in the country for recycling.
- Eight:** We deal with anti-social behaviour where it exists in our District.
- Nine:** We support local charities, award grants to a range of community initiatives, and provide free car parking at certain times of the week and leading up to Christmas.
- Ten:** The Conservatives are ready to face the challenges that will arise in the years to come.

Best Regards
Angelina

Vote Conservative
Angelina MARRIOTT
3rd May 2018

Polls open at 7am and close at 10pm

vote

ANGELINA MARRIOTT

3rd May 2018



Conservative

WORKING for Hullbridge

Angelina Marriott

Tel: 07958 351181

Email: Angelina.marriott@hotmail.com



Dear Residents

Tomorrow is polling day. May I remind you that the Polling Stations are open from 7.00 AM to 10.00 PM. The card that you received a few weeks ago will state the location of your Polling Station. Please make the time to vote.

My aims are for strong and effective policing of our community, a clean, safe and pleasant environment to live in, and an infrastructure that is fit for purpose.

MY PLEDGE TO HULLBRIDGE

I will ensure that agreements made by the developer of Malyons Farm to provide infrastructure and amenities are carried out in full. I will repeatedly ask that our streets receive a better standard of maintenance. I will work to improve traffic flow and minimise pollution.

Best Regards
Angelina

Angelina MARRIOTT



Conservative



Polls open at 7am and close at 10pm

Printed by the Police Commission on behalf of Angelina Marriott, local of SWVCCA, 25 Rotherham Lane, Rotherham S14 7EP
Printed by Rockford Printing Co, Unit 7 Riverside Ind Est, South Street, RuxMead, Essex S14 7PL

Appendix 3 - Emails regarding the additional booking of a surgery in the library

Fri 22/06/2018 10:27

Tracy Potter, Face to Face Area Manager

FW: Councillor Weston

To: Joanna Boaler, Head of Democracy & Transparency

From: Pam Corps, Deputy Library Supervisor
Sent: 17 April 2018 10:11
To: Tracy Potter, Face to Face Area Manager
Cc: Kelly Wingfield, Face to Face Supervisor
Subject: Councillor Weston

Apparently Angelina Marriott (Deputy Chairman Hullbridge Parish Council) came in on Saturday and asked if Councillor Weston could do an extra surgery on the 29th April. 10 – 12pm. I assume this is OK but could you confirm please and I will let her know. Thanks

Pam Corps

Deputy Library Supervisor

Hullbridge Library

Essex County Council
Telephone: 033301 32673
Email: pam.corps@essex.gov.uk | www.essex.gov.uk

From: Pam Corps, Deputy Library Supervisor
Sent: 14 June 2018 16:02
To: Tracy Potter, Face to Face Area Manager
Subject: Councillor Surgery

The conversation I had with Angelina Marriott regarding the surgery was as follows:

'I understand from my staff that Councillor Weston would like to have an additional surgery on the 28th April and I confirm that it is OK and that I will leave it to you (Angelina)to contact Councillor Weston and let her know'.

Hope that is OK

Pam Corps

Deputy Library Supervisor

Hullbridge Library

NOTICE OF ELECTION AGENTS' NAMES AND OFFICES

Rochford District Council

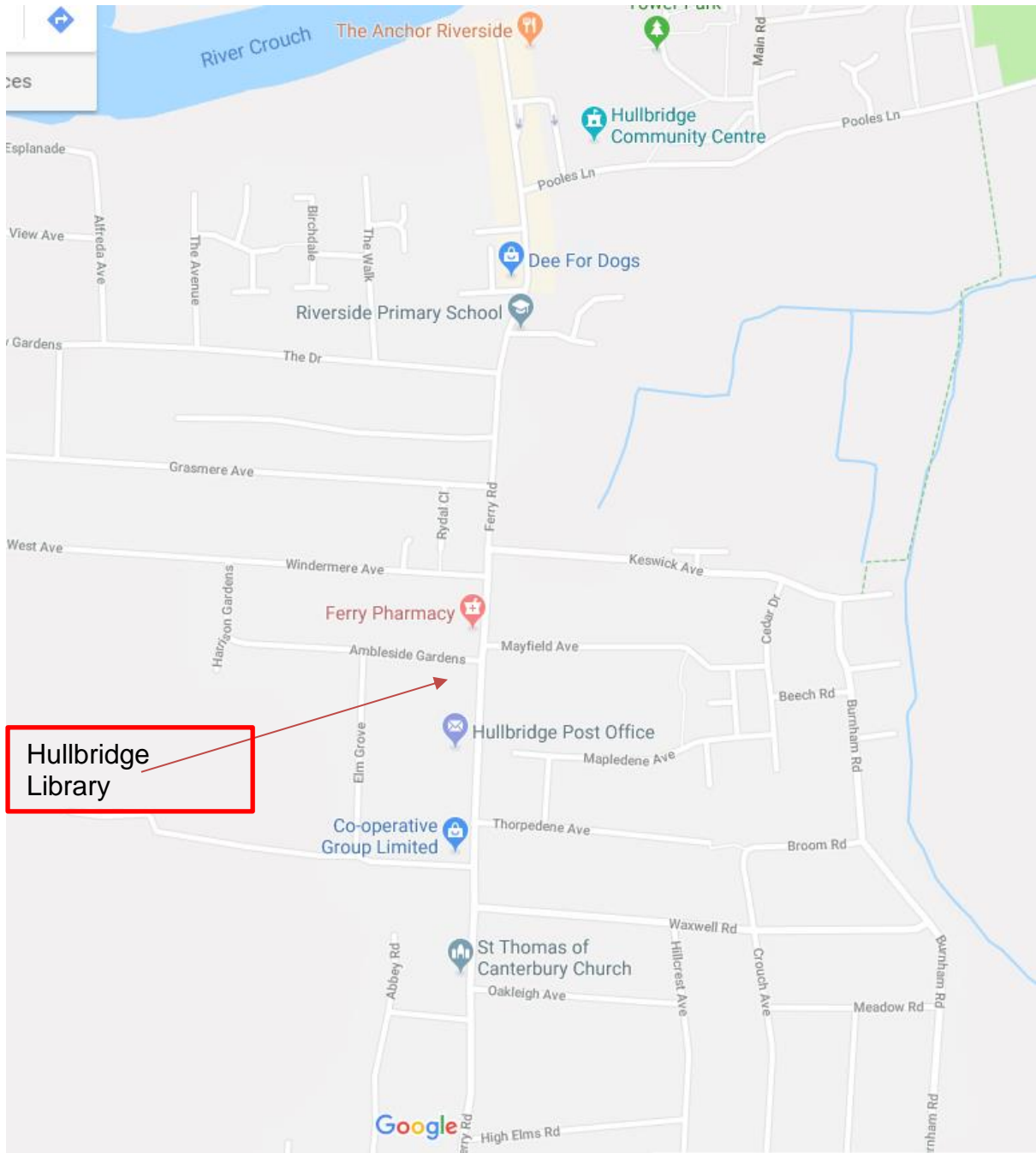
Election of a District Councillor for

Hullbridge
on Thursday 3 May 2018

I HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that the names and addresses of election agents of the candidates at this election, and the addresses of the offices or places of such election agents to which all claims, notices, writs, summons, and other documents addressed to them may be sent, have respectively been declared in writing to me as follows:

Name of Election Agent	Correspondence Address	Name of Candidate
HENNESSY Peter George	25 Leamington Road, Hockley, Essex, SS5 5HH	MARRIOTT Angelina Donna
WEIR Myra Anne	18 Glenwood Avenue, Hawkwell, Essex, SS5 4HH	WILLIAMS Victoria Mary
WILSON Stuart Anthony	21 The Walk, Hullbridge, Hockley, Essex, SS5 6LW	WILSON Stuart Anthony

Appendix 5 – Map of Hullbridge showing library



Cllr Weston statement – 5 June 2018.

I hold my surgery on a bi-monthly basis at Hullbridge Library, Ferry Road, Hullbridge. This is held jointly with Cllr Angelina Marriott, as the then Vice-Chairman on Hullbridge Parish Council (now Chairman). I hold the surgery with Cllr Marriott as she knows Hullbridge very well.

I decided to organise an additional surgery in Hullbridge library for 28 April 2018; the reason for this was that I had a lot of complaints and moaning about who I was and what I do on the local Facebook pages, statements such as “Who is Carole Weston?” and “What does she do?” have been made.

So, Cllr Marriott booked the session for me on 28 April, 10:00-12:00 at Hullbridge Library.

I remember the people who came in to talk to me on that date:

1. A gentleman in his 80s, he was a seafarer, former navy personnel, who lives in Hullbridge. It was interesting to talk to him and I asked him about his life, he stayed for about 40 minutes.
2. A lady who had complained about my lack of presence, we spoke about dementia because there is work between the Harbour Club in Battlesbridge and the old school house in Hullbridge, I spoke to her for about 20 minutes. It was Cllr Marriott who told me she was one of the complainants on Facebook, questioning who I am.
3. Gentleman about a pothole near the library, I visited the pothole once the surgery finished.

The election was not discussed with any of the individuals who came to speak to me.

I am not aware that anything was handed out inside the library, Cllr Marriott was not electioneering, she was just holding a regular surgery with me, supporting me. One of the big issues in Hullbridge is some planning of new housing that has been agreed, Cllr Marriott knows a lot about it so she supports this. I did not see Cllr Marriott’s election literature.

I think this complaint is politically motivated by the opposition (Green Party) at Rochford District Council.

I was not aware that anything was being handed out outside of the library or of any campaigning that was taking place. Certainly, no campaigning or handing out of literature was taking place in the library.

Cllr M Hoy statement – 5 June 2018.

My complaint is as per the complaint form I submitted on 5 May 2018. My complaint is simply that Cllr Weston has used her position as a councillor improperly by misusing the library for campaigning/ electioneering purposes for the Rochford District Council elections in May 2018 and giving an advantage to the Conservative candidate, Cllr Angelina Marriott.

Cllr Weston misused her position as she allowed Cllr Marriott to use the library (Essex County Council premises) for campaigning purposes. Cllr Marriott was standing as a Conservative candidate for Hullbridge ward in these elections.

In a campaign leaflet, Cllr Marriott said that she would be available on 28 April 2018 to speak to residents at Hullbridge library. Cllr Weston usually only holds a surgery at Hullbridge library on the first Saturday of every other month.

I was alerted to the library being used for the purposes as above by a few people, including Amanda Studd's, who saw the agent handing out leaflets outside of the library.

I was informed by Amanda Studd's that the surgery on 28 April 2018 was booked in the name of Cllr Weston.

Amanda Studd statement – 6 June 2018.

I originally became aware that Angelina Marriott was going to Hullbridge library on 28 April 2018 to meet residents when I received her election flyer through the door. My background is in the civil service and I was surprised to see that she was holding a surgery in the election literature. I instantly felt uncomfortable about this.

On 28 April 2018, I drove past the library between 11:00 and 12:00, I saw a man, who I believe was a Conservative election agent, outside of the library on the path with a stack of blue leaflets in the left pocket of his coat/jacket. I assume these leaflets were Conservative election literature, but as I drove past the library I cannot be sure. I drove around the block with the intention of going in the library at around 12 noon and he was not there.

On Monday I called Hullbridge Library to find out more information. The staff on duty were not aware of the issue but the area manager telephoned me back. She confirmed that the library was booked for Cllr Weston's surgery.

I also spoke to the Returning Officer at Rochford District Council who informed me that they were unaware of the issue and that it would be okay to do this if the candidate paid for use of the premises. I know that it was not from my conversation with the library. There is no separate bookable room, the surgery is held in the main part of the library.

My complaint is against Angelina Marriott, Cllr Weston and the agent. The complaint against Angelina is that she used the library for election purposes, that Cllr Weston misled the library staff and therefore the County Council by booking it for a surgery when it was being used for election purposes and that the agent (man outside the library) was clearly electioneering/canvassing on County Council land.

Interview with Tracy Potter and Carol Rotheram at Hullbridge Library - 22 June 2018.

An additional surgery was requested by Angelina Marriott for Cllr Weston to hold an additional surgery at Hullbridge Library on Saturday 28 April. Approval was sought as per the emails below and once agreed, Angelina Marriot was informed as per the emails below.

This surgery was an addition to the regular surgeries that Cllr Weston holds in the library.

On the 28 April 2018, at about 10am Cllr Weston came in and sat at her usual spot at the back of the library near the desk, she was joined by a gentleman. He was wearing a coat and a cowboy style hat. Later in the morning Angelina Marriott joined Cllr Weston.

Cllr Weston and the gentleman were offered a cup of tea by Victoria, who works in the library on a Saturday.

I remember the man saying to an elderly gentleman that he had ten minutes with Cllr Weston, I am not sure what context this was, but it was a strange comment which is why I remember it. This gentleman didn't come in straight away but was brought in by the man with the coat and hat. The elderly gentleman was a sea faring gentleman, he wasn't Cllr Weston's first visitor of the day, but he stuck in my mind because of his appearance.

The man with the coat and hat came in and out during the morning. I got the impression he was encouraging people to come in and see Cllr Weston. He was in and out of the library a lot, but I couldn't say that I saw him handing out or holding election leaflets.

Cllr Weston had a few people come in during the morning to see her. The housing issue is a big concern in the village and people came in to talk to her about it. There is also a lot of talk locally about the Harbour Club, Battlesbridge moving into the School House.

Angelina Marriott has a distinct voice and when the library is quiet it is noticeable when she was talking, she did seem to be doing a lot of talking on that date. I remember overhearing Cllr Weston saying that "no one seems to know who I am" on 28 April. I remember that when Cllr Weston was first elected she was trying to make herself known in the village.

Hullbridge is a small village and we are aware from other surgeries that Amanda Studd is in a relationship with Stuart Wilson, the Green Party Councillor who won the seat that Angelina Marriott stood in.

At the end of the surgery Cllr Weston said thank-you and left.

Cllr Marriott statement - 9 July 2018

Cllr Weston has received a lot of social media comments regarding not being present in Hullbridge, potholes in and housing issues in the village.

There was also an issue relating to the footpath near the river and a resident putting in a gate. This has now been resolved. There has been an issue over the fly tipping in Beeches Road, Cllr Weston received a lot of emails about this.

Cllr Weston likes to meet people in person and speak to them face-to-face, so the additional surgery on 28 April was to enable residents to come and discuss issues in this way given the aforementioned issues.

A small number of people who supported Cllr Hoy, resent that Cllr Weston won the County Council seat in 2017, I believe this is in part, because she lives in Hockley not Hullbridge (although the division covers both villages).

An extra surgery on 28 April was scheduled to try to reduce the anti-Cllr Weston feeling and not for any other reason.

At the surgery on 28 April, a lady came in who was concerned about construction traffic in relation to the new housing development.

Another resident who came in on that date, was a lady who does a lot of work about dementia and we spoke to her about the Harbour Club work.

The issues discussed were resident concerns not about voting in or the forthcoming district election.

I take the pre-election period seriously and removed myself from a meeting and exhibition about the housing development during the pre-election period after I sought advice.

I always accompany Cllr Weston at her surgeries, as it is part of the division where I have a lot of local knowledge, so we work closely together. This was therefore not an irregular situation in that I always accompany her in role as parish councillor for Hullbridge.

On 28 April, I was inside the library all the time from after 10:00 until 12:00, Mr Hennessey brought Cllr Weston and I coffee, but I cannot tell you what he was doing outside, as I was involved in discussions inside the library. He has attended surgeries in the past and been an usher to encourage and help people inside. But the surgery on 28 April was very busy, so I was engaged in the discussions with residents and could not confirm what he was doing.

Mr Hennessey is not a councillor, so he wouldn't have attended code of conduct training, but I am sure he stands on the pavements and encourages people to come in does not electioneer. As far as I know this is what he did on 28 April.

With regard to the election literature, I proof read the leaflet but didn't see that the surgery would be viewed as electioneering. However, in hindsight I can see how it would be read and I am sorry as it wasn't the intention.

I am very sorry for the work that this mistake has caused you.

Cllr Weston wasn't involved in the campaign for me standing in the Rochford District Council elections, we just work together for the best of residents of Hullbridge.

Mr Peter Hennessey – 09 July 2018

I can confirm that the surgery held on 28 April 2018 at Hullbridge library was simply another surgery.

It was an unfortunate accident that the election literature for Angelina Marriott included the detail about the surgery on 28 April. The literature should have never gone out, I was an agent for the first time and in rush of getting the literature out I missed this. I was the agent for three people and this was a mistake.

The reason this additional surgery was held was due to the increased concern of who Cllr Weston was on social media. There are a lot of issues being raised locally at the moment.

I have attended three surgeries including the one on 28 April. I act as a guide for those outside to inform residents of the surgery and that the two councillors (Marriott and Weston) are inside. I cannot confirm the dates of when I have attended the surgery before.

On the 28 April, I was in attendance from 10:00-12:00, I spoke to anyone and everyone who was passing the library on the day. I did go into the library and went to get coffees for Cllrs Weston and Marriott from the Co-op. Most of the time I was on the pavement not on the library slabs as this is where I greeted individuals.

I do not recall having any literature of any kind and was not handing anything out. When I was telling at Thorpe Dean Church on 3 May, I was accused by Cllr Stuart Wilson of handing out election literature on the 28 April.

I made a complaint in 2016 against Mr Michael Hoy; I therefore believe that this is a revenge and a partly fabricated the complaint.

I believe that Cllr Weston is innocent of this complaint and a breach of the member code of conduct. It is unfortunate that the surgery detail appeared in Cllr Marriott's literature, this was an accident due to time pressures.
