

**ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL
STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE**

DECISION

Alleged Breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Carole Weston

Introduction

1. On 9 November 2018 the Sub-Committee considered a report regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Carole Weston.
2. The report dealt with three issues. The sub-committee considered that issues (i) and (iii) were the same.
 - (i) ***The first allegation is that the complainant considers that an additional surgery was booked in the name of Cllr Weston during the pre-election period as an electioneering event***
 - (ii) ***The second allegation is that the complainant believes the candidate, Cllr Marriott's election agent (Mr P Hennessy) was clearly handing out election literature on the library premises whilst Cllrs Weston and Marriott were inside. The investigator concluded that Mr Hennessy on the balance of probabilities she could not be satisfied that Mr Hennessy distributed election material and this allegation was not therefore for the sub-committee to consider.***
 - (iii) ***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 Angelina Marriott.***
3. This is alleged to be contrary to Paragraph 24.4.1 of the Code of Conduct which states that Councillors 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, ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes).
4. The issues had been referred to the sub-committee by Paul Turner, the Monitoring Officer of Essex County Council.

Facts:

5. The Sub-Committee considered the issues and heard the submissions of the Deputy Monitoring Officer, Joanna Boaler and Councillor Weston (who was supported by the Hearing by Cllr Dick Madden. The Sub-Committee noted that, at the time of the hearing, the facts were not in dispute.

Breach of the Code

6. The Sub-Committee noted Cllr Weston's concession with respect to the surgery held on 28 April 2018, which was that it was a breach of the Code

Consideration of Sanction

7. Having accepted the concession found a breach with respect of issue (iv), the Sub-Committee went on to consider what action to recommend. They considered the sanctions available to them.
8. The Committee noted Councillor Weston's explanation of that she had not been aware that Cllr Marriott had advertised the surgery in her election leaflet. They also noted the investigator's comment that she had been helpful and co-operative during the investigation. Finally, they noted that Cllr Weston had voluntarily attended Standards Training in October 2018.

Decision on Sanction to be imposed:

9. With respect to a sanction to be imposed, the Standards Sub Committee indicated that they would have requested that Cllr Weston undertake standards training had she not recently undertaken it.
10. They resolved that Cllr Weston should apologise to the Chief Executive of Essex County Council for the fact that she had improperly used the resources of the County Council.
11. This decision will be published on the Council's website in accordance with the procedures adopted by the sub-committee.