

Mr C Moister  
Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Chorley Council  
Town Hall  
Market Street  
Chorley PR7 1DP

15 April 2013

Dear Chris,

**Concerns over Conduct by Members of Chorley Council**

As you are obviously aware, Chorley Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its elected members and co-opted members.

I was appointed by Chorley Council in July 2012 specifically to be consulted on alleged breaches of the code of conduct for councillors, parish councillors and co-opted members. In carrying out the role of considering standards complaints, I see it as my duty to recommend any changes – for example, to guidance issued to members – that I feel would help members to maintain high standards and thus reduce the possibility that they become the subject of a standards complaint. Obviously, it is up to Chorley Council to decide what action, if any, it wishes to take on any such recommendations I make. At the last Governance Committee meeting on 14 March, the committee appeared to welcome such a proactive approach.

The reason for this letter is simply to express my personal concern that a significant number of Chorley members appear to have forgotten about the existence or content of the Code of Conduct or, perhaps more importantly, the reasons for it.

In the last six weeks there have been no less than five complaints against members for not “valuing my colleagues” or not “always treating people with respect”. This means that, in such a short space of time, there have been standards complaints against some 11% of the council. While one of these standards complaints has been rejected, it has been agreed that the other four should be investigated. Clearly, some if not all of these other complaints may in the end be rejected after detailed investigation or at a local hearing. However, members need to be aware that – whatever the outcome of individual standards complaints – such regular appearance in the local press of what may be seen by readers as personal attacks by councillors against other councillors is unlikely to create a favourable impression among the general public of councillors or of the council itself.

Given the high number of recent, similar standards complaints, in my opinion all councillors should be reminded of:

- (a) the existence and content of the Code of Conduct and
- (b) the need to exercise care when talking with the press or writing to local papers, especially when criticising other councillors or parish councillors.

Yours sincerely,

Independent Person to Chorley Council