

Economy, Communities and Corporate Directorate

Director: Geoff Hughes

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Councillor A Crowe
Mayor of Ledbury
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Dear Madam Mayor

Re: Members conduct complaint

As you are aware I am seeking an external investigation following allegations received that a number of ledbury town councillors have breached the code of conduct.

The difficult situation that you are dealing with is not underestimated but the problem you have is that the staff grievances allege bullying by two councillors. Clearly this is behaviour prohibited by the code of conduct. Therefore in my opinion although the staff have written these allegations within the grievance procedure their allegation is in fact that a member has failed to comply with the authority's code of conduct. As a result you know that my view is that such an allegation cannot be dealt with otherwise than in accordance with arrangements made under s28(6) of the Localism Act 2011.

I understand the duty of care to your own staff and why therefore you have followed the grievance procedure and made decisions at the extra ordinary meeting on 5th May. However this is in conflict with the requirements in the Localism Act and could expose the council to risk which I would want you to avoid.

My suggestions although I know you have your own source of advice, is that you need to consider how the code of conduct investigation impacts upon your decision of the 5th May. Does it mean it should be postponed? Be effective only until the outcome is known? Be reconsidered at that time? These are obviously matters for your council.

Yours sincerely

Claire Ward
Solicitor to the Council