

Councillor further sanctioned for failure

An East Cambridgeshire District councillor has been sanctioned for failure to comply with sanctions imposed by a previous subcommittee in July 2021

At a meeting of the Finance & Assets (Ethical Governance) Subcommittee on 18th March 2022, Councillor Matthew Downey, who represents the Ely East ward, was found to have failed to comply with 2 of the sanctions imposed at the Finance & Assets (Ethical Governance) Subcommittee meeting on 29th July 2021.

The sanctions imposed at the July meeting were that Councillor Downey was required to provide a written apology to the complainant, undergo training in good political debate and a press notice was issued. These were imposed as Councillor Downey had breached the East Cambridgeshire District Council Member Code of Conduct in that he failed to treat others with respect and when doing so, his conduct brought his office into disrepute.

Cllr Downey failed to provide an apology or commit to undertaking training during the 8 months prior to the subcommittee meeting. A meeting was called for 18th March 2022 to consider whether further sanctions should be imposed. A late “apology” and offer to undertake training were submitted by Cllr Downey at 11:52 on the morning of the subcommittee hearing. The subcommittee hearing noted receipt of this but did not accept that this amounted to an apology due to a lack of remorse or regret. Furthermore, the “apology” was a reiteration of the remarks which Cllr Downey made which had brought about the original complaint and for which he had been found to be in breach of the Member Code of Conduct at the July subcommittee.

As a result, the Finance & Assets (Ethical Governance) Subcommittee resolved that Cllr Downey should be further sanctioned by providing an actual apology for the disrespectful remarks aimed at the Complainant and other Councillors. The apology must be made in writing to the complainant within 30 days of the subcommittee. In addition, he must undertake training in good political debate within 6 months and the Finance & Assets (Ethical Governance) subcommittee issues a formal censure and a press notice, the contents of which to be drafted by the Monitoring Officer and agreed in consultation with the Chairman of the subcommittee.