

## NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

### STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARING PANEL

18 JULY 2017

### DECISION NOTICE

<b>PANEL MEMBERS</b>	Mrs M Evans (co-opted Chair) Cllr B Hannah Cllr M Prior
<b>SUBJECT MEMBER;</b> Cllr Laura Stango (Mundesley Parish Council) Supported by Cllr Harding (Mundesley PC) and Mr Stango	<b>COMPLAINANT;</b> Mrs W ( former employee of Mundesley PC) Supported by Mr W and daughter
<b>Investigating Officer</b>	Cara Jordan

<b>PRELIMINARY</b>	N/A
<b>ALLEGATIONS</b>	<p>In summary, it is alleged that Councillor Stango of Mundesley Parish Council breached the Code of Conduct in that:</p> <p>a. <i>Cllr Stango failed to act with openness and accountability in her conduct surrounding a planning application, considered at the Mundesley Parish Council (MPC) meeting of 21 March 2016.</i></p> <p>b. Cllr Stango failed to treat Mrs W with respect at the Part II meeting of the MPC on 21 March 2016, when she questioned the employee about her health and employment plans.</p> <p>c. Following this meeting, Cllr Stango, through her conduct, was disrespectful to Mrs W in that she undermined her and caused her embarrassment, in particular by sending undermining emails to other people and by her conduct at the Overstrand Parish Council on 19 April 2016.</p> <p><i>NOTE: Allegation (a) was not found to be a breach by the Investigating Officer and was not considered by the Panel.</i></p>
<b>EVIDENCE HEARD</b>	<p>The Panel members;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Read the Investigator's report and appendices.</li><li>2. Read the further documentation provided by Cllr Stango</li><li>3. Heard evidence from; Mrs W and Cllr Stango</li><li>4. Heard submissions from the Investigation Officer</li></ol>
<b>INDEPENDENT PERSON ASSESSMENT (Mr A Oram)</b>	<p>These comments are based on the papers circulated to the Committee and the additional papers submitted by Councillor Stango</p> <p>Matters related to allegation (b)</p>

bullying conduct by Cllr Stango.

3. The Panel felt that the tone and content of the emails was particularly unpleasant. Despite Cllr Stango's assertions to the contrary an email with an attachment named "Mrs W's lies" was clear evidence of bullying conduct towards an employee.
4. The Panel also noted that although Mrs Stango criticised Mrs W for her performance of her role, there was no evidence that this had been an issue that had been raised with the Employee through any performance management framework.
5. To the Panel, Cllr Stango appeared to be trying to justify her own poor behaviour by being critical of the Clerk.
6. Even if Mrs W had been lacking in her performance (of which there was no evidence of) Cllr Stango could not use it as a justification to then bully and humiliate Mrs W.
7. In relation to Cllr Stango attending the Overstrand Parish Council meeting, the Panel found that this fell within the scope of the Code of Conduct.
8. The Panel felt that this was another example of bullying conduct by Cllr Stango towards Mrs W. Attending a meeting of another Council in order to specifically raise issues to "scupper" an appointment process was totally unacceptable.
9. It was clear from the minutes that Cllr Stango was ejected from the meeting and this was something that brought the reputation of Mundesley PC into disrepute.
10. The Panel also felt that there were other concerning issues. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that she had advised Mrs Stango about the content and circulation of her emails several times during the investigation process but Cllr Stango did not change the way that she communicated and criticised the Monitoring Officer for offering this advice.
11. The Panel also noted that Cllr Stango had secretly recorded telephone conversations with an officer from another Council, which was completely unacceptable in their view.
12. There were a number of current Mundesley Parish Councillors, who from the documents that Cllr Stango submitted appeared to believe that there was nothing wrong with Cllr Stango's behaviour. The Panel were concerned that this indicated that some of the conduct may not be simply an isolated issue with Cllr Stango.
13. Furthermore since the close of the hearing it has become evident from correspondence that Cllr Stango, or one of those persons attending the

	<p>hearing did not respect the confidentiality of the proceedings.</p> <p>14. The Panel are extremely disappointed to note this as firstly the information passed outside the hearing was inaccurate and secondly the proceedings were in private session as the hearing contained private and personal information.</p> <p>Consequently, the Panel finds that Cllr Stango <b>DID FAIL</b> to treat the employee with respect at the Part II meeting of the MPC on 21 March 2016, when she questioned the employee about her health and employment plans.</p> <p>The Panel finds that, Cllr Stango, through her conduct, <b>WAS DISRESPECTFUL</b> to the employee in that she undermined her and caused her embarrassment, in particular by sending undermining emails to other people and by her conduct at the Overstrand Parish Council on 19 April 2016.</p>
<b>DECISION</b>	<p>The Panel have considered what recommendations should be made to Mundesley Parish Council in respect of sanctions to be imposed;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Panel consider that the bullying behaviour is so serious and persistent that the Parish Council should reprimand Cllr Stango.</li> <li>2. The Panel also considered that as Cllr Stango did not acknowledge that any of her behaviour fell short of the standards expected of an elected member that she should undergo training in ethics and standards.</li> <li>3. The Panel felt that, as Cllr Stango was not able to demonstrate that she was able to demonstrate appropriate behaviour and that her behaviour had, and would continue to bring Mundesley PC into disrepute, that Cllr Stango should be removed from any Chairman or Vice Chairman position by the Council.</li> </ol>

.....<sup>MEVANS</sup>  
Mrs M Evans  
Panel Chair

.....<sup>27</sup>.....July 2017

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO PROVISION FOR APPEAL AGAINST THIS DECISION**

