



Member Standards Hearing Committee Agenda

10.00 am

Thursday, 6 November 2025

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

Members of the Public are welcome to attend and make representations at this Meeting.

1. To Appoint a Chair for the purpose of this meeting only
2. introductions/Attendance at Meeting
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Hearing Documents (Pages 3 - 108)

Hearing documentation

5. To consider the exclusion of the Public and Press

(a) Would Members please note that some personal details have been redacted from the submitted report. The basis for this is that it reveals information about an individual/contains information about an individual and considering the public interest test it is not in the public interest to disclose it.

(b) In view of (a) above, it may be necessary for discussions to held in the confidential part of the meeting and the press and public should be excluded. If this is the case the following resolution will be passed:-

RESOLVED – That, pursuant to Sections 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the ensuing items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as

defined in exclusion paragraph 2 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'A. C. Wennington', with a horizontal line underneath.

Amy Wennington
Assistant Director Law and Governance

Wednesday, 29 October 2025

Town Hall
Darlington.

Membership

Councillors McGill, Snedker and Marshall

If you need this information in a different language or format or you have any other queries on this agenda please contact Hannah Miller, Democratic Officer, Resources and Governance Group, during normal office hours 8.30 a.m. to 4.45 p.m. Mondays to Thursdays and 8.30 a.m. to 4.15 p.m. Fridays email: hannah.miller@darlington.gov.uk or telephone 01325 405801

CONFIDENTIAL

Investigation report date; 6 December 2024

Introduction. Case Reference: 142/2024 Report of an investigation under Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 concerning an allegation that Councillor Colin Pease breached the Code of Conduct.
Investigation authorised by: Luke Swinhoe, Assistant Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer for Darlington Borough Council.
Investigator: Ellie Dewar – Independent Investigating Officer
Date investigation began: 4 June 2024

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- 9 Issues for consideration by the panel
- 10 Recommendation

Appendix 1 – Drawing of room layout

Appendix 2 – Transcript of audio recording

Appendix 3 –Councillor Colin Pease statement in regard to allegations

Appendix 4 – Interview notes of witnesses as follows;

- a) Hazel Bullock
- b) Les Foggett
- c) Alan Macnab
- d) Adrian Marshall
- e) Monty Brack
- f) Member of the Public 2
- g) Deborah Laing
- h) Maggie Beadle
- i) Simon Pleydell
- j) Dave Darling

Appendix 5 – Complaint statement of Member of the Public 1

Appendix 6 – Email complaint from Member of the Public 1

Appendix 7 - Parish Council meeting agenda of 13 May 2024

Appendix 8 – Parish Council meeting minutes of 13 May 2024

Appendix 9 – Alan Macnab original statement

Appendix 10 – Monitoring Officer's Assessment Decision Notice

Appendix 11 – Photographs of Councillor Darling (not published)

Appendix 12 – Photographs of Councillor Pease (not published)

Appendix 13 – Code of Conduct adopted by DBC Members

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 It has been alleged by Member of the Public 1, that on 13 May 2024 during a meeting of Middleton St George Parish Council, Councillor Colin Pease breached the code of conduct, by assaulting [REDACTED] Councillor David Darling.
- 1.2 There is a linked complaint made by Councillor Colin Pease, about the conduct of Councillor Darling arising from the same meeting and incident.
- 1.3 The meeting was audio recorded by the Clerk to the Parish Council, Alan Macnab, and a further audio recording was made by Member of the Public 1.
- 1.4 At the start of the parish council meeting, the chairman of the parish council, Councillor Hazel Bullock, invited Councillor Pease to speak during the ward councillors report, which is a standard item on the agenda of all parish council meetings.
- 1.5 Councillor Darling then read a prepared list of questions to Councillor Pease. The conversation became heated between Councillor Darling and Councillor Pease, with Councillor Darling repeatedly asking questions of Councillor Pease without giving him time to answer in a raised voice and provoking manner.
- 1.6 Councillor Pease then stood up and pointed his finger on the table and called Councillor Darling a "prat" amongst other comments, before going towards the door to exit the room.
- 1.7 Councillor Darling quickly stood up and shut the door with force meaning that Councillor Pease could not leave. Both parties were then engaged in a physical altercation. Councillor Pease had scratches and blood on his face and arm area, and his glasses were broken during the incident. Councillor Darling had a slightly red face and a bruised finger. Members of the meeting can be heard on the audio recording asking Councillor Darling to "stop" repeatedly. Members of the meeting assisted in separating both parties, and they left separately.
- 1.8 It is my conclusion that this matter should be referred to the Member Standards Hearing Committee, as there is sufficient evidence in respect of potential breaches of the following provisions of the code of conduct:
 - a) Paragraph 3 (1) – "you must treat others with respect"
 - b) Paragraph 5 – "you must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office as a member or the Council into disrepute"

1.9 There is sufficient evidence for this matter to proceed to a hearing, and it will be for the hearing panel to consider that evidence and determine whether there has been a breach.

2 The Complaint

2.1 On 14 May 2024, Darlington Borough Council received a complaint from Member of the Public 1 about the conduct of Councillor Pease, as follows:

I write to make an official complaint regarding the verbally and physically aggressive behaviour by Cllr Pease in the Middleton St George Parish Council meeting last night.

Cllr Darling questioned Pease on his seemingly negative attitude and approach to matters concerning the Ward. Some of which included him complaining about the Parish Council as well as Officers of Darlington Borough Council, the payment of public funds to a private business, his questioning the allocation of 106 monies to the community centre, and 'ordering' the litter picker to get on with his work.

Cllr Pease became verbally aggressive, leaning across the table and pointing his finger at Cllr Darling, saying (I quote), "why are you sticking your nose in", followed by "you can carry on running your own little fiefdom without me" and finally "I'm not listening to that prat" before heading for the door. At this point the altercation between them became physical, and I witnessed at least two punches being thrown at Cllr Darling's face by Cllr Pease. The incident has been reported to the Police. I have evidence of what was said should the Police require this.

Cllr Pease's behaviour is totally unacceptable and has caused me severe distress and anxiety for what was a very frightening episode to witness. At the very worst I would expect a written apology from Cllr Pease for the distress caused and at best I would like to see him removed from office.

3 Official details

3.1 Councillor Pease is a member of Darlington Borough Council.

3.2 Councillor Darling is a member of Middleton St George Parish Council. Councillor Darling is also the Chairman of the Middleton St George Community Centre.

4 The Code of Conduct

4.1 Darlington Borough Council adopted a members Code of Conduct, based on the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct, on 1 January 2022 (this was a revision from an earlier Code of Conduct).

4.2 A copy of the Code of Conduct adopted by Darlington Borough is set out in Appendix 13

4.3 The relevant parts of the Code of Conduct appear to be 1. Respect and also 5. Disrepute.

5 Evidence

5.1 Councillor Pease was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 17 July 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Pease as accurate.

5.2 Clerk to the Parish Council, Mr Alan Macnab had already prepared a written statement and shared this with Mr Luke Swinhoe, dated the 31 May 2024. He was then interviewed on Microsoft Teams on the 21 June 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Mr Macnab as accurate.

5.3 Councillor Adrian Marshall was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 12 June 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Marshall as accurate.

5.4 Councillor Hazel Bullock was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 19 June 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Bullock as accurate.

5.5 Councillor Les Foggett was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 11 June 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Foggett as accurate.

5.6 Councillor Simon Pleydell was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on 24 June 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Pleydell as accurate.

5.7 Member of the Public 1 was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 7 July 2024. There had been a slight delay due to ■■■ being on holiday for a period of around 3 weeks. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Member of the Public 1 as accurate.

5.8 Councillor Maggie Beadle was spoken to by telephone on 17 July 2024, as she was unable to facilitate the use of a video interview. A written record of this meeting was made and with some amendments has since been confirmed by Councillor Beadle as accurate.

5.9 Councillor Monty Brack was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 5 July 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Brack as accurate.

5.10 Councillor Deborah Laing was interviewed via Microsoft Teams on the 25 June 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Laing as accurate.

- 5.11 Member of the Public 2 was interviewed on the 22 July 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Member of the Public 1 as accurate.
- 5.12 Councillor Darling was interviewed by Microsoft Teams on the 26 July 2024. A written record of this meeting was made and has since been confirmed by Councillor Darling as accurate.
- 5.13 Councillor Jean Walker did not respond to the investigator's emails inviting her for interview.

6 Summary of the material facts

- 6.1 Councillor Pease is a Member of Darlington Borough Council and was attending the meeting of Middleton St George Parish Council in his capacity as a Ward Councillor. He is a former member of Middleton St George Parish Council. Councillor Darling is member of Middleton St George Parish Council.
- 6.2 Councillor Pease reports there had been "issues" between himself and Councillor Darling since May 2023 during the local elections. He believes this related to how Councillor David Darling and his wife Member of the Public 1 could not apply to be conservative candidates and were "put out" when Councillor Pease decided to put his name forward to be a conservative councillor and stood for the election. Councillor Darling does not believe there were any particular issues between himself and Councillor Colin Pease prior to the incident taking place on 13 May 2024.
- 6.3 There were 13 people in total present at the meeting held on the 13 May 2024, and 12 have provided statements. The meeting room is quite small (see appendices 1. which shows where people were sat). There were two members of the public in attendance (Member of the Public 1 and Member of the Public 2) who were sat toward the back of the room near the door. Councillor Pease was also sat in this area in between the two members of public. Councillor Bullock was the chair at the time of the meeting, and Mr Macnab was the Clerk who was making an audio recording of the meeting.
- 6.4 Member of the Public 1 also made [REDACTED] own audio recording of this meeting. [REDACTED] did not make anybody aware of the fact [REDACTED] was doing this beforehand. During [REDACTED] interview [REDACTED] believed [REDACTED] had a right to record this meeting as it was a public meeting and did not elaborate further on why [REDACTED] felt the need to make [REDACTED] own recording. Some of those interviewed believe that given the questions Councillor Darling was going to ask Councillor Pease, it may have been anticipated that the meeting could have involved confrontation, and this was why Member of the Public 1 had wanted to record this particular meeting.
- 6.5 The audio recording provides additional context in respect of how the altercation started. It also provides confirmation that people were shouting for Councillor Darling to "stop" at the point the physical altercation started. As this

is an audio recording and not a video recording, it is less easy to determine the actions of the individuals present at the meeting.

- 6.6 Councillor Pease shared with the investigator that he was in possession of the audio recording made by Member of the Public 1. He advised the investigator that he believed this particular audio recording had been doctored in a way that portrayed him to be more of the aggressor. The investigator requested a copy of this audio recording from Councillor Pease. However he stated that he had already shared this with Mr Swinhoe. The investigator received an audio recording via e-mail from Mr Swinhoe on the 8 June 2024. The investigator has completed a transcript of the audio recording and compared it to the audio recording made by the Clerk. Both recordings are the same.
- 6.7 The facts of how the verbal altercation started are not in dispute. Councillor Darling asked Councillor Pease a number of questions during an Agenda Item entitled Ward Councillors Report. Councillor Darling and Councillor Pease then start to talk over each other, voices getting louder, about matters relating to finances and spending. Councillor Pease then responded in an agitated way and stood up pointing his finger in the table and towards Councillor Darling, calling him a prat.
- 6.8 However, there is a dispute in regard to who initiated the physical altercation, and who assaulted who. Councillor Pease accuses Councillor Darling of assaulting him by *"grabbing him round the neck, headbutting his nose resulting in blood on his shirt with cuts and bruises on his collarbone and arms."* Councillor Darling denies this, saying that Councillor Pease *"punched him first."*

7 Summary of evidence

Account of Member of the Public 1

- 7.1 Member of the Public 1 advised that [REDACTED] Councillor Darling and [REDACTED] had attended the meeting on 13 May 2024. Member of the Public 1 advised that [REDACTED] made [REDACTED] own recording of the meeting; [REDACTED] attends such meetings on a regular basis, and [REDACTED] believed [REDACTED] had a right to record the meeting, even though [REDACTED] did not ask anyone's consent or advise any parties of this beforehand.
- 7.2 Member of the Public 1 stated that Councillor Darling questioned Councillor Pease about some of the things he had said and done during his time as ward councillor. Member of the Public 1 believes this was done in a calm manner.
- 7.3 Member of the Public 1 is of the view that during the course of the conversation Councillor Pease became agitated and raised his voice in an aggressive manner. Member of the Public 1 stated that Councillor Pease said things like; *"you stuck your nose into my community fund"*. Member of the Public 1 stated that Councillor Marshall got up and said he was leaving the room and would come back when everybody could act in a calm and professional manner.

- 7.4 Member of the Public 1 stated that Councillor Pease got up from his chair and crossed the room and walked over to the table and leaned across Councillor Jean Walker and was pointing his finger at Councillor Darling saying; *"carry on running it as your fiefdom you can leave me out of it"*, before calling Councillor Darling a prat.
- 7.5 Member of the Public 1 stated that Councillor Pease then turned round and walked towards the open door which is when Councillor Darling got up and pushed the door towards Councillor Pease, he was on his way out.
- 7.6 Member of the Public 1 advised that Councillor Darling then got hold of Councillor Pease's shoulders and this is when [REDACTED] started shouting David's name. [REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED] saw Councillor Pease then hit Councillor Darling with a fist in his face and [REDACTED] started to try and pull Councillor Pease off Councillor Darling.
- 7.7 Member of the Public 1 stated that [REDACTED] was being pushed backwards and forwards and punches were being made. Member of the Public 1 saw Councillor Pease hit Councillor Darling twice, and [REDACTED] Member of the Public 2 and Councillor Jean Walker tried to separate them. Member of the Public 1 stated that in doing so Councillor Pease's glasses came off and caused a cut to the bridge of his nose.
- 7.8 Member of the Public 1 advised that [REDACTED] was hyperventilating and shaking, [REDACTED] was in shock. Member of the Public 1 reported that [REDACTED] had no idea that Councillor Darling was going to ask the questions that he did. Member of the Public 1 was of the view that it was unjust for someone to be allowed to punch another man in the face and get away with it which is why [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] reported the matter to the police as soon as they got home that night.
- 7.9 Member of the Public 1 declined to share a view on Councillor Darling's behaviours.

Account of Councillor Hazel Bullock

- 7.10 Councillor Bullock described the room and where everybody sat; on her right was Councillor Darling, with Councillor Pease and two members of the public sitting immediately to the right of the door. Councillor Bullock advised this door was open.
- 7.11 Councillor Bullock shared with the investigator that she had written her own notes immediately after the event and therefore her recollection is good. Councillor Bullock stated that Councillor Darling had come prepared with and A4 sized sheet of printed questions that he wanted to ask of Councillor Pease.
- 7.12 Councillor Bullock stated that Councillor Pease had started to try to respond to the first couple of points raised by Councillor Darling; but she began to get concerned that most of the points were nothing to do with council business. Councillor Bullock reported that both Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling started to raise their voices and became more aggressive.

- 7.13 Councillor Bullock stated that Councillor Marshall then stood up and announced to the meeting that he was leaving and expected to return when both parties had stopped arguing and left the room. Councillor Bullock stated that Councillor Pease then stood up as if to leave but leaned on the table pointing his finger at Councillor Darling whilst saying something that she did not hear. At this point she advised Councillor Darling removed his glasses pushed back his chair violently and stood up going towards the door slamming it shut before Councillor Pease could leave.
- 7.14 Councillor Bullock stated that Councillor Darling then “set upon CP” who reciprocated, with both men being locked in a very physical exchange of attempted punches and hair pulling. Councillor Bullock advised that CP’s glasses were knocked from his face and broke on the floor. Councillor Bullock described how Councillor Walker made efforts to separate the men, before Councillor Marshall returned to the room and took Councillor Pease outside.
- 7.15 Councillor Bullock stated that Councillor Darling then returned to his seat and when she asked him to leave, he refused. Councillor Bullock said she looked at the other councillors, who all appeared shocked; Councillor Darling then eventually left the room.
- 7.16 Councillor Bullock stated that following the meeting, she felt that Councillor Darling should be spoken to with a suggestion that he considered resigning due to the impact his behaviour had on his fellow councillors. Councillor Bullock was of the view that Councillor Darling verbally provoked CP, and while Councillor Pease was wrong to call Councillor Darling a prat, there was no excuse for the violence from Councillor Darling. She stated that the act of slamming the door shut was in her view the first act of aggression. Councillor Bullock did not see who threw the first punch, as both parties were locked together, and it was a very small space. Councillor Bullock believed Councillor Darling did not treat others in the meeting fairly or with respect and is not the behaviour of an officer in the public domain.

Account of Councillor Deborah Laing

- 7.17 Councillor Laing stated that she arrived at the meeting slightly late, at the point where Councillor Darling was asking Councillor Pease questions. Councillor Laing felt the questions were inappropriate. Councillor Laing stated that she was sat opposite Councillor Darling where she watched him “grill” CP, before Councillor Pease stood up and started pointing at Councillor Darling, saying; “you and your fiefdom”, calling Councillor Darling a prat.
- 7.18 Councillor Laing stated that she saw Councillor Darling take off his glasses and stand up going over towards Councillor Pease in a rugby type tackle and slamming the door. Councillor Laing stated it was like a wrestling match, and she could see Councillor Pease then punch Councillor Darling a few times. She could not see what Councillor Darling was doing due to the angle of where she was stood.

- 7.19 Councillor Laing stated that she could not believe what she was seeing and there was a lot of screaming going on, and the two members of public tried to split it up.

Account of Councillor Monty Brack

- 7.20 Councillor Brack stated that he was sat next to Councillor Darling. Councillor Brack felt that Councillor Darling was putting questions to Councillor Pease that were nothing to do with the parish council. He believed that Councillor Darling was “getting back at” Councillor Pease for previous issues between them.
- 7.21 Councillor Brack stated that Councillor Pease then came across to the table with his finger pointing and went as if he was going to leave the room. He stated that he saw Councillor Darling then get up and go towards Councillor Pease and there was a lot of pushing and shoving; he thinks that CP’s glasses also fell in the tussle.
- 7.22 Councillor Brack was of the view that both parties were as responsible as each other for the physical interaction.

Account of Councillor Simon Pleydell

- 7.23 Councillor Pleydell described how the meeting started, and then the agenda item for the ward councillor began, and Councillor Darling “started a whole lot of questions clearly pre prepared as they were printed on paper.”
- 7.24 Councillor Pleydell was of the view that this was provocation by Councillor Darling, and all the questions were asked in a way of a “barrage” rather than allowing Councillor Pease to respond.
- 7.25 Councillor Pleydell stated that the conversation continued to be heated and Councillor Pease stood up and leant over the table and called Councillor Darling a name which he can't exactly remember. Councillor Pleydell stated that Councillor Darling then took his glasses off, and also got up and then they started hitting each other. Councillor Pleydell stated that the incident was very fast, and he could not recall who hit who, he just remembered however that the door was shut, and that Councillor Jean Walker tried to separate them.
- 7.26 Councillor Pleydell was of the view that the two parties have a major disliking for each other, and he felt blame was attributed to both of them for the violence. Councillor Pleydell stated that he felt both individuals had equal opportunity to walk away and not do what they did.

Account of Councillor Les Foggett

- 7.27 Councillor Foggett stated this at the start of the meeting Councillor Darling produced an enormous “wad” of paper and proceeded to go through a list of things he had read and comments that Councillor Pease had allegedly made

on Facebook. He stated that this was not a lot to do with the parish council at all, and he considered that there was a grievance between the two because of the manner in which Councillor Darling was asking the questions.

- 7.28 Councillor Foggett stated that about 5 minutes into this Councillor Marshall said something similar to; “hang on let's stop this as it is getting personal and it's not parish council business”.
- 7.29 Councillor Foggett stated that it was at this time where Councillor Pease said; “*I'm not listening to any more of this you prat*” or words to that effect. He stated that Councillor Pease then got up to leave, but Councillor Darling jumped out of his seat and slammed the door shut in front of Councillor Pease stopping him leaving.
- 7.30 Councillor Foggett could not see who grabbed who first; the next thing both parties had hold of each other and punches were being thrown by both of them. He stated that Councillor Darling grabbed hold of CP's jacket lapels and then punches were thrown. During the conflict he stated that CP's glasses were knocked from his face and fell to the floor and broke and he also had a nasty mark on the side of his nose.
- 7.31 Councillor Foggett reported that Councillor Darling was restrained by Councillor Walker, both were still on their feet then she tried to get in between them. Councillor Foggett stated that she managed to separate them and then Councillor Pease left the room. He stated that it was then a unanimous vote for Councillor Darling to leave the meeting.
- 7.32 Councillor Foggett was of the view that Councillor Darling's response to being called a prat was a disproportionate action; he also advised Councillor Bullock that he felt Councillor Darling “*had broken every rule in the book and it was totally unacceptable*”.

Account of Mr Alan Macnab

- 7.33 Councillor Macnab stated at the start of the meeting Councillor Darling began to ask questions of CP, before they started shouting at each other. Councillor Macnab stated that Councillor Marshall intervened and stated that he was not prepared to sit in a meeting where there was so much friction. Councillor Marshall agreed that the questions being asked were not for this meeting; Councillor Marshall then left the room.
- 7.34 Councillor Macnab stated that Councillor Pease then tried to leave the room. He stated that there were raised voices between Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling; Councillor Darling then took his glasses off and laid them on the table in front of him and rose from his chair, moving towards the door as Councillor Pease was wanting to leave and physically assaulted Councillor Pease.
- 7.35 Councillor Macnab advised that he saw how Councillor Darling had his arm around Councillor Pease's head, and he recalled this was at the point where

Councillor Darling threw a punch at Councillor Pease's head causing his glasses to fly off. He stated that there was an air of shock in the room, and he heard somebody call for the police. He saw Councillor Pease struggling to get away and he looked shocked.

- 7.36 Councillor Macnab stated that Councillor Pease then left the building. Councillor Macnab stated that the chair of the meeting Councillor Bullock shared the view that the conduct of Councillor Darling was disgraceful, and he was asked to leave the meeting. Councillor Macnab was of the view that Councillor Darling should not have asked the questions he did, and they were totally irrelevant to the meeting. He advised that Councillor Pease then reacted to these questions, and this is when the matter escalated and ended up in violence.

Account of Councillor Adrian Marshall

- 7.37 Councillor Marshall stated that at the start of the meeting Councillor Darling went through a prepared sets of questions that he had typed on paper which had no bearing on the parish council and his attitude was very aggressive.
- 7.38 Councillor Marshall stated that initially Councillor Pease replied calmly, but it seemed that Councillor Darling became increasingly aggressive and as a result Councillor Pease became more agitated.
- 7.39 Councillor Marshall stated that he stood up and said he did not think that the questions were part of the meeting and that they should stop, and they should move on to which Councillor Bullock agreed.
- 7.40 Councillor Marshall reported that things were escalating, and he decided to make a gesture to try and make people see sense and therefore he stood up and said; "I'm not prepared to listen to this and will leave the room and only come back when this is calmed down."
- 7.41 Councillor Marshall said he then left the room, and after a short while he heard some noises and realised something was happening. Councillor Marshall reported that he then tried to open the door to go back in, but this was blocked, and he could not open it.
- 7.42 Councillor Marshall advised that he eventually did get into the room and saw Councillor Pease looking pretty shocked and upset with Councillor Darling; Councillor Pease's glasses were broken and then he took Councillor Pease outside, seeing blood on his shirt and there were abrasions on his nose.

Account of Councillor Maggie Beadle

- 7.43 Councillor Beadle wanted her account to remain factual and did not wish to provide opinion and therefore her statement was short. Councillor Beadle stated that Councillor Darling started to read from a list of pre prepared questions. She advised that then Councillor Darling stood up, paused and took a deep breath and turned and strode towards Councillor Pease.

7.44 Councillor Beadle stated that as he passed the door, Councillor Darling reversed his hand and pushed it away from him in order to get to Councillor Pease.

7.45 Councillor Beadle stated that Councillor Darling flung his right arm around CP's neck and punched him three times in the face; Councillor Pease's glasses flew off.

7.46 Councillor Beadle could not recall much more as people then began to rise from their seats. Councillor Beadle was of the view that Councillor Darling has physically assaulted Councillor Pease; she was very shocked.

Account of Member of the Public 2

7.47 Member of the Public 2 stated that she attended the meeting held on the 13 May 2024 as she wanted to become a parish councillor. She stated that she sat with Member of the Public 1 on one side and Councillor Pease on the other.

7.48 Member of the Public 2 stated that Councillor Darling started to ask questions of Councillor Pease regarding his conduct and Councillor Pease was taken aback by this. Member of the Public 2 advised that it was awkward to listen to.

7.49 Member of the Public 2 stated that the questions continued, and Councillor Macnab stood up saying something like he was leaving until the issues were resolved and then left the room. Member of the Public 2 reported that Councillor Pease then stood up placing his hands on the table leaning over; both parties were shouting at this point and Councillor Pease called Councillor Darling a prat.

7.50 Member of the Public 2 stated that Councillor Darling immediately got up and either pushed the door shut or slammed it (there was a loud bang) and this is when Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling interlocked; Councillor Darling had hold of Councillor Pease with his arms around him and Councillor Pease was the same.

7.51 Member of the Public 2 explained how a lady from the parish council tried to get them off each other; she was completely shocked. Member of the Public 2 explained that at one point they were just "ragging each other around".

7.52 Member of the Public 2 stated that Councillor Pease threw a right punch to which she then stood up as she did not want the ladies getting an elbow in their faces and then stood between both men. Member of the Public 2 stated that Councillor Pease then threw another punch, and she screamed for both parties to get off each other as there were ladies present.

7.53 Member of the Public 2 stated that Councillor Pease's glasses hit the floor in the struggle; Councillor Pease then went outside, and Councillor Darling sat

down. Member of the Public 2 felt that both parties were at fault and the violence should not have happened.

Account of Councillor Pease

- 7.54 Councillor Pease made a complaint to Darlington Borough Council on the 15 May 2024 about the conduct of Councillor Darling at the Parish Council meeting.
- 7.55 Councillor Pease advised that he arrived at the Parish Council meeting at 6:30pm on Monday 13 May 2024. He explained that item 3 is the ward councillor's report, and he reported that he did not have any major issues to discuss in his recent work. Councillor Pease advised the meeting that he was happy to take questions.
- 7.56 Councillor Pease reports that Councillor Darling *"promptly started to read off a pre prepared list of complaints against him"*. Councillor Pease was of the view these questions had not been approved by the Parish Council and they were all unaware of Councillor Darling's intended action.
- 7.57 Councillor Pease describes it as a "tirade" of questions which he tried to address each point in turn. Councillor Pease stated that Councillor Darling spoke constantly toward him and reeled off many questions one after the other. Councillor Pease describes Councillor Darling as *"aggressive in his tone and very provocative"*.
- 7.58 Councillor Pease said that he continued to try and answer the questions, but Councillor Darling kept interrupting him and therefore it was very difficult to keep track, and the situation became more and more heated. Councillor Pease stated that there were raised voices from both of them as he was trying to respond back. Councillor Pease then said that Councillor Marshall commented that that he felt the conversation was inappropriate and that he was going to leave.
- 7.59 Councillor Pease advised that it was at this point he stated something similar to "well so am I because I don't need this" at which Councillor Darling then took his glasses off and stood up and stomped down the side of the room. Councillor Pease described Councillor Darling's face as bursting with anger; but that he was not expecting Councillor Darling to "leap" on him.
- 7.60 Councillor Pease stated that he first recalled that the door near him that had been ajar was pushed shut by Councillor Darling, so that he could get closer to him. Councillor Pease reports being shocked and surprised that Councillor Darling attacked him, and he was ducking down to try and get his glasses off when Councillor Darling grabbed him around the neck, and he thinks that Councillor Darling head butted his nose.
- 7.61 Councillor Pease advised that the incident happened very quickly, and he was struggling to recall the exact events. Councillor Pease reported that there was blood on his shirt, and he honestly could not understand how he

ended up with cuts and bruises on his collarbone and arms. Councillor Pease stated that during the incident his left arm was trapped against Councillor Darling, therefore he used his right hand to try and hit Councillor Darling to get him off.

7.62 Councillor Pease stated that he noticed other councillors were then trying to grab Councillor Darling off him, with people shouting things like; *“David, what are you doing”*. Councillor Pease recalled that he then said; *“this is an assault I’m going to report you to the police and these glasses you have just broken cost £325, what is the matter with you?”*.

7.63 Councillor Pease advised that they were then both separated by the councillors, and somebody asked him if he would like a glass of water and to sit down. He stated that Councillor Marshall and then Councillor Bullock followed him out and apologised.

7.64 Councillor Pease shared a photograph with the investigator of the injuries he received as a result. He had explained that his nose was red and bruised and he had cuts near his collarbone where the blood had dripped on to his shirt and he has a curved cut on his left shoulder as well as a bruise on his left arm as if he had been grabbed.

Account of Councillor David Darling

7.65 Councillor Darling stated that he decided to question Councillor Pease on matters that he had written on a list in respect of funding and his attitude with the council and criticism of a colleague. Councillor Darling stated that his questions were pointed directly to Councillor Pease about specific things that had happened either with or by him. Therefore, he appreciates that Councillor Pease may have felt uncomfortable.

7.66 Councillor Darling stated that Councillor Pease stood up from his seat and leant over a parish councillor and he was banging the table with his finger and saying something similar to; *“I could keep the parish council fiefdom”* and he (Councillor Pease) was getting more and more angry.

7.67 Councillor Darling stated that Councillor Pease then got up and walked towards the door and called him a prat. Councillor Darling advised that he wanted Councillor Pease out of the meeting, and this is why he also then stood up and went to shut the door.

7.68 Councillor Darling stated that Councillor Pease then punched him once or twice. Councillor Darling did not recall shutting the door in order to stop Councillor Pease getting out. But he accepts he must have got up quickly from his seat, as Councillor Pease was already stood near the door.

7.69 Councillor Darling was certain that Councillor Pease punched him first in the cheek, and in response he (Councillor Darling) pushed the flat hand up against Councillor Pease’s chin. Councillor Darling denied getting Councillor Pease in a headlock.

- 7.70 Councillor Darling could not recall hearing anybody saying they were going to call the police, and he also could not recall anything about Councillor Pease's glasses. Councillor Darling could also not say how Councillor Pease sustained a cut to his nose or any other parts to his body, but he does wear a heavy watch which may have connected whilst he was trying to get his palm under Councillor Pease's chin.
- 7.71 Councillor Darling stated that the incident happened over a very short space of time and the altercation was broken up by other councillors and members of the public including [REDACTED]
- 7.72 Councillor Darling reports that he was not aware until after the event that [REDACTED] had been audio recording the meeting. Councillor Darling advised that after the incident he went back into the meeting room and there was a unanimous vote for him not to remain in the meeting which he understands, and he also appreciates that people were shocked.
- 7.73 Councillor Darling advised that he has seen the Codes of Conduct.
- 7.74 Councillor Darling was of the view that both himself and Councillor Pease have acted in an unreasonable way.
- 7.75 The investigator asked Councillor Darling if he felt there was any time he could have walked away from the situation to prevent the altercation. Councillor Darling found this was difficult to say as it all happened very quickly.

Analysis of the audio recording (appendix 2)

- 7.76 The investigator has received 2 audio recordings. One is from Member of the Public 1 and one is from the Clerk. Both of these recordings contain the same information in the same order and there is no difference between them.
- 7.77 On the audio recording you can hear how Councillor Darling asks Councillor Pease a lot of questions one after the other without allowing Councillor Pease opportunity to respond. The questions are direct and personal. Some of the parish councillors interject advising that this was not appropriate for this meeting. You can then hear Councillor Marshall advise that he is going to leave the room saying;

05.37 - "I'm going to suggest that people calm down and then when I come back maybe I think we should just continue the meeting in a calm and professional way".

- 7.78 Councillor Pease is then heard to say;

05.39 - "well you can carry on running it as your little fiefdom without me" and then; 05.53 - "sorry I'm not listening to that Prat".

7.79 Loud noises can then be heard with Councillor Bullock saying;

05.54 - "Colin Colin excuse me Colin"

7.80 You can then hear a loud door slamming and somebody's voice saying;

06.09 - "*no David, David, stop*" and Councillor Bullock saying "*for goodness sake have some dignity David stop.*"

7.81 There is then another noise seemingly like a scuffle before another person says;

06.27 - "*no hey Colin, Colin Colin stop it, David. Enough enough enough. David now please there are women in here now enough David sit down.*"

7.82 The voices are clearly loud, shouting and can be described as scared.

7.83 Councillor Pease then says;

06.29 - "*what is the matter with you*" and somebody saying; "*David you will end up having a stroke doing that sit down.*"

7.84 The audio recording then seems to show things as calmer with it apparent that the altercation has ceased. There is some conversation before Councillor Bullock says;

07.16 - "*I invite Councillor David Darling to leave the meeting now I really don't feel that we should be here after the outburst*" "(inaudible) *with behaviour of parish councillors and consider action because that was completely unprecedented and disgraceful it was just ridiculous, and I don't particularly want you in the meeting.*"

8 Further analysis of the potential breaches of the Code of Conduct

8.1 The most relevant parts of the Code of Conduct are respect (Section 1) and disrepute (Section 5), which are set out below:

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

(explanatory text):

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack. In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors. In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor- officer protocol.

- 8.2 Councillor Darling had commenced asking Councillor Pease a set of questions that were pre prepared on a printed piece of paper. This is described by some as being "a tirade" or "barrage" from an "enormous wad of paper". The majority felt the questions were not relevant for that particular meeting and Councillor Darling himself accepts that his questioning was direct and he could understand why Councillor Pease may have felt uncomfortable.
- 8.3 Councillor Pease is reported to have responded to these questions initially quite calmly. Most witnesses report that the continued questioning made Councillor Pease more agitated. The tone of both Councillor Darling and Councillor Pease becomes less civil.
- 8.4 Councillor Marshall interjects and seeks to calm matters. This did not work, and the exchanges become more heated. At this point Councillor Marshall says he is going to leave the meeting and suggests people calm down. At this stage it relates to the verbal conduct of both parties (Councillor Darling and Councillor Pease)
- 8.5 Councillor Pease says he is also leaving and before doing so makes comments to Councillor Darling about; "your fiefdom", and says that he is "not listening to that prat". Almost all of those present at the meeting also described how Councillor Pease stood up and used his finger to jab at the table or lean towards Councillor Darling whilst using these words.
- 8.6 The reaction by Councillor Pease could be seen as acting in a threatening or intimidating manner. This could be seen as showing a lack of respect towards Councillor Darling. There was also an option for Councillor Pease to act in a more appropriate manner. There then has to be the question asked, that if Councillor Pease had responded more appropriately and calmly, whether the subsequent physical altercation could have been avoided.
- 8.7 Witnesses then describe that Councillor Darling then stood up and took his glasses off placing them on the table before very quickly moving towards the

door and slamming it shut as Councillor Pease was going to leave the room. This was seen by the majority of those present as an act of aggression towards Councillor Pease. It is not unreasonable therefore that Councillor Pease's natural reaction was to perceive this act as apprehending violence.

- 8.8 Legally a common assault is when a person inflicts violence on someone else or makes them think they are going to be attacked. It does not have to involve actual physical violence. The act of removing glasses and then slamming the door to prevent someone leaving, could have made Cllr Pease to apprehend he was about to be attacked.
- 8.9 The investigator then has to consider whether Councillor Pease's reaction to this apprehension of violence and the way in which Councillor Darling took hold of Councillor Pease (allegedly round the neck in a rugby type grasp), was appropriate, proportionate and entirely in self-defence.
- 8.10 It is not in dispute that there was physical contact between Cllr Darling and Cllr Pease. There is conflicting evidence on precisely what happened but there is clear evidence from a number of witnesses that Councillor Darling was the first person and solely responsible to initially physically engage with Councillor Pease. This was unwelcome and Councillor Pease resisted by way of trying to punch Councillor Darling "off" him. The recording has voices telling both Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling to stop.
- 8.11 The physical engagement by Cllr Darling could be viewed as an assault perpetrated by Councillor Darling. This could be seen to be showing a lack of respect towards Councillor Pease. In such a circumstance it would be reasonable for a person to use proportionate acts to defend themselves. An issue is whether using a clenched fist to punch an individual off them if they are being grabbed around the neck could be considered as a proportionate and natural reaction to being attacked.
- 8.12 The investigator has also examined the photographic images of Councillor Pease's bruising, scratches and blood marks to his face area which are consistent with somebody being attacked as he describes alongside the witnesses, by Councillor Darling.
- 8.13 Overall there are 2 separate aspects that could be considered as failing to treat with respect by Cllr Pease;
- a) Councillor Pease's response to Councillor Darling's questions when he pointed his finger and called Councillor Darling a "prat".
 - b) Councillor Pease's response, by use of a clenched fist to punch Councillor Darling after being grabbed and held around the neck by Cllr Darling.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

- 5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.**

(explanatory text):

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute. You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct bringing the role of councillor or the authority into disrepute.

- 8.14 Words used to describe the verbal and physical altercation have been "disgraceful", "unprofessional", "ragging each other around". Most of those in attendance portray a feeling of shock, Member of the Public 1 specifically states that [REDACTED] was shaking.
- 8.15 The audio recording evidence is shouting, screaming, and voices that you would describe as being in shock. The audio recording you can hear people shouting loudly things such as; *"David, David, stop". "Please have some dignity" "I have never experienced aggression like that" "completely unprecedented behaviour" "enough, enough, now please there are women here"*
- 8.16 All those interviewed described how Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling were interlocked in a physical altercation with each other. Some of these descriptions do vary, which is understandable given the fast pace of the incident and the different positions people would have been seeing this from.
- 8.17 Councillor Bullock states; *"Councillor Darling then "set upon CP" who reciprocated, with both men being locked in a very physical exchange of attempted punches and hair pulling".*
- 8.18 Councillor Laing stated; *"she saw Councillor Darling take off his glasses and stand up going over towards Councillor Pease in a rugby type tackle and slamming the door. Councillor Laing stated it was like a wrestling match, and she could see Councillor Pease then punch Councillor Darling a few times. She could not see what Councillor Pease was doing due to the angle of where she was stood".*
- 8.19 Councillor Foggett stated; *"Councillor Darling grabbed hold of Councillor Pease's jacket lapels and then punches were thrown."*
- 8.20 Councillor Macnab stated; *"Councillor Darling had his arm around Councillor Pease's head and he recalled this was at the point where Councillor Darling threw a punch at Councillor Pease's head causing his glasses to fly off."*

- 8.21 Councillor Beadle stated; *“Councillor Darling flung his right arm around CP’s neck and punched him three times in the face; CP’s glasses flew off.”*
- 8.22 Councillor Darling denies this and advised that Councillor Pease punched him first.
- 8.23 Both Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling agree they were in a physical altercation together. Councillor Darling believes both he and Councillor Pease have acted inappropriately. Councillor Pease is of the view that he was inappropriately verbally and physically attacked.
- 8.24 Determining whether these provisions of the code of conduct have been breached is an issue for the panel and will likely depend on the panel’s view of the conduct of Cllr Pease as a whole, prior to the physical engagement, during and afterwards.
- 8.25 A matter to be considered is whether the conduct that is established has lowered the public's confidence. It is specifically noted that two members of the public were present during this meeting. The incident was something that the wider public have become aware of, and it has been picked up on social media and by the press.

9 Issues for consideration by the panel

- 9.1 The panel is asked to determine whether the following provisions of the Code of Conduct for Members have been breached:
- (a) Paragraph 3 (1) – “you must treat others with respect”
 - (b) Paragraph 5 – “you must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office as a member or the Council into disrepute”
- 9.2 To assist in decision making, the panel may find it helpful to consider the following issues:
- (a) The definition of bringing into disrepute, is conduct that could potentially damage the public's perception of the individual or the authority. If that individual is representing the local authority, then their behaviour could also lower the public's confidence in the local authority.
 - (b) A Councillor whose actions provoked or caused a physical confrontation during a parish council meeting could be viewed as bringing their role as a parish councillor into disrepute and also the local authority.

10 Recommendation

It is my conclusion that the evidence does not entirely support the complainants' views (Member of the Public 1).

The evidence shows that Councillor Darling has asked a number of questions that were critical of Councillor Pease and initially without allowing him to respond. This led to the reaction from Councillor Pease, in my view he failed to treat Councillor Darling with respect. It was open to Councillor Pease to respond in a different manner. With hindsight, a better and more polite and collected response may have prevented the following physical altercation taking place.

It is my view that the matter was then escalated by Councillor Darling standing up taking his glasses off and then, by aggressively slamming a door preventing Councillor Pease from leaving. The majority of evidence supports a view that Councillor Darling initiated the physical altercation by grabbing hold of Councillor Pease's neck. This led to punches being thrown. In my view Councillor Pease has acted in reasonable and proportionate self-defence in trying to get his attacker off him.

My recommendation is that this matter should proceed to a hearing so that the panel can consider, and determine, whether there has been a breach of the following provisions of the code of conduct:

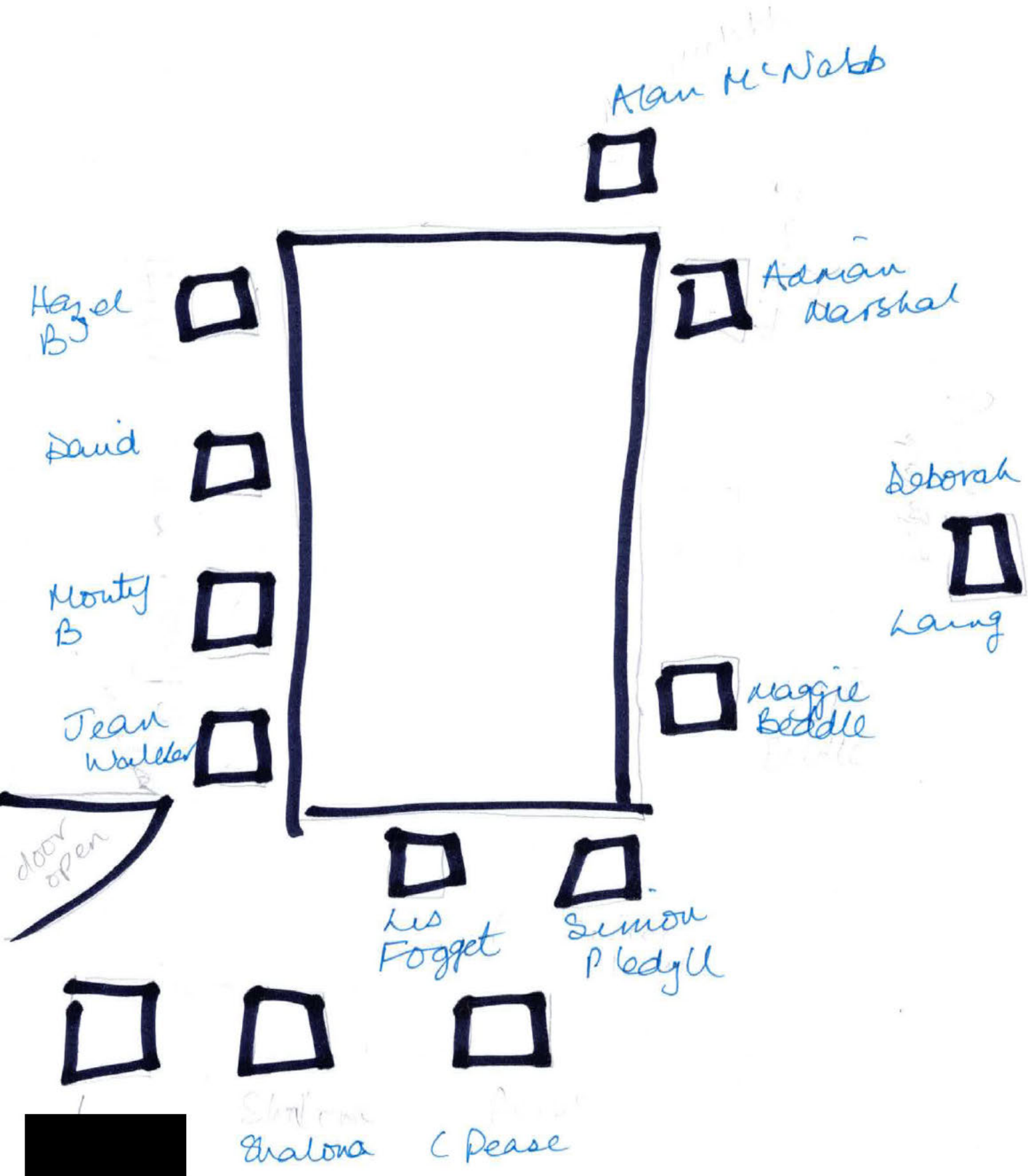
- a) Paragraph 3 (1) – “you must treat others with respect”
- b) Paragraph 5 – “you must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your office as a member or the Council into disrepute”

Investigator's signature:

[Ellie Dewar]

Date: 6 December 2024

MSG PC Meeting 13 May. Room Layout



Transcript of Parish Council Meeting	
Date:	13 May 2024
Venue:	Middleton-St-George Parish Hall

Colin Pease	On a wide range of things, but if you've got any questions or observations from me that I need to take away, that's fine.
Hazel Bullock	Colleagues / Councillors have any questions or comments? No. Anybody
David Darling	Yes, I have. Councillor Pease, can I ask you what it is that you do as your job description for the consti, sorry the ward that you represent
Colin Pease	Well, there aren't any terms of reference if that's what you mean, it seems to be whatever the residents want me to do and look after the welfare and well-being of the ward. Why do you ask?
David Darling	Right
Colin Pease	Why do you ask?
David Darling	Well, because it seems to me that several people have been complaining about your posts on your website. Sorry, on your on Facebook.
Colin Pease	Several?
David Darling	You criticise the Parish Council regarding the play park
Colin Pease	No I didn't
David Darling	And an inactive swing, and yet you didn't even bother to show up for the public consultation that we had on Saturday, which I found disappointing. You question why 106 funds should be made available to the Community Centre for the new car park? You question 106 funds for the Community Centre outdoor gym equipment, which incidentally is having an earlier inspection by suppliers because of its tremendous use. You complained that the Community Centre's receiving funds from Story homes, which were identified at the planning meeting and asked for by the Community Centre £5000. And then the stronger communities fund of which we all know the councillors have £1000. I understand you gave £500 to the medical centre. It's a business. Why? And the other thing, of course, that I find particularly interesting is the fact that you cause dissent within the village when criticising the officers of Darlington Borough Council, and then the last thing I'd like to ask you is why on earth you think that you can order John Lynn, a litter picker, to do something down by the water park? Do you want to answer those for me please?
Colin Pease	Well there's quite a list there.

David Darling	Well, would you like a copy?
Colin Pease	Yes, certainly, that would certainly aid my responses
David Darling	I'll send it to you.
'Colin Pease	Well, I need to answer now really. What? What was your first one?
David Darling	The first one, why do you? Well actually it wasn't the first one. You criticised the Parish council regarding the play park and it's now active swing.
Colin Pease	No, I didn't.
David Darling	Oh you didn't?
Colin Pease	I put on as I discussed with Alan it was a little humorous comment. I know it was going to get fixed, and I said in the post that it was going to get fixed, so that's just taken completely out of proportion as usual. What was your next one?
David Darling	106 funds being made available to the Community Centre for the new car park.
Colin Pease	Yes, I merely enquired and this goes back to the five grand. I was at the planning meeting
David Darling	Yes
Colin Pease	When Deborah quite rightly you know, got Story's to cough up 5 grand. I had a chat with Dave Coates and that was going to go to a community fund.
David Darling	Yes
Colin Pease	Next thing and it should be some discussion about where that money goes. I then read the Section 106, which has automatically gone to the Community Centre. Now I haven't got a problem with the community getting funding. What I'm querying and it is a query, it's not a complaint. That you've had about 150 grand in the past year going to the Community Centre and that's great. Don't get me wrong, but what about the rest of the ward? No one else seems to have had anything. I mean, correct me if I'm wrong.
David Darling	Well, I think.
Colin Pease	So I'm not criticising, I am pointing out.
David Darling	You are because because Darlington Borough Council. Sorry. Darlington Borough Council gave this parish council £43,000 two and a half, three years, sorry two and a half years ago to spend on the INAUDIBLE. Because there was no activity. Because there was no activity.
Deborah Laing	We're getting
Adrian Marshall	I've got a problem.
David Darling	So did Deborah want to say something.
Adrian Marshall	Could could, could I say? Well, sorry. This is the parish council meeting.

	Can I say something? I read that there seems to be some friction between David, who is has his view, and Colin, who obviously has his view. I don't think this is part of a parish council meeting.
David Darling	Fine. I'll take it outside the meeting.
Colin Pease	Well, it is when I get criticised.
David Darling	And right on, Sir.
Adrian Marshall	Look, I mean, this seems to be a bit a bit personal here and and really I I don't think this is the the the time to to be doing this.
Hazel Bullock	I agree.
Adrian Marshall	I mean we've got an agenda. This was the Ward Councillor's report. I think we should be moving on with the agenda.
Hazel Bullock	Thank you. Thank you. I appreciate that, Adrian. Also a number of your points there are historic, they've been dealt with, conversations have been had and it's all been sorted
David Darling	But it's still being raised by our Council.
Hazel Bullock	I'm not quite sure whether you're right
Colin Pease	Yes, I'm asking questions and for you to just stick your nose in what I do with my stronger communities fund?
Hazel Bullock	But Colin, Colin. Colin. Please
David Darling	Oh yes, why not, you gave away £500. Something you should not have done
Colin Pease	Yes, and it's been removed
Speaker	Stop David, show a bit of sense and stop
Adrian Marshall	INAUDIBLE I'm going to. I'm gonna leave the meeting. I'm going to suggest that people calm down, and then when I come back, maybe I think we should just continue with the meeting in a calm and professional way.
Colin Pease	Well you can just carry on running it as your little fiefdom without me.
Hazel Bullock	Colin. Colin.
Speaker	Excuse me, Colin.
Colin Pease	I'm sorry INAUDIBLE. I'm not listening to that prat. Right.
Hazel Bullock	No, I'm not. INAUDIBLE
Speaker	Listen to someone else
Colin Pease	No, I will not

00:06:05	DOOR SLAMS <i>The following section may not be entirely accurate due to the volume of people speaking at the same time, and the noise in the background affecting clarity</i>
MP1	No. David, David, Stop
Hazel Bullock	For goodness sake have some dignity, David stop
Speaker	No, hey Colin, Colin Colin, stop it, David Enough. Enough, enough. Now enough. No, no. David, enough now please, there are women in here now enough, David, sit down now now now End up having a stroke
Colin Pease	What the hell is the matter with you?
Davd Darling	This is terrible
Speaker	David, You will end up having a stroke doing that. Sit down
Hazel Bullock	And sit down and. That's terrible. Sorry
Colin Pease	He broke my
Speaker	INAUDIBLE
Hazel Bullock	It doesn't matter
Colin Pease	Bloody nut case
Speaker	Yeah he is
Hazel Bullock	Yeah. Don't say anymore Colin please.
Colin Pease	And am I?
Hazel Bullock	No, I understand. Just just sit down a moment. Do you want me to get you a drink?
Colin Pease	No. You'll get a bill for them, £325
Hazel Bullock	I would like to invite councillor Darling to leave the meeting now, I really don't feel that we should be here after that outburst. I'm sorry. Please take the papers and go
Speaker	I'm sorry about that
David Darling	No, I'm staying
Hazel Bullock	Right. Well, I think we'll have to look at the papers to do with behaviour of parish councillors and consider action, because that was completely unprecedented and and disgraceful, I was just. It was just ridiculous and I don't particularly want you in the meeting. I don't think my fellow councillors want you either.
David Darling	Perhaps we should take a vote
Speaker	Right, we'll take a vote
Hazel Bullock	All right then, yeah. Then we'll take the vote. Would you please say whether you would like Councillor Darling to remain in the meeting? Well, the moment, Adrian (inaudible). We need. I'm sorry, but I agree that we should go. You should go. I do. I think I think it'd be better for. I have never experienced aggression like that.

Speaker	I agree that he should go
Speaker	I do too
Speaker	I have never experienced aggression like that
Adrian Marshall	Colin's note pad. OK.
Speaker	No, this is his note pad.
Hazel Bullock	Yeah. He's got the wrong one. Do you want to take it out?

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Cllr Colin Pease
Role / position	DBC Councillor, Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	17 July 2024
Time	1pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Whilst Cllr Pease had already made a complaint about the events that took place on 13 May 2024, and provided a statement for that to the investigator, this statement is in response to the allegations of complaints made by Member of the Public 1.

- 1.1 Cllr Colin Pease (CP) started by explaining his role and a background summary leading up to the events that happened on the 13 May 2024. This statement is written in CP's own words.
- 1.2 Cllr Dave Darling (DD), is a parish councillor and was co-opted on about 2 months ago. He is the chairman and acting treasurer of the community centre; I don't know him other than that. Before the election last year, he called to my house to see if I wanted to be a trustee on the community centre, but I declined. This was the first time I had met him.
- 1.3 At the May 2023 local government election both Member of the Public 1 and DD had wanted to stand as Conservative candidates in the Sadberge and Middleton St. George Ward. The problem was that it's a three member ward and two Conservative candidates had been selected. Member of the Public 1 was selected to be third Conservative candidate. There was then an unsuccessful attempt to get

Mr Darling selected in place of one of the two selected candidates which led to Member of the Public 1 ceasing to be a Conservative candidate.

- 1.4 I was then approached by former Cllr Mike Renton to be a conservative councillor, and he put my name forward. I then stood for the election, DD and Member of the Public 1 were put out by this and decided to stand as independent councillors and they lost and did not take it well. Ultimately DD and Member of the Public 1 want me out.
- 1.5 Since starting my role I have been very active and have gained popularity within the community. I have also been asking questions about the community centre, and asking why all of the developer S106 monies all seem to go to the community centre rather than other opportunities. I believe this may have antagonised DD, as one of his friends and trustees is Cllr Deborah Laing, who happens to be on the Council Planning Committee and has some influence on the allocation of S106 contributions.
- 1.6 Recently, new developers have agreed to put £5000 into the community fund and I asked the Head of Planning for a discussion to be held in order to agree how the money was used. However, it was immediately allocated to the community centre at Cllr Laing's request without any discussion. [REDACTED] do not like me asking questions about the money, whilst we have so many other clubs and activities that could benefit. I like to see the community centre doing well but not to the detriment of anyone else.
- 1.7 One of the things DD raised in his questions at the meeting on the 13 May 2024, was me allocating a £1000 grant to various causes. I gave £500 to a school for a sensory garden. We have a new Dr surgery, and I gave them £500 to either set up a charity or buy chairs for the waiting room. Mr Darling took umbridge with this and said it was a private business and I wasn't allowed. I had previously cleared this with the cabinet holder who agreed this was OK. However, to keep the peace I gave the money back (about 2-3 months ago, which was 2 weeks before the Parish council meeting).

On the 13 May, the Parish council had a meeting (parish council building in MSG, behind the community centre).

CP was asked to describe the room.

- 1.8 The room is a rectangle, and the entrance is the bottom left, and I was sat 2-3 chairs in from that. DD was halfway – 2/3 along the left-hand side. The meeting is relatively informal, and we stay seated when we are speaking. Only the parish councillors can sit at the table; CP and members of the public do not sit at the table as they are not part of the Parish council. Sat on my left was Member of the Public 2 [REDACTED] and on her left was Member of the Public 1 sat by the door in the corner. Halfway up on the right there is a bench where Cllr Laing was sitting. Between myself and DD, there was roughly 15 feet.
- 1.9 During the meeting I spoke about Item 3 on the agenda (Ward Councillors Report). I briefed them on what I was working on and then questions would go

to and fro. I reported that I did not have any major issues to discuss as my recent work had focussed on resident queries and assistance. However, I advised the meeting I was happy to take questions; initially nobody had questions.

- 1.10 After a pause, DD promptly started to read off a pre-prepared list of complaints against me. Most were trivia and deliberately misconstrued humour. This had not been approved by the Parish Council and they were unaware of his intended action.
- 1.11 DD should have pre warned the parish council that he was going to do this, but he didn't (I would say this was a code rule and this was why there is an agenda).
- 1.12 DD spoke constantly and reeled off many questions one after the other, he was aggressive in his tone and very provocative "why are you doing this / why are you doing that". I would say he was speaking for a good minute. I think Cllr Marshall might have said something like "this isn't right for the Parish Council meeting", as they were not Parish issues he was raising.
- 1.13 Whilst I was trying to answer the questions, DD kept interrupting again so it was very difficult to keep it on track and because he was interrupting, it became more and more heated.
- 1.14 There were raised voices from both of us as I was trying to respond back "look, it is actually my job to query these things, they are not complaints but questions about where the money is being spent" Cllr Marshall said it was inappropriate and he was going to leave, although he did not do so straight away.
- 1.15 It was at this point I said "well so am I because I don't need this" DD then took his glasses off and stood up and stomped down the side of the room. His face was bursting with anger and as he got to me, I stood up – I thought he was going to poke me in the chest for example. I was not expecting him to leap on me, I still had my glasses on and a book and a pen.
- 1.16 First of all I recall that the door near me was ajar, and he pushed it shut to get past it to get to me. I was so shocked and surprised, he attacked me, and it was so quick I am struggling to recall what hit me first.
- 1.17 I was ducking down trying to get my glasses off and he grabbed me round the head, I think he head butted my nose, there was blood on my shirt. I honestly can't think how I ended up with cuts and bruises on my arms, my left arm was trapped against him and I used my right hand to try and hit him off me.
- 1.18 I noticed that parish councillors were then trying to grab DD off me. I cannot recall exactly who was doing this, as it was all in a flurry, there were at least two of them who had come to help and pull him off, there was not much room.
- 1.19 I heard people shouting, "David what are you doing" by a few people and when they got him off me, I definitely said "that is assault, and I am going to report

you to police and these glasses you have just broken cost £325 – what is the matter with you?”.

- 1.20 We were then separated by councillors, and someone said to me “are you OK, want to sit down / glass of water” and then Adrian Marshall followed by Cllr Hazel Bullock followed me out and apologised – they were very nice and tried to calm me down and make sure I was ok. I then drove home with one lens in my glasses.
- 1.21 Cllr Marshall and Cllr Maggie Beadle called me later that night to check I was OK.
- 1.22 My injuries as a result, are visible in the photographs I have shared, my nose was red and bruised, I have cuts near my collar bone where blood had dripped on my shirt, and a curved cut on my left shoulder. I had a bruise on my left arm as if I had been grabbed.
- 1.23 I have since been told by Luke Swinhoe, that Member of the Public 1 was recording all of this on her phone - however [REDACTED] had not told anyone of this before the meeting which I do not believe is appropriate or allowed.
- 1.24 Cllr Les Foggett and the Parish Clerk Alan Macnab will have a copy of the full official recording as they record all meetings, which I was not aware of until recently and I am not sure if DD and Member of the Public 1 were aware either.
- 1.25 The clerk has sent me the Parish Council recording which I forwarded to Luke Swinhoe. I have listened to both recordings, and I believe Member of the Public 1 recording to be incomplete. This is because you cannot hear anyone saying for DD to leave, and there is nothing on there about my glasses being broken. Cllr Laing, Member of the Public 2 and Member of the Public 1 will be in support of DD, and they are not independent.
- 1.26 In my opinion, this event was a pre-planned set-up. In terms of his conduct, I can confirm that DD did not act respectfully, was not polite or courteous in his behaviour and this was not a debate. He was aggressive, intimidating, and then assaulted me.
- 1.27 His comments in response to my report were also a personal attack rude and offensive and not relevant for the meeting itself. I believe that DD’s actions have lowered the public's confidence. I would certainly consider him to be deceitful and his behaviour wholly inappropriate conduct for a council member.
- 1.28 I had another listen to the recording, and it is obvious, DD apologised to the PC but they threw him out. This whole thing was a set-up, the list of questions had not been passed by the PC and Member of the Public 1 had not advised that [REDACTED] was recording the meeting.
- 1.29 DD had me in a headlock, and I did punch him to get him off me – I had a book and pen in my hand and I still do not recall how I got the blood and cuts on me.

- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: Colin Pease (via email)

Date; 18 July 2024

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Hazel Bullock
Role / position	Parish Councillor and chair at the time of this incident Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	19 June 2024
Time	3.00pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Hazel Bullock was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

- 1.1 A week after the meeting I stood down as chair, something I had discussed with the Clerk and Vice Chair a month before.
- 1.2 I am very conscious this needs to be my perspective, as we were all seeing it from different angles.
- 1.3 The room is a small room with 1 door from the outside street to a lobby and then into the room. Cllr Pease and 2 others were sitting immediately on the right of that door. As you go into the room on the left is a big table where we were all sat, and I was at the back, furthest away from the door. On my right was Cllr Darling and 2 other PC beyond him.
- 1.4 The door to the room opens inwards.

- 1.5 I have written notes from immediately after the event, with my thoughts included.
- 1.6 CP has not attended meetings for a while, and he was present on this one.
- 1.7 We have a Councillor Les Foggett who records the meeting and the clerk then uses / checks this for minutes.
- 1.8 **Agenda item 3 - Ward Councillor's report** (Cllr Pease present). Ward Councillor Pease (CP) had nothing specific to report and asked if councillors had any questions. Most indicated 'no questions'.
- 1.9 Cllr Darling (DD) however, said he had several questions. (I was sitting beside Cllr Darling and could see he had a prepared sheet, A4 size, listing points he wanted to make.)
- 1.10 DD stated all the points on his list. CP asked for a copy of the points so he could respond. DD said he would email them later.
- 1.11 CP then started to respond to the first couple of points. (I was concerned that most of the points were nothing to do with Council business but more to do with the Community Centre of which DD is Chair and Treasurer. However, both men had started to raise their voices over one another, and I didn't feel able to voice my view)
- 1.12 The Vice Chair, Cllr Marshall (AM) did speak out stating that this was not Council business, and both should have the discussion elsewhere and at another time. (My feeling was that, because voices were raised and becoming more aggressive, neither of the protagonists heard what was said)
- 1.13 AM then stood and told the meeting he was leaving the room and expected to return when both parties had stopped arguing. He left the room hoping that this gesture would break the pattern.
- 1.14 CP stood up as if to leave but then leaned on the table, pointed his finger at DD and said something (I do not remember what was actually said but I felt he wanted the last word) At that point, DD removed his glasses, pushed his chair back violently, stood and moved to slam the door shut before CP could leave.
- 1.15 He then set upon CP who reciprocated and both men were locked in a very physical exchange of attempted punches and hair pulling. CP's glasses were knocked from his face and broken. Sometime during this altercation, the second member of the public [REDACTED] in attendance left the building.
- 1.16 Cllr Walker made strenuous efforts to separate them. AM heard the noise, came back in and was able to remove CP from the room. DD returned to his seat and sat with his hands folded on his lap.

- 1.17 After a few moments, during which CP's notebook etc was returned to him and [REDACTED] who was present as a member of the public, was comforted by Cllr Walker, I told DD he should leave the meeting and return home. He refused.
- 1.18 I looked around my fellow councillors, all of whom were clearly shocked, to see if anyone was indicating that DD should remain. None were, so I told him at least twice more that he should leave the meeting and return home.
- 1.19 Finally, he packed his papers into his bag and left. I followed him to the door to ensure he went to his car without interacting with CP who was outside. AM was also there.
- 1.20 AM remained with CP until DD had left, checked CP was OK and took him to his car. He went home.
- 1.21 I re-joined the remaining councillors and asked if they felt alright for the meeting to continue as we had quite a lot of business to get through. They all agreed, and we continued in a fairly sombre mood.
- 1.22 At the end of formal business, I asked each councillor how they felt and what they felt should be done now. The general feeling was that AM and I should meet with DD to discuss what had happened, explain how much his fellow councillors had been impacted by his behaviour and suggest he consider resignation from the Council.
- 1.23 The next day, I emailed DD asking him to meet us on Wednesday 15th May. He responded by saying he wouldn't be available but could see us just before the AGM on 20th May. To meet at that time, and in the venue for the AGM, would not allow any privacy so was completely unsuitable in my view. He also sent all councillors an email apologising and listing the ways he felt he had been provoked by CP.
- 1.24 My perception is that the original provocation came from DD when he arrived at the meeting with a written list of questions/comments all of which were critical of CP.
- 1.25 I think DD put the PC into disrepute by the behaviour and did not listen to others when it was pointed out his points were not PC matters.
- 1.26 A violent outburst, which reminded me of children fighting, is not the behaviour of an officer in the public domain. Cllr Darling did not treat others 'fairly and with respect', nor did he act in a way that 'gives public confidence in the role of councillor'
- 1.27 Cllr Pease was wrong for trying to have a last word, but I have a high degree of sympathy as he was being provoked verbally.
- 1.28 DD in his email of apology claimed Cllr Pease called him a prat and again my views were "So?" as this does not require punches. I could not see who threw

the first punch as it was such a tiny space, and they were locked together as soon as DD shut the door, which I felt was the first act of aggression.

- 1.29 Later that week I met with the clerk and vice chair to see what we were going to do as DD would not agree to meet us. I had also sought advice from Luke who explained that persuasion was the only way we could work with DD as there was no official means at our disposal as a `parish Council.
- 1.30 I am aware that DD and CP do not like each other. I was very concerned about what else I could do at the end of the meeting when asking him to leave and he wouldn't go.
- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: **Hazel M. Bullock** (agreed via e-mail)

Date: 22.07.2024

Darlington Borough Council**Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward****Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation****Complaint statement**

Interviewee	Cllr Les Foggett
Role / position	DBC Councillor, Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	11 June 2024
Time	4pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

I was at the meeting, and I know Member of the Public I was also there. I was witness to what happened. I happen to know Member of the Public I, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was there as a member of the public, I was there as a Parish Councillor. It is not normal for Member of the Public I to attend but [REDACTED] has been to them before. This all happened in the first 8 minutes of the meeting.

We started the meeting, and one of the first agenda items after the welcome is the Ward Cllr report and the chair (Hazel Bullock) invited Cllr Pease to make his report. He said he hadn't got anything particular, so she asked if any of the Cllrs had anything to ask.

Cllr Darling then produced an enormous wad of paper and proceeded to go through a list of things he had read and comments that CP had made on Facebook or written and most of the comments were directed to the allocation of 106 monies, and not a lot to do with the Parish Council. It had a lot to do with the MSG community centre which DD is the chair of.

My take on this, was that there was a grievance happening and bad feeling between the two gentlemen because DD was asking questions of CP – his first question was "what exactly is your remit" and CP answered to say there wasn't one and he is there to serve the ward. DD went into information of monies being allocated and not attending meetings – we were a few minutes into the meeting, and it was getting uncomfortable, and CP was sat behind me and DD was sat to my left. After about 5 minutes Cllr Adrian Marshall (was Vice of PC) said *"hang on lets stop this is getting personal and not PC business"* and Hazel Bullock then said *"a lot of the items being raised by DD were historical items"* and therefore was not really part of the PC meeting. About this time, CP said *"I am not listening to any more of this you PRAT"* or words to that effect. I made the recording of this meeting as this is my role. Alan McNab asked me to forward the recording and I clipped the first 8 minutes until after the incident.

CP got up to leave (he was behind me sat next to Member of the Public I). The door to the room was on my immediate left, DD jumped out of his seat and literally slammed the door shut in front of CP stopping him leaving the room. At this point I am not quite sure who grabbed who first, DD was standing in front of the door and CP was trying to leave and the next thing they had hold of each

other and punches were thrown by both people. DD had grabbed hold of CP jacket lapels and then punches were thrown. In the conflict CP glasses were knocked from his face and fell on the floor and broke and he had a nasty mark on the side of his nose. DD was restrained by Cllr Jean Walker, both were still on their feet, she was nearer DD and she jumped up and tried to get between them. At this point Jean managed to separate them and CP left the room and got out the door. Cllr Marshall left the room, Member of the Public 1 and David Darling were still in the room. David Darling went to sit down, and Cllr David Darling wanted to stay in the meeting. Cllr Hazel Bullock said to DD *"I think you should leave"* "No I want to stay he said" and she put it to the councillors present and we had a unanimous vote to leave the meeting which he did, and Member of the Public 1 followed after this.

As well as being a parish councillor I was the clerk of another Parish Council and familiar with Code of Conduct and Nolan Principles. Both parties contravened every one of the Nolan Principles, it was unbelievable what happened. I discussed this with Cllr Bullock at the end of the meeting and as far as I was concerned Cllr DD had breached Code of Conduct. He was disrespectful and shouting and violent, at a meeting.

I think because Cllr Pease had called DD a prat, DD shot out of his seat and was physical, CP wasn't at that point. DD's reaction was disproportionate to being called a prat. I think the view not to have DD remain was to diffuse the situation and get on with the business we were there for. He was then able to come to the next meeting which he did at the AGM on 20 May 2024. We had a meeting last night, but DD wasn't present as he was on holiday. The feeling was that we carry on the meeting on the 13 May 2024, without DD and let everyone calm down. This is why we took a vote on whether DD should leave the meeting. I told Hazel at the end of the meeting that I felt DD had broken every rule of the book and was totally unacceptable. At the time it was such a shock, and only lasted a minute or so.

- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: [Les Foggett]

Date; 16Th June 2024

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Alan Macnab
Role / position	Clerk to the Parish Council Middleton St George Parish Council
Date	21 June 2024
Time	9am
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Alan Macnab was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

- 1.1 At the start of the meeting there is a spot on the agenda for the ward councillors report. Ward Cllr Pease was there, and he reported that there was nothing to report.
- 1.2 The Chairman asked if Parish Councillors had any comments or questions to Councillor Pease. Parish Councillor Darling then read a prepared list of questions to Councillor Pease.
- 1.3 The first question Parish Councillor Darling asked Councillor Pease was “what do you do?” Councillor Pease responded that he looked after the welfare of the people in his ward. Councillor Darling then asked why he criticized the Parish Council on his Facebook blog. I did not hear the response from Councillor Pease.
- 1.4 Councillor Darling then asked Councillor Pease “why did you order the Litter Picker to work in the Water Park?” and then “where were you when the consultation on the Play Park was held on Saturday?”

- 1.5 I did not hear Councillor Pease's response to these questions because noise came from the opposite end of the room to which I sat.
- 1.6 Councillor Pease then made reference to Section 106 money for the car park and outdoor exercise equipment at the Community Centre. Councillor Darling is Chairman of the Community Association which runs the Community Centre. I could not hear the details. Councillor Darling responded but again I could not hear the details of the response.
- 1.7 At this point both Councillors Darling and Pease shouted at one another. The Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Adrian Marshall intervened and stated that he was not prepared to sit in a meeting when there was so much friction, the questions were not part of the meeting, and this was not the time for Councillor Darling to be doing this. I felt the items were not for this meeting. Councillor Marshall then left the room with a member of the public.
- 1.8 The Chairman stated that the Ward Councillors Report had been completed and the Parish Council should move on to the next item on the agenda.
- 1.9 Councillor Pease stood up from his chair and proceeded to leave the room. There were raised voices between Councillors Darling and Pease. At this point Councillor Darling took off his spectacles and laid them on the table in front of him and rose from his chair. He moved towards the door of the room which Councillor Pease was using to leave and physically assaulted Councillor Pease.
- 1.10 Councillor Darling had his arm on Councillor Pease around his head and I cannot recall if this was the point he threw a punch but there was a physical assault on Councillor Pease and Councillor Darling broke Councillor Pease's glasses – I saw them fly off. There was an air of shock. I heard someone state to call for the police.
- 1.11 Councillor Pease left the building. I understand that Councillor Pease's spectacles were broken in the attack.
- 1.12 Councillor Darling returned to his seat.
- 1.13 The Chairman stated that the conduct by Councillor Darling was disgraceful and called for a vote on whether Councillor Darling should be asked to leave the meeting. The vote was unanimous, and Councillor Darling was asked to leave the meeting which he did.
- 1.14 Councillor Darling should not have asked those questions, they were totally irrelevant to the meeting. Councillor Pease reacted to this and then things escalated and ended up in violence. Councillor Pease spoke in response to the questions, but the questions from Councillor Darling resulted in an angry reaction from Councillor Pease who mentioned Section 106 funding for the car park and outdoor play equipment at the Community Centre.

- 1.15 Councillor Darling is Chairman of the Community Association which runs the Community Centre. Mentioning the Section 106 funding was also irrelevant and should not have been raised. This provoked an angry reaction from Councillor Darling.
- 1.16 Councillor Darling then took his spectacles off and laid them on the table in front of him where he sat in the Parish Council meeting as Councillor Pease was leaving and he moved towards Councillor Pease and the physical assault on Councillor Pease by Councillor Darling took place.
- 1.17 Councillor Darling grabbed Councillor Pease round his neck and held his head and threw a punch to Councillor Pease's head which made his spectacles fly off.
- 1.18 As far as I can recall and it was so quick, Councillor Pease did not retaliate he was struggling to get out of the way of the assault and was shocked coupled with the fact that his spectacles flew off in the attack.
- 1.19 I cannot be certain if anyone tried to separate them it was so quick and everyone was shocked. I heard one of the lady Councillors I think it was Councillor Walker stated; " send for the police."
- 1.20 Councillor Pease left the room on his own. Councillor Pease may have been met outside the room by Councillor Marshall who had left the room when the incident first started with raised voices but I could not be certain as I was in the Meeting Room.
- 1.21 Councillor Darling resumed his seat in the Meeting Room and was then asked to leave by the Chairman which he did.
 - I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: Alan W. Macnab (agreed via e-mail)

Date: 23 July 2024

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Adrian Marshall
Role / position	Parish Councillor, Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	12 June 2024
Time	15.00pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Adrian Marshall was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

- 1.1 I was talking to Hazel Bullock who chaired the meeting, and I am vice chair – both of us voluntarily stepped down the week after the meeting. Hazel also spoke with Luke, and she recommended I write down fairly soon afterwards what I recalled.
- 1.2 I believe there are also possible 2 audio recordings for the meeting on the 13 May 2024.
- 1.3 This was a meeting at Middleton St George (MSG) Parish Council (PC) on Monday 13 May 2024 and we start 630pm. Present were:

Hazel Bullock was Chairing
Myself (I am vice chair)
Clerk is Alan McNab

David Darling
Jean Walker
Simon Pleydell
Les Foggett
Maggie Beadle
Monty Brack
Colin Pease

- 1.4 There were also two members of the public in attendance were [REDACTED] and the other was [REDACTED].
- 1.5 Just as this was all kicking off - another ward counsellor Deborah Laing arrived but I cannot recall at what stage.
- 1.6 Our agenda, the start of it is the same each month. There was a generic opening at item one and item 2 is the public participation session, nobody wanted to speak. So, we moved on fairly quickly to item 3 – ward counsellors report.
- 1.7 I was chair of the PC between 2021 and 2022, this was something I brought in, to encourage our ward Councillor's to attend and provide updates. Collin Pease (CP) has been attending our meetings, so it was he that we asked to give the ward Councillor's report.
- 1.8 CP stated that he did not have much to report, and did we have any questions for him. At this stage David Darling (DD) said that he had questions and it seemed to me the Q's were prepared as he had them typed on paper and DD went through these questions and it seemed to me (there was a list of them) they had no bearing on the PC and his attitude was very aggressive.
- 1.9 CP initially replied quite calmly and said he would deal with the Q's if they were put to him in order one at a time. Then it seemed DD went through them again and became increasingly aggressive and as a result of this CP became more agitated.
- 1.10 I piped up then and I said that I didn't think that the questions were part of our meeting, and they should stop and we should move on and Hazel Bullock (HB) agreed.
- 1.11 We didn't move on, because DD continued his aggressive questioning. Both parties were sat down – DD was opposite me, and CP was to the far left at the end – it is a small room.
- 1.12 At this stage it seemed things were escalating, and I decided to make a gesture to try and make people see sense and I stood up and said I *"wasn't prepared to listen to this and will leave the room and only come back when this calmed down"*. I walked to the door – I used the words unprofessional; it was being dealt with in an unprofessional way.

- 1.13 At this stage I left the room. I thought this act of mine might make the situation calm down.
- 1.14 I went outside, and I was only there for a few seconds before I realised something happening inside – I heard raised voices. So, I turned round and tried to open the door to go back but it was blocked, and I could not open it.
- 1.15 Eventually I did get in and saw CP standing to my right and he looked pretty shocked and upset with DD who was to my left. CP's glasses were broken, and I took CP outside and there was blood on his shirt and there were abrasions on his nose. I said to CP "*I think you should go home*" however he had left a notebook inside and I went to retrieve this, and I think I said to Member of the Public 1 at this stage "*take DD home*".
- 1.16 I went back out to CP and gave him his notebook and then DD left the building to his car, Member of the Public 1 left the building and walked on foot ([REDACTED] looked cross) and the Member of the Public 2 left the building hurriedly. DD drove away past me and CP.
- 1.17 At this stage I walked CP to his car, and I asked if he was OK and OK to drive and he said he was. I then went back to the PC meeting.
- 1.18 I was probably outside with CP for about 2-3 minutes.
- 1.19 I did not see the physical action, but I saw the preamble. I thought DD's behaviour was unacceptable. He seemed to have come with a prepared list of difficult questions which he asked in an aggressive manner, and he didn't back down, I was the one saying, "*we should not continue this*" and he didn't move on. I think CP was provoked.
- 1.20 I am aware DD in his statement said he was provoked; I do not know what was said after I left the room, but I did not see evidence of CP provoking DD – it was very much the other way round.
- 1.21 I will reiterate that the main aggressor was DD.
- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: Adrian Marshall (agreed via email)

Date; 19 June 2024

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Cllr Monty Brack
Role / position	DBC Parish Councillor, Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	5 July 2024
Time	3pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Monty Brack was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

- 1.1 I was in attendance at the meeting 13 May 2024.
- 1.2 I was sitting next to David Darling (DD). Colin had been on social media having a pop about DD getting funding for the community centre, and this wound DD up. DD put some questions in his list that he asked Colin that was nothing to do with the Parish Council and were Darlington Borough Council business and he should not have brought them up – he was getting back at Colin.
- 1.3 After DD's Spoke, Colin then came across to the table with his finger pointing and then he went as if he was going to go and he opened the door hard onto where Member of the Public I [REDACTED] was sat, I think this was the trigger for DD.
- 1.4 DD went up and went towards Colin and there was pushing and shoving. The glasses got broken I think they fell during the tussle.

1.5 They should not be physical with each other, and they were both doing that.

1.6 The chairman and the deputy chairman were being “old school” and there had been questions asked and there were new people coming on to the Council and there had been animosity against DD.

I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: K Brack (via e-mail)

Date; 21/10/24

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	[Member of the public]
Role / position	Member of the Public 2
Date	22 July 2024
Time	10am
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

[Member of the Public] was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

- 1.1 I joined the parish meeting on the 13th May as I wanted to put my name forward to become a Parish councillor. I sat either side of Member of the Public 1 and Colin Pease (CP).
- 1.2 The question was asked by parish councillors if anyone had any questions for CP. David Darling (DD) started to ask questions regarding his conduct on his Facebook posts but was quite heated. CP was taken back by this, and it was quite awkward to sit and listen to.
- 1.3 The parish councillor then intervened stating this is not what was asked and to leave it be. DD did continue to say stuff and CP started to say stuff back (apologies I cannot remember what it was about but remember it made me feel uncomfortable).
- 1.4 Adrian Marshal (AM) stood up and stated something along the lines "he was leaving until they resolved their issues" and left the room. Other things were said between DD and CP to which CP was then stood next to the big parish council table leaning over with hands placed on the table.

- 1.5 They were both shouting, and CP shouted DD was a prat or a twat.
 - 1.6 DD got up immediately after that and I think he either pushed the door shut or slammed it (either way a loud bang happened). CP and DD were then interlocked, DD had hold of CP with his arms around him and CP the same.
 - 1.7 An older lady from the parish council tried to get them off of each other and Member of the Public 1 had got up to do the same. I was completely shocked. They were at that point just ragging each other around.
 - 1.8 CP threw a right punch, to which I shot up as I didn't want the ladies getting an elbow in their faces and stood between both men. CP threw another right-handed punch and I screamed for both parties to get off of each other as there were ladies present.
 - 1.9 CP's glasses hit the floor in the struggle, and they disconnected. I picked up CP's glasses and handed them to him. CP was taken outside, and DD sat back down.
 - 1.10 I made sure [REDACTED] was ok as [REDACTED] was in shock, and I then removed myself from the PC meeting. CP was outside with another PC member when I walked to the carpark to get into my car.
 - 1.11 I did not want to give an account on this matter as I know both DD and CP and feel both were at fault and should not have happened. Someone should have walked away before the violence occurred.
- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed ...Member of the Public2.....(agreed via email)

Date31 July 2024.....

Darlington Borough Council**Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward****Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation****Complaint statement**

Interviewee	Cllr Deborah Laing
Role / position	DSC Ward Councillor, Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	25 June 2024
Time	5pm
Present	Ellie Dewar 110

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Deborah Laing was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

1.1 I was in attendance at the meeting 13 May 2024.

1.2 I do know them both, there has been no issues with Cllr Darling before. Cllr Pease has been a councillor for a year, and I have had to correct a few factual inaccuracies in his emails (illegal to park on pavement for example). Cllr Pease also causes a few problems in the Ward as he does not get his facts right.

1.3 I always attended the MSG meeting -there are 3 ward councillors for this area and we have regular meetings once a month. Cllr Pease had not attended for a couple of months. The meetings are audio recorded by Les Foggett. This makes it easier for the minutes.

1.4 I walked in and the meeting had started (couple of minutes late) and it was the Ward Councillors report. Cllr Darling was asking Cllr Pease questions. There has been tension built up over the years between the two.

1.5 He was questioning him about the community centre and I felt this was inappropriate but for Cllr Darling he may have felt it was relative as he Cllr Pease has had a go at him on line.

1.6 I was sat opposite Cllr Darling and I watched this grilling by him and Cllr Pease stood up and started pointing (leant over Jean Walker) at Cllr Darling, then he said "you and your fiefdom" which I have never heard of before.

1.7 He was pointing which was provocation, then he called Cllr Darling a Prat.

1.8 I saw Cllr Darling then take his glasses off and stand up and he went for Cllr Pease in a rugby type tackle and he slammed the door and it was a wrestling match, I was looking at Cllr Pease back so I could see him punch Cllr Darling 3 times but I could not see what Cllr Darling was doing.

1.9 I thought "he's going to kill him" Member of the Public 1 and Member of the Public 2 got up to try and split this up. There was screaming going on - I could not believe what I was actually seeing. I never moved.

1.10 When the arguing started Adrian Marshal advised he would go outside and when he came back in he expected hit to stop. Cllr Darling has snapped because of the last 12 months criticism from Cllr Pease.

1.11 I have signed up to the Code of Conduct. I am a trustee of the community centre - Cllr Darling asked me to do this in 2021.

1.12 I believe both have broken the codes of conduct. Cllr Pease should not have got up and leaned over and pointed at Cllr Darling, but then for Cllr Darling to get up and go for him -that shouldn't have happened.

1.13 The chair asked Cllr Darling to leave after getting everyone's views. I then spoke to Member of the Public 1 the next day as [REDACTED] was upset after the incident. I said, "I cannot believe what David did" and [REDACTED] and she was shocked.

- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: [Deborah Laing]

Date: 20 November 2024

Darlington Borough Council**Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward****Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation****Complaint statement**

Interviewee	Maggie Beadle
Role / position	Parish Councillor, Middleton St George Ward
Date	17 July 2024
Time	10am
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Maggie Beadle was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

1.1 The chairman opened the meeting and addressed the usual items eg. Members of the public wishing to speak etc. She then handed over to Ward Councillor Colin Pease.

1.2 Councillor Darling was sitting almost opposite me and slightly to my right and had a pre prepared list of questions in front of him. Before ward Councillor Pease could give his report Councillor Darling said "You said that I " ... and he proceeded to read out from his list.

1.3 Councillor Pease said, "*I was asking questions not making statements*".

1.4 Councillor Darling stood up, paused, took a deep breath and turned and strode towards ward Councillor Pease who was only a short distance away. As he passed the door, he reversed his hand and pushed it away from him.

1.5 The door was open, and people were stood around, so to get to Councillor Pease, Councillor Darling had to push the door away from him.

1.6 Councillor Pease, who had been seated rose to a semi bent position as Councillor Darling flung his right arm around Councillor Pease's neck and punched him three times in the face. Councillor Pease's glasses flew off.

1.7 I couldn't see much more as people began to rise from their seats.

1.8 [REDACTED] he was asked to leave the meeting [REDACTED]

1.9 I was not aware at the time that [REDACTED] had recorded the meeting, and [REDACTED]

Signed [Maggie Beadle]

Dated [23 July 2024]

Darlington Borough Council**Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward****Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation****Complaint statement**

Interviewee	Cllr Simon Pleydell
Role / position	DBC Councillor and chair, Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Date	24 June 2024
Time	12pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

Simon Pleydell was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

1.1 I did not make any notes at the time of the incident, and I was not asked to.

1.2 It started under the agenda item for ward councillor and CP was asked to give any news – this is a standard update we have. He said he did not have anything to report but happy to take questions.

1.3 As a result of this the chair HB asked for questions and DD started a whole lot of questions clearly pre prepared as printed on paper and he went through a whole bunch of things, some of which were about the community centre and what CP had been saying in the way they operate.

1.4 This was a provocation in my view. It took a few minutes to get through 6-12 items that DD raised, and it was done in a way of a barrage of stuff rather than allowing CP to respond.

1.5 CP was then disturbed that this attack had been launched on him. It was difficult then and Adrian Marshal said he did not believe this was council business and if they did not start behaving he would leave the room which he then did.

1.6 The conversation continued to be heated. CP stood up and leant over the table and called DD a name (cannot recall exactly but began with a P).

1.7 Then DD took his spectacles off and also stood up and they started hitting each other. It was all very fast, and I cannot recall who hit who, I think the door was shut and Jean tried to separate them.

1.8 I personally would find it hard to attribute blame – they were both as bad as each other, however I do not know who triggered the violence.

1.9 My background is in health, and I have dealt with some difficult people in my time but never dealt with something quite like that. The two individuals have a major disliking for each other.

1.10 Both individuals had opportunity to walk away and not do what they did. We did not chair the meeting in a firm way – we should not let this develop and DD should have been stopped as soon as he started.

1.11 It did look as though it something similar to a pub fight, having a proper go at each other with real viciousness and attitude. It happened quickly.

1.12 We then voted for DD to leave as it would be difficult for us to continue our business with DD in the room. [REDACTED] was in the corner and was very stressed by it all and someone said DD may have a stroke.

1.13 My immediate question was that it was right for DD to leave and my question to the chair and vice chair was what investigatory powers we had and what sanction – I have been advised we have neither.

1.14 Police are involved. the code of conduct had been broken and, in my view, both people had participated in this. Even if provoked there is no need for a person to engage in this. Cllr Pease is an elected member where DD is an elected Parish Cllr which is different, there is not a different expectation in terms of behaviours.

- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: [Simon Pleydell]

Date: 29 July 2024

Darlington Borough Council
Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward
Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Cllr David Darling
Role / position	Parish Councillor, Middleton St George Ward
Date	26 July 2024
Time	3.19pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

The investigator explained there is a recording made of the meeting however the purpose of this meeting today was to gather their views from memory and from their own perspective, independently of the recording.

David Darling advised the investigator that police officer Jonathan Plews had recently emailed him to advise that the police investigation was concluded with no further action. David Darling was concerned that in his e-mail, PC Jonathan Plews advised that both the police investigation and the ongoing investigation into the codes of conduct, had determined that he was more at fault. David Darling wished to share his concerns about this, specifically in the absence of him being able to provide his views. David felt that this interview had been compromised. He was asked to send a copy of the Jonathan Plews email to her. The Investigator advised that she would address this with Jonathan Plews separately.

David Darling was asked to describe the events 13 May 2024.

1.1 Cllr David Darling (DD) started by explaining his role and a background summary leading up to the events that happened on the 13 May 2024. The statement is written in DD's own words.

1.2 It was a Monday 13 May if I recall, just after 6.30pm when the meeting commenced and the chairman asked Colin Pease (CP) if he had anything to report and he said no.

1.3 Then it was a question of whether anyone else wanted to ask questions and I had a list. I decided to ask about items on my list, related to funding, his attitude with DBC and I also questioned why he was criticising a colleague of his and also about funds allocated by a ward councillor (he has £1000 each year to spend on behalf of the ward they represent - stronger communities fund) and he had made an award of £500 to the local medical centre, as a business which I felt needed a response from CP.

1.4 During the course of my questioning - in fairness, my questions were pointed and directly to him, they were specific to things that had happened with or by him. Therefore, I appreciate he may have felt uncomfortable; I like facts to be gathered and to be direct about this.

DD was asked his view on whether the questions were relevant for that meeting

1.5 It depends how you would translate that for this meeting as I would partly agree. However, on the other hand the questions were to get answers on the funding that he had been criticising others on, and also to do with a person called [REDACTED] the village litter picker. In 2016 CP was the chairman of the parish council. Recently I was told he had tried twice to give a verbal/ written warning to [REDACTED] which I also felt needed addressing.

1.6 At this point I recall CP stood up from his seat and leant over a parish

councillor and he was banging table with his finger (he was pointing his fore finger in a jabbing motion on the desk) and talking about the fact this was not true or saying "I could keep the parish council fiefdom" and getting more and more angry.

1.7 CP got up and walked towards the door and called me a prat. I wanted him out of the meeting and that is why I then went and shut the door. He was leaving to exit the door and at that point called me a prat and I got up to close the door after him and he blocked the door and a punch or 2 came my way.

DD was asked if he shut the door to stop CP from leaving

1.8 I do not recall shutting the door to stop him getting out. I do recall Adrian Marshall, a Parish councillor left the room during the questions being asked although again I could not recall exactly what was said. I must have got up quick from my seat as I know that CP was already stood and nearer the door.

1.9 CP punched me first on my left cheek (I sent a picture to Luke along with a copy of the audio).

1.10 There were people that had their back to the confrontation and may not have seen everything and people who were close to it such as [REDACTED] Member of the Public 1 and Member of the Public 2 and Cllr Laing (she was on other side facing where I was sitting and the door).

DD was asked if he took CP in a headlock or rugby tackle type grip

1.11 I pushed a flat hand up against his chin, I did not grab him in a headlock. I am taller than he is. I am unsure what was said by anybody else in the meeting or by CP. I would not have thought the whole thing took more than a minute.

DD was asked if he recalled CP's glasses being damaged

1.12 I don't recall anyone shouting about the police. I can't say I recall CP's glasses, but I have seen a copy of his report that says in the mele I damaged and cut his nose. I cannot say how that has happened, but I have a heavy watch and it may have connected while I was trying to get my palm under his chin.

1.13 I did not throw any punches to CP.

1.14 I cannot recall who took hold of who to separate the altercation. It was a very short space of time and the only person I can recall standing by me was Cllr Bullock and she said I should go to A and E as I hurt my finger when I shut the door, I think this was after CP had left.

1.15 I got up quite quickly and shut the door hard and he swung one or two punches at me. To restrain him I put my hand under his chin and then a 3rd blow did not connect, and the altercation was broken up by other counsellors and or Member of the Public 1 and Member of the Public 2 and that was it.

1.16 I was not aware until afterwards that Member of the Public 1 was recording the meeting. At the end of the incident, I do remember that CP left with Adrian Marshall, and I went back into the meeting. There was a unanimous vote for me to not remain in the meeting which he understands. He appreciates people were shocked.

1.17 I have seen the Codes of Conduct but I have not signed them. I may have had a copy when I joined as a councillor in September 2023. I was never asked to sign them. The first time I read them I cannot recall when this was. I am now aware there is a standard of conduct.

1.18 We both have behaved in an unreasonable way.

DO was asked if there was any time he could have walked away from the situation to prevent the altercation

1.19 It is difficult to say whether there was a point that I could have walked away. This was a very short period of time, and I was concerned with getting him out of the building and that it was free of his verbal abuse.

1.20 I had an email at 1030pm the evening of the incident from Cllr Kevin (Monty) Brack. He was talking about the meeting, and how he perceived what had happened. I will forward the email to the investigator. David read out the contents of the email and Ellie asked for a copy of this to be sent to her.

1.21 When I got back having left the meeting, I called 101 to report the incident. Jonathon Plews after a few days spoke to me. I did not get an incident reference number and I never provided a statement to the police.

1.22 I want to continue as a Parish Councillor and I do wish to make some changes and I do believe some people are not happy about this.

- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it known that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: [David Darling]

Date: 6 August 2024

Darlington Borough Council

Sadberge and Middleton St George Ward

Parish Council Code of Conduct Investigation

Complaint statement

Interviewee	Member of the Public 1
Role / position	Member of the public
Date	7 July 2024
Time	2pm
Present	Ellie Dewar IIO

The Investigator explained her role and the relevant procedure under which the complaint would be investigated.

I attend the PC meetings on a regular basis – I have an interest in what goes on and the process of decision making etc. being a trustee of the community centre we are the heart of the village, and it is important we collaborate with the PC.

13 May 2024.

- 1.1 The meeting started by David Darling (DD) questioning Cllr Pease about some of the things he had said and done. In particular his negative comments towards the Parish Council and some of the work that they do and negative thoughts against why the community centre get 106 funds. During the course of this conversation, Cllr Pease appeared to get agitated with the questions. He then said; *"you stuck your nose into my community fund"* and this is when DD asked him why he paid this fund to a private business as this is forbidden to pay a private business. At this point Adrian Marshall who was deputy chair at the time got up and said he was leaving the room and come back when everybody could act in a professional manner. And he left the room and left the door open.
- 1.2 At this point Cllr Pease got up from his chair and crossed the room (Member of the Public I showed a drawing of the room layout). He walked over to the table, and he leaned across Jean and he was pointing his finger at DD "carry on running it as your fiefdom leave me out of it". At this point he said "I am not listening to that prat" and turned round and walked towards the open door. Then, DD took off his glasses and got up and walked towards the door and pushed the door

towards Cllr Pease. DD then got hold of Cllr Pease shoulders and this is when I started shouting David's name. I saw Cllr Pease then pull his arm back in a fist as if going to hit DD and this is where I got up and with a pen in my hand, I was trying to grab Cllr Pease as he was hitting DD with his fist. Member of the Public 2 then got up to help me pull Cllr Pease off and Member of the Public 2 was shouting "*Collin*". I saw 2 punches, but I understand there may have been 3 - I did not see the third. Jean Walker also got up and helped to split up the two councillors. They then broke up and DD took his hands off Cllr Pease shoulder and in doing so knocked Cllr Pease glasses off and caused a cut to his nose and Cllr Pease bent to pick up his glasses saying; "*what is the matter with you*".

- 1.3 None of the men got up to help.
- 1.4 DD was asked to leave the meeting with Hazel saying something similar to; "*behaviour not becoming of a parish councillor*" and he was asked to leave. I sat down and I was in shock and shaking. Jean Walker sat with me – she is an ex-nurse and she asked if I was expecting that and I said no of course I wasn't and she said she feared for DD health.
- 1.5 She sat with me until I felt OK to leave. As I left Adrian Marshall and Hazel B were with Cllr Pease and they asked him if he was OK to drive and he said yes he was fine.
- 1.6 I had no idea that DD was going to ask the questions – he did come prepared. He is thorough and does prepare.
- 1.7 I am aware of what the code of conduct is. I read this before I made the complaint. At that time, Cllr Pease was still a member of the conservative party.
- 1.8 I am a very just person and believe in fairness and believe rules are there as a guideline that should be adhered to. Especially in the case of a ward councillor. There was a previous issue I had to make a complaint to Luke Swinhoe about regarding Cllr Pease. This was when he had given funds to a private business, and I felt this was immoral. I believe Cllr Pease has broken the codes of conduct in 2 ways. Certainly, with regard to respect, and also in the past he has been very derogatory about members of the council. This is in public on the FB page and I disagree this is the moral and correct way in which a ward councillor should act as a representative of this ward. I also believe this is unjust that someone should be able to punch another man in the face and get away with it which is why we reported this to the police.
- 1.9 I am here to talk about my complaint against Cllr Pease.
- 1.10 The complaint that Cllr Pease has made I have seen. He either has a bad memory and doesn't recall the facts or he lies. For example, in the press recently he has said that he had already resigned from the conservative party long before the altercation and this is not factual. He had a meeting on the WED after the event with the leader of the conservative party (Cllr Jonathon

Dulston) and as a result he was suspended from the party as a result of my actions, and he resigned the following Monday and became an independent.

- 1.11 He made some very derogatory comments about myself for example; *“an act of desperation.....looking for ways to criticise me”.....” resent his popularity”*
 - 1.12 I chatted to Member of the Public 2 on holiday, and she said she had not been approached – she gave her permission to pass on contact detail. She is a key witness and she helped pull Cllr Pease off. We met up a couple of days after the event to walk the dog and she was very disappointed Cllr Pease had not apologised to her. DD wrote to the council (all parish councillors) the day after apologising (Deborah Laing and Member of the Public 2)
 - 1.13 The stories that are being spread around the village by Cllr Pease one relates to a tape that I have allegedly doctored but I would not know where to start. Not sure if this was before or after he was aware that Les Foggett was recording the meeting. And also, Cllr Pease is making things very uncomfortable in terms of what he is sharing on social media and saying he is the “bloodied victim” and does not mention punching DD in the face. This is causing discomfort for me. I always record the meetings. As a member of the public, I have every right to record the meeting. Also, my right to share this in whatever right I choose. The main reason I recorded this time, was because Cllr Laing was going to be late this time and I recorded so she could hear what went on for the bit [REDACTED] missed. I do not have to make anyone aware that I am recording a public meeting. The parish council should let the meeting know they are recording as the parish council.
- I confirm that the contents of this Statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief and make it knowing that it is to be used in relation to the Investigation of the Complaint

Signed: Member of the Public 1 (agreed via e-mail)

Date; 9 July 2024 (confirmed correct via e-mail on 24 October 2024)

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Luke Swinhoe](#)
Cc: [Councillor Dulston](#); [Councillor Laing](#)
Subject: Verbal and Physical Altercation by Cllr Pease
Date: 14 May 2024 13:29:49

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon Like

I write to make an official complaint regarding the verbally and physically aggressive behaviour by Cllr Pease in the Middleton St George Parish Council meeting last night.

Cllr Darling questioned Pease on his seemingly negative attitude and approach to matters concerning the Ward. Some of which included him complaining about the Parish Council as well as Officers of Darlington Borough Council, the payment of public funds to a private business, his questioning the allocation of 106 monies to the community centre, and '*ordering*' the litter picker to get on with his work.

Cllr Pease became verbally aggressive, leaning across the table and pointing his finger at Cllr Darling, saying (I quote), "why are you sticking your nose in", followed by "you can carry on running your own little fiefdom without me" and finally "I'm not listening to that prat" before heading for the door. At this point the altercation between them became physical, and I witnessed at least two punches being thrown at Cllr Darling's face by Cllr Pease. The incident has been reported to the Police. I have evidence of what was said should the Police require this.

Cllr Pease's behaviour is totally unacceptable and has caused me severe distress and anxiety for what was a very frightening episode to witness. At the very worst I would expect a written apology from Cllr Pease for the distress caused and at best I would like to see him removed from office.

I await your response.

Kind regards.

[REDACTED]



Middleton St George Parish Council

www.middleton-st-george.org.uk

clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk

From: Alan Macnab Clerk to the Parish Council

To: Members of the Middleton St. George Parish Council

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of Middleton St. George Parish Council on **Monday 13th May, 2024 at 6.30 p.m. in the Parish Council Meeting Room** for the transaction of the following business.

AGENDA

1. Chairman's opening address and welcome.
2. Public Participation Session – 15 minutes. Each person to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. It would be helpful if members of the public write to the Clerk (email clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk) in advance of the meeting to advise if they wish to speak at the meeting.
3. Ward Councillors' Report.
4. Apologies for Absence.
5. Declarations of interests.
6. Minutes of the following meetings:
 - a. Parish Council meeting on the 8th April, 2024. Minutes enclosed.
 - b. Finance Committee on the 2nd April, 2024. Minutes enclosed.
 - c. Community Engagement Committee on the 29th April, 2024. Minutes to follow.
7. Actions taken since the Parish Council Meeting on the 8th April, 2024. Action Sheet enclosed.
8. Items brought by the Clerk
 - a. Vacancy for one Parish Councillor.
 - b. Breakdown of costs for the Village Show enclosed.
 - c. Condition of the footpaths in Middleton St. George. Response from the Chief Executive enclosed.
 - d. Request for our support to seek a DMMO for field path off Roman Way. Request enclosed.
 - e. Flagpole Inspection. Quotation enclosed.
 - f. Meeting with the Construction and Supervising Engineer. Rearranged for Thursday 23rd May, 2024 at 10 a.m.
9. Parks and Grounds Matters.
 - a. Minutes of meeting on 1st May 2024 attached.
 - b. Play Area. Feedback from consultation event Cllrs Darling and Holgate.
 - c. MUGA - quotations for repairs to the brickwork Cllr Marshall. Quotation enclosed
 - d. Security lighting on the Parish Council Building. Clerk

10. Financial Matters
 - a. Financial Report 2023-24 as at the 6th May, 2024. Report enclosed.
 - b. Payments received and payments for May 2024 for authorisation. Please Appendix 1.
 - c. Timetable of Controls and Year Planner for May 2024. Report enclosed.
11. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24 Internal Auditor's Report to follow.
12. Requests received:
 - a. Middletons in Bloom. Request for planters. Request enclosed.
 - b. What's On in MSG collaboration proposals.
13. Planning Matters.
 - a. Planning decisions taken by Darlington Borough Council since April 2024. Please see Appendix 2.
 - b. New planning applications.

24/00312/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Middleton Back Road, South of Oaklands Farm, Middleton One Row.

24/00308/FUL. Formation of temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. North of Yarm Road, Oak Tree, Middleton St. George.

24/00310/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Mill Lane, Middleton St. George.

24/00314/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Land East of Northumbrian Water Sewage Treatment Works, The Front, Middleton One Row.

24/00313/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Middleton Back Road, South of Hill Rise, Middleton One Row.

Recommend - no comment as the previous application for the removal of sections of hedgerow was passed.

Information states: *"The application proposes the formation of a site access from (various places on line of pipework) The proposed access would be in place for a temporary period until 31st October 2025, during the construction period of the pipeline. The site access will be reinstated to its original condition upon completion of the pipeline."*

24/00250/FUL. Construction of a dropped kerb for vehicular access. 2, Dinsdale Close, Middleton St. George.

Recommend – Parish Council supports the objection made by Mrs Lawlor and objects to this application. The proximity of this proposal to the Designated School Crossing Zone is a cause for concern.

24/00197/TF. Works to various trees protected under Tree Preservation Order (No. 3) 2007 as per arborist's report. Land at Wellington Drive, Middleton St. George.

Recommend - no comment because there is no advice from DBC arborist.

24/00382/FUL. Removal of covered walkway to front elevation, erection of a double garage and porch to front, part single storey, part two storey extension with Juliet balcony to rear together with 2 no. additional first floor windows to existing south elevation and installation of solar panels. 9, Castle Close, Middleton St. George.

14. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas.
15. Decisions from this meeting we feel should be publicised through social media.
Examples – Item 8 vacancy
Item 9b outcome of consultation
Item 12b PC supporting a local initiative
16. Date of next meeting.
Annual Parish Council Meeting Monday 20th May, 2024 at 6.30 p.m. in the WI Hall, Neasham Road, Middleton St. George.

Alan Macnab,
Clerk to the Parish Council
6th May 2024.

APPENDIX 1 PAYMENTS RECEIVED AND PAYMENTS FOR APPROVAL

Income

Date	Supplier	Amount	Budget
12.04.2024	HM Revenue and Customs. VAT January to March 2024 Repayment	£1,528.13	VAT
15.04.2024	Darlington Borough Council. Precept 2024-25	£61,479.00	Precept
18.04.2024	Transfer from Business Premium Account 2	£1,404.00	Transfers
	Total	£64,411.13	

Expenditure for approval – May 2024

Date	Customer	Amount	Budget
07.05.2024	Scottish Power. Electricity Monthly	£111.62	Utilities
12.04.2024	Scottish Power. Gas Monthly	£75.70	Utilities
13.05.2024	HM Revenue and Customs. Clerk's PAYE £211.80. Employer's National Insurance £41.65 May 2024	£253.45	PAYE and Pensions
13.05.2024	NEST Pensions. J.D. Lynn. Employers and Employees Contributions £54.46 and C. I. Wood Employer and Employees Contributions £6.96. May 2024	£61.42	PAYE and Pension
13.05.2024	MSG Women's Institute Hall Hire	£104.00	IT, Administration and Printing
13.05.2024	David Gardner. Renovation of the Millenium Bench	£280.00	Grounds Maintenance
13.05.2024	Daniel Groves. Crack stitching on the Model Boat Club Building	£140.00	Barclays Business Premium Account 1
13.05.2024	Councillor D. Darling. Reimbursement for tyre swing repair	£25.00	Grounds Maintenance
23.05.2024	BT Hub Monthly.	£40.61	Utilities
31.05.2024	Cleaner – C. I. Wood Pay	£94.44	Salaries
31.05.2024	Litter Picker – J. D. Lynn Pay	£739.02	Salaries

31.05.2024	Clerk – A. W. Macnab Pay	£847.99	Salaries
	Total	£2,773.25	

APPENDIX 2 PLANNING DECISIONS TAKEN BY DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL SINCE APRIL 2024.

24/00273/TCN. Notification under Electronic Communications Code (Reg 5) of intention to remove 6 No. existng antennas to be replaced with 6 No. replacement antennas, 6 No. RRU's and 1 No. 300mm dish on the existing 32M lattice tower and associated internal works. 02 Telecommunications Mast (809) Mill Lane Middleton St George Darlington. Permitted development.

21/00529/FUL. Demolition of existing agricultural buildings and structures and development of 260 no. dwellings including access, open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage systems and associated infrastructure and works (Amended plans received 18th September 2023) (Amended description) (BNG information received 24th October 2023). Land To The West & South Of Station Road Station Road MIDDLETON ST GEORGE DARLINGTON. Granted, subject to Section 106 agreement.

16/00976/OUT. Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of up to 260 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and associated access, landscaping and engineering works with details of appearance, layout, landscape and scale reserved (Amended plans received 1st February 2019 and 13th May 2019) (Additional Information received 1st February 2019). Land To The West & South Of Station Road Station Road MIDDLETON ST GEORGE DARLINGTON. Application withdrawn.

24/00384/NMA. Non Material Amendment of planning permission 23/00940/FUL dated 22 Nov 2023 (Erection of a detached outbuilding within the rear garden for use as a home office/gym and store) to permit the installation of a WC within outbuilding. 8 Coatham Avenue Middleton St George Darlington DL2 1AJ. Approved.



Middleton St George Parish Council

www.middleton-st-george.org.uk

clerk@middleton-st-george.org.uk

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Monday 13th May. 2024 in the Parish Council Meeting Room.

Present: Councillor H. Bullock (Chairman).
Councillor A. Marshall (Vice Chairman),
Councillor M. Beadle,
Councillor M. Brack,
Councillor D. Darling,
Councillor L. Foggett,
Councillor S. Pleydell,
Councillor J. Walker,
Alan Macnab, Clerk.

In Attendance: Ward Councillors Laing and Pease and 2 Members of the Public.

The meeting started at 6.30 p.m.

2415. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the May meeting of the Parish Council.

2416. Public Participation Session

The Clerk reported that no requests had been made to address the Parish Council.

2417. Ward Councillor's Report

Ward Councillor Pease stated that there was nothing to report.

The Chairman asked Parish Councillors if they had any comments or questions to the Ward Councillors. Councillor Darling asked a number of questions to Ward Councillor Pease which Ward Councillor Pease responded to. During this part of the meeting the Parish Council considered that the questions asked by Councillor Darling were not part of the meeting and that the meeting move on to the next item of business.

A verbal and subsequent physical altercation between Parish Councillor Darling and Ward Councillor Pease occurred. As a result of which both left the meeting which they did.

2418. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Holgate due to work commitments.

The Parish Council **agreed** to accept Councillor Holgate's apologies.

2419. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were made.

2420. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting on the 13th April, 2024

The minutes of the Parish Council on the 8th April, 2024 were presented. The Parish Council **agreed** that they were a true record of the proceedings and the Chairman signed the minutes at the end of the meeting.

The Vice Chairman asked in future that the MSG Annual Show be asked for a breakdown of spending to accompany its request for Section 137 funding.

2421. Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on the 2nd April, 2024

The minutes of the Finance Committee on the 2nd April, 2024 were presented.

2422. Minutes of the Community Engagement Committee meeting on the 29th April, 2024

The Parish Council **agreed** that the minutes of the Community Engagement Committee be presented to the next Parish Council meeting.

2423. Actions taken since the Parish Council Meeting on the 8th April, 2024

The Parish Council **noted** the Action Sheet. The Clerk reported that he had not had time to purchase the key cabinet for the

2424 Items brought by the Clerk

2424.1 Vacancy for one Parish Councillor

The Parish Council **agreed** to the Clerk's request to advertise the long standing Parish Councillor vacancy.

2424.2 Breakdown of costs for the Village Show

The breakdown of costs for the Village Show for the purposes of the Section 137 grant was circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Parish Council **noted** the costs and reiterated that in future the organisers of the Annual Show be asked for a breakdown of spending to accompany its request for Section 137 funding.

2424.3 Condition of the footpaths in Middleton St. George

The response from the Chief Executive of Darlington Borough Council on the condition of footpaths in the village was circulated with the papers for the meeting,

Councillor Pleydell pointed out that the Parish Council had requested a meeting in its email to the Chief Executive but a meeting was not referred to in the Chief Executive's response.

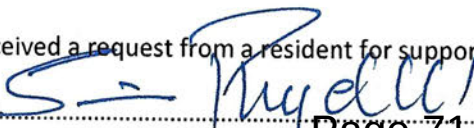
There was a need for a footpath to be installed on the allotments side of Killinghall Row to link up with the new houses.

The Parish Council **agreed** that:

- a. It could not take any more action on this matter.
- b. Ward Councillor Laing will arrange for the Highways Engineer to attend a meeting in the village to inspect the footpaths and to ask for a footpath to be created on the allotments side of Killinghall Row. This could be funded through S106 from the 'High Scroggs' development.

2424.4 Request for support to seek a DMMO for field path off Roman Way

The Parish Council received a request from a resident for support for a Definitive Map Modification Order

Chairman's Signature  Date 10/6/2024

(DMMO) to be applied to a field at the bottom of the black path off Roman Way. The field had a diagonal path across it much used by dog walkers (for more than 20 years) and walkers which were shown on the OS map but which was not a Public Right of Way. The new owners plan to deny access to this. It was pointed out that the field in question may be in Neasham Parish.

Following a discussion, the Parish Council **agreed**:

- a. To write to the Borough Council's Footpaths Officer to ask for the diagonal footpath to be rerouted to the edge of the field and for a Definitive Map Modification Order to create a public right of way with a copy to the resident.
- b. The Clerk will draft the email to the Footpaths Officer for the Vice Chairman's agreement.

2424.5 Flagpole Inspection

The Clerk reported that the last inspection of the flagpole was held in 2021. There were no regulations stating when flagpoles should be inspected but that he had obtained information through CDALC from a Town Council who inspect their flagpole every two years. A quotation for the inspection work had been received from Harrison Flagpoles of Newton Aycliffe for £312.00 (including VAT).

The Parish Council **agreed** that:

- a. The flagpole be inspected every three years.
- b. The quotation of £312.00 (including VAT) from Harrison Flagpoles for the inspection be accepted and the Clerk will arrange for the inspection to take place.

2424.6 Meeting with the Construction and Supervising Engineer

The Parish Council **noted** that the meeting with the Construction and Supervising Engineer will be held on Thursday 23rd May, 2024 at 10 a.m. in the Parish Council Meeting Room.

2425. Parks and Grounds Matters

2425.1 Minutes of meeting on 1st May 2024

The minutes of the Parks and Grounds Committee on the 1st May, 2023 were submitted to the meeting. The Chairman went through the minutes and the actions from the meeting. The Chairman reported that the Committee decided that no action be taken on the safety signs for the MUGA because adequate safety signage existed.

2425.2 MUGA. Quotations for repairs to the brickwork

The Vice Chairman reported that he had approached two companies which specialised in repairing and repointing brickwork but both had too much work on and couldn't take on this job. Another company have examined the brickwork and submitted a quotation which was circulated with the papers for the meeting. An earlier quotation had been received so councillors agreed to compare the two quotations.

The Parish Council considered the two quotations received. Company A £24,700 and Company B £20,120.

The Parish Council **agreed** that Company B – Grove NE quotation of £20,120 be accepted and they be asked for a timeline to carry out the work.

2425.3 Play Area Improvements

The Parish Council considered if it was in a position to take the proposals in Councillor Holgate's email forward

at this meeting because of the absence of Councillors Holgate and Darling.

The Parish Council **agreed** that:

a. The proposals for the Play Area proposals are considered by a Special Parish Council meeting which will take place immediately after the conclusion of the Annual Parish Council Meeting on the 20th May, 2024.

b. All new signs must have the Parish Council's logo on them.

2425.4 Security lighting on the Parish Council Building

The Clerk reported that he had not received a reply from the security company and was approaching other security companies for quotations.

2426. Financial Matters

2426.1 Financial Report 2024-25 as at the 6th May 2024

Balances of Accounts, Progress against the Budget, Bank Reconciliation and Budget Pressures

Appendix 1 of these minutes gives the balances of accounts and progress against the budget as at the 6th May 2024, the bank reconciliation as at the 30th April, 2024 and the budget pressures.

The Parish Council **agreed** to accept the Financial Report.

2426.2 Payments received and payments for May 2024 for authorisation

Income

Date	Supplier	Amount	Budget
12.04.2024	HM Revenue and Customs. VAT January to March 2024 Repayment	£1,528.13	VAT
15.04.2024	Darlington Borough Council. Precept 2024-25	£61,479.00	Precept
18.04.2024	Transfer from Business Premium Account 2	£1,404.00	Transfers
	Total	£64,411.13	

Expenditure for approval – May 2024

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13.05.2024	HM Revenue and Customs. Clerk's PAYE £211.80. Employer's National Insurance £41.65 May 2024	£253.45	PAYE and Pensions
13.05.2024	NEST Pensions. J.D. Lynn. Employers and Employees Contributions £54.46 and C. I. Wood Employer and Employees Contributions £6.96. May 2024	£61.42	PAYE and Pension
13.05.2024	MSG Women's Institute Hall Hire	£104.00	IT, Administration and Printing
13.05.2024	David Gardner. Renovation of the Millennium Bench	£280.00	Grounds Maintenance
13.05.2024	David Gardner. Restoration of the bench on The Front at Middleton One Row	£245.00	Grounds Maintenance
13.05.2024	Daniel Groves. Crack stitching on the Model Boat Club Building	£140.00	Barclays Business Premium Account 1
13.05.2024	Councillor D. Darling. Reimbursement for tyre swing repair	£25.00	Grounds Maintenance
13.05.2024	Gordon Fletcher. Internal Audit	£125.00	Audit
23.05.2024	BT Hub Monthly.	£40.61	Utilities

Chairman's Signature.....

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Date.....

10/6/2024

31.05.2024	Cleaner – C. I. Wood Pay	£94.44	Salaries
31.05.2024	Litter Picker – J. D. Lynn Pay	£739.02	Salaries
31.05.2024	Clerk – A. W. Macnab Pay	£847.99	Salaries
	Total	£3,143.25	

The Parish Council **agreed**:

- a. The payments for May, 2024.
- b. To transfer £14,634.16 from the Community Account to the Parish Council's Treasurer's Account with Lloyds Bank.

2426.3 Timetable of Controls and Year Planner May 2024

The Timetable of Controls Report for April, 2024 was presented. The report is given in Appendix 2 of these minutes.

The Parish Council **agreed** that it was satisfied that the actions had been or were being carried out during May 2024.

2427. Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24

The Parish Council received and **agreed** to note the Internal Auditor's Report on the Parish Council's accounts for the purposes of AGAR for 2023-24. The Parish Council also noted that there were no recommendations made.

2428. Requests Received

2428.1 Middletons in Bloom. Request for planters

The Parish Council received a request from Middletons in Bloom for four Barrel Planter from Amberol Ltd at a total cost of £396.00 + VAT.

The Parish Council **agreed** to purchase the four Barrel Planters at a total cost of £396.00 + VAT and the Clerk will send the purchase order to Amberol.

2428.2 What's On in MSG Collaboration Proposals

The Parish Council received a request from the Founder of MSG Business Elevate for the Parish Council to participate in the What's on in MSG quarterly publication.

The Parish Council **agreed** in principle to participate in the What's on in MSG publication and the Founder will be contacted after the Annual Parish Council by the Chairman to have a ½ page in the publication.

2429. Planning Matters

2429.1 Planning decisions taken by Darlington Borough Council since April 2024

The Parish Council received and agreed to note the planning decisions taken by Darlington Borough Council since April, 2024. The planning decisions are given in Appendix 3 to these minutes.

2429.2 New planning applications

The following new planning applications were presented to the meeting.

24/00312/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Middleton Back Road, South of Oaklands Farm, Middleton One Row.

24/00308/FUL. Formation of temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. North of Yarm Road, Oak Tree, Middleton St. George.

24/00310/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Mill Lane, Middleton St. George.

24/00314/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Land East of Northumbrian Water Sewage Treatment Works, The Front, Middleton One Row

24/00313/FUL. Formation of a temporary site access and associated works in connection with the construction of an underground pipeline. Middleton Back Road, South of Hill Rise, Middleton One Row.

The Parish Council **agreed** to make no comment on the above five planning applications.

24/00250/FUL. Construction of a dropped kerb for vehicular access. 2, Dinsdale Close, Middleton St. George.

The Parish Council agreed to support the objections made by Mrs. Lawler and to object to the planning application on the grounds of the proximity of this proposal to the Designated School Crossing Zone which was a cause for concern.

24/00197/TF. Works to various trees protected under Tree Preservation Order (No. 3) 2007 as per arborist's report. Land at Wellington Drive, Middleton St. George.

24/00382/FUL. Removal of covered walkway to front elevation, erection of a double garage and porch to front, part single storey, part two storey extension with Juliet balcony to rear together with 2 no. additional first floor windows to existing south elevation and installation of solar panels. 9, Castle Close, Middleton St. George.

The Parish Council **agreed** to make no comment on the above two planning applications.

2430. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

2430.1 Speed Monitoring Report

Councillor Foggett reported on the speed and the number of vehicle movements recorded by the three speed monitors.

2430.2 Doors in the Parish Council Building

The Vice Chairman reported that the door to the Meeting Room and men's toilet would not close. The Parish Council **agreed** that the Clerk will ask David Gardener to repair the two doors at the same time as he installs the key cabinet.

2431. Messages from the Parish Council Meeting

The Parish Council **agreed** the following messages:

Major expenditure on the MUGA wall.

Participation in the What's On in MSG publication.

Support for Middletons in Bloom.

2432. Date of next meeting

Chairman's Signature.....

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Date.....

10/6/2024.

Annual Parish Council Meeting Monday 20th May, 2024 at 6.30 p.m. in the WI Hall, Neasham Road, Middleton St. George.

2433. Incident at the conclusion of the Ward Councillor's Report

The Parish Council **agreed** that the Chairman and Vice Chairman will discuss the altercation between Parish Councillor Darling and Ward Councillor Pease and decide what action need to be taken.

The meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.

Appendix 1 Financial Report 2024-25 as at the 6th May, 2024

1. Balance of Accounts

Contingency – Business Premium Account 1 – Barclays	£17,776.32
Contingency – Business Premium Account 2 – Barclays	£13,655.24
Community Account Barclays	<u>£ 68,202.60</u>
Total holdings in Barclays	£99,634.16
Reserves. Lloyds Bank Treasurer's Account	£31,776.00
Reserves - Account with Darlington Credit Union	<u>£60,023.67</u>
Total	£191,433.83

Barclaycard. March/April 2024 Expenditure £44.08

2. Progress against the budget

Income

Account	Budget	Income to date	Year End Income	Variance from Budget
1. Barclays Business Premium Account 1 Income				
	£17,776.32		£17,776.32	0%
2. Barclays Business Premium Account 2 Income				
	£13,655.24		£13,655.24	0%
3. Barclays Community Account Income				
Carry Forward from 2023-24	£9,645.70	£9,645.70	£9,645.70	0%
Precept	£61,479.00	£61,479.00	£61,479.00	0%
VAT Reimbursement	£3,000.00	£1,528.13	£3,000.00	0%
Contribution from DBC for Litter Picker	£8,868.00		£8,868.00	0%
PAYE Reimbursement	£0.00		£0.00	0%
Fishing	£1,389.00		£1,389.00	0%
Model Boat Club Rent	£694.00		£694.00	0%
Model Boat Club Electricity	£1,000.00		£1,000.00	0%
Reimbursements	£0.00		£0.00	0%
PC Facilities Hire	£0.00		£0.00	0%
Sundry Income Compensatory Payment	£0.00		£0.00	0%
Transfer in from Barclays Business Premium Account 2	£0.00	£2,808.00	£2,808.00	2808%
Total	£86,075.70	£75,460.83	£88,883.70	3.2%
4. Lloyds Bank Treasurer's Account Income				
	£31,839.00		£31,839.00	0%
5. Darlington Credit Union Income				
	£60,033.67		£60,033.67	0%

Chairman's Signature.....

Date 10/6/2024

Expenditure

Item	Budget	Expenditure to date	Year End Expenditure	Variance from Budget
1. Barclays Business Premium Account 1 Expenditure	£0.00	£3,970.00	£3,970.00	3,970%
2. Barclays Business Premium Account 2 Expenditure Transfers	£0.00	£4,348.00	£4,348.00	4,348%

Expenditure

Item	Budget	Expenditure to date	Year End Expenditure	Variance from Budget
3. Barclays Community Account				
VAT	£3,000.00		£3,000.00	0%
Allotments	£600.00		£600.00	0%
Audit	£630.00		£630.00	0%
Speed Cameras and CCTV	£500.00		£500.00	0%
Expenses/Training	£200.00	£10.00	£200.00	0%
Grass Cutting Contract	£6,383.00		£6,383.00	0%
Health and Safety	£735.00		£735.00	0%
Insurance	£1,909.00		£1,909.00	0%
IT, Administration and Printing	£600.00	£32.57	£600.00	0%
Northumbria in Bloom	£1,000.00		£1,000.00	0%
PAYE and Pensions	£4,081.00	£314.87	£4,081.00	0%
Play Equipment Maintenance	£5,000.00		£5,000.00	0%
Property Maintenance. Parish Council Building and MUGA (Formerly Property Maintenance)	£2,000.00	£126.00	£2,000.00	0%
Grounds Maintenance (Formerly Maintenance The Front and Water Park) Playing Field and MUGA including strimming and tree work not Viewing Platform	£4,000.00		£4,000.00	0%
Reservoir Registration	£6,500.00		£6,500.00	0%
Salaries	£20,994.00	£1,681.45	£20,994.00	0%
Section 137 Grants	£2,000.00	£1,240.00	£2,000.00	0%
Subscriptions	£979.75	£815.75	£979.75	0%
Utilities	£4,100.00	£229.59	£4,100.00	0%
Website	£250.00		£250.00	0%
Projects	£3,705.00	£1,404.00	£3,705.00	0%
Contingency	£7,263.25		£7,263.25	0%
Transfer from Community Account to Business Premium Account 2	£0.00	£1,404.00	£1,404.00	
Totals	£76,430.00	£7,258.23	£77,834.00	1.84%
4. Lloyds Treasurer's Account Expenditure	£84.00	£7.00	£84.00	0%
5. Darlington Credit Union Expenditure	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0%

3. Bank Reconciliation

Community Account held by the Parish Council	
Opening Balance	£9,645.70
Closing Balance	£68,208.08

Community Account held at the bank		Difference
Opening Balance	£10,045.70	
Closing Balance	£68,208.08	£0.00

4. Budget Pressures

- Repairs to the MUGA Wall Repoint brickwork - £24840. Overclad brickwork with SGL panels - £46274.85. Render the walls but not recommended because they could get damaged more easily – approx. £25,00
- Viewing Platform, Middleton One Row. Costs in excess of £60,000.
- Play Area. Revamp
- Repairs to the wall and jetty at the Model Boat Club building. Costs unknown
- Complying with the Reservoirs Act. Annual costs £600 per year. Additional costs for new Reservoir Engineer's fees. Fees unknown at time of writing.

Chairman's Signature.....



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Date.....

10/6/2024,

APPENDIX 2 TIMETABLE OF CONTROLS MAY 2024

ACTION	ACTIONEE	COMPLETION
Provide the Parish Council with the Financial Report which gives the balances of the accounts, a statement of receipts and payments to date under each budget heading, comparing actual expenditure to the appropriate date against that planned as shown in the budget (the Progress against the Budget Statement), the Bank Reconciliation and Budget Pressures. Provide the bank statements with the Financial Report.	Clerk	The Financial Report will be submitted to the Parish Council on the 13 th May, 2024.
Prepare a schedule of payments, including regular payments covered by standing orders requiring authorisation, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting and, together with the relevant invoices, present the schedule to the Parish Council. The Parish Council shall review the schedule for compliance and, having satisfied itself shall authorise payment by a minuted resolution.	Clerk	The Agenda for the Parish Council on the 13th May 2024 gives the list of payments in the Appendix
Counterfoils of cheques (if used) to be signed by the signatories.		All payments will be made by bank transfer following the Parish Council meeting on the 13th May, 2024. Standing order payments are reported to the Parish Council in the Appendix to the Agenda.
The Parish Council to be notified of any losses, liabilities or damage which could lead to claims.	Clerk	No losses, liabilities or damage have occurred since the last report in April, 2024.
Hold the Annual Parish Council Meeting. The Annual Parish Council Meeting will carry out the following: - Election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman for the year. - Chairman to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office. - The Chairman's Annual Report. - Committee Reports. - Agree the Committee Structure and Membership for the forthcoming year. - Agree the Parish Councillors with Co-ordinating Responsibilities including the two Councillors to carry out the quarterly	Clerk	The Annual Parish Council meeting will be held on the 20 th May, 2024. The agenda will consist of the points given in the Action column.

Chairman's Signature.....

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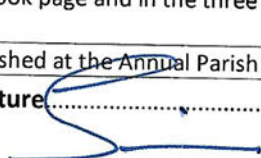
Date.....

10/6/2024

audit of accounts. • Agree the appointments to outside bodies. • AGAR. a. Receive the Internal Auditor's Report. b. Consider the Annual Governance Statement Compliance Report and approve Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement). To c. Examine the calculations for Section 2 and approve Section 2 (Accounting Statements). d. Examine the Annual Internal Auditor's Report, Bank Reconciliation Explanation of		
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ACTION	ACTIONEE	COMPLETION
Variances in Section 2 and set the date for the Public Rights of Inspection of the Accounts e. Examine the documents to be sent to the External Auditors: Internal Auditor's Report. Bank Reconciliation. Explanation of variances in Section 2. Contact Details. f. Public Rights of Inspection Notice. • Appoint the Internal Auditor. • Review and adopt Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, General Reserves Policy and Procurement Policy. • Review Staff Payments. • Review the Assets Register. • Review the banking arrangements including the bank mandate and bank transfer arrangements and signatories of cheques and debit card. • Confirm the Insurance arrangements. • Agree the payment of Subscriptions schedule for the year: ○ Website Hosting Fee due in April. ○ Zoom registration fee due in April. ○ Information Commissioner GDPR Annual Fee due in August. ○ Friends of the Stockton and Darlington Railway due in August. • Determine dates for Parish Council meetings in the year.		
Send the AGAR and supporting documents to be sent to the External Auditor and post the Public Rights of Inspection notice on the website, the Facebook page and in the three noticeboards.	Clerk	Following approval by the Annual Parish Council meeting.
Committees established at the Annual Parish	Committees	The first Committee meeting after the

Chairman's Signature



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Date

10/6/2024

Council meeting to review their terms of reference		Annual Parish Council meeting
Arrange monthly staff salary and pension payments.	Clerk and Chairman	After authorisation by the Parish Council on the 13 th May, 2024
Complete the on line HMRC staff payments return.	Clerk	During the week commencing 27 th May, 2024.

APPENDIX 3 PLANNING DECISIONS TAKEN BY DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL SINCE APRIL 2024.

24/00273/TCN. Notification under Electronic Communications Code (Reg 5) of intention to remove 6 No. existng antennas to be replaced with 6 No. replacement antennas, 6 No. RRU's and 1 No. 300mm dish on the existing 32M lattice tower and associated internal works. O2 Telecommunications Mast (809) Mill Lane Middleton St George Darlington. Permitted development.

21/00529/FUL. Demolition of existing agricultural buildings and structures and development of 260 no. dwellings including access, open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage systems and associated infrastructure and works (Amended plans received 18th September 2023) (Amended description) (BNG information received 24th October 2023). Land To The West & South Of Station Road Station Road MIDDLETON ST GEORGE DARLINGTON. Granted, subject to Section 106 agreement.

16/00976/OUT. Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and the erection of up to 260 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and associated access, landscaping and engineering works with details of appearance, layout, landscape and scale reserved (Amended plans received 1st February 2019 and 13th May 2019) (Additional Information received 1st February 2019). Land To The West & South Of Station Road Station Road MIDDLETON ST GEORGE DARLINGTON. Application withdrawn.

24/00384/NMA. Non Material Amendment of planning permission 23/00940/FUL dated 22 Nov 2023 (Erection of a detached outbuilding within the rear garden for use as a home office/gym and store) to permit the installation of a WC within outbuilding. 8 Coatham Avenue Middleton St George Darlington DL2 1AJ. Approved.

**STATEMENT ON THE INCIDENT AT THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ON MONDAY 13TH MAY, 2024
BY ALAN MACNAB.**

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Hazel Bullock, invited Councillor Pease to speak during the Ward Councillors Report which is a standard item on the agenda of all Parish Council meetings.

Councillor Pease reported that there was nothing to report.

The Chairman asked if Parish Councillors had any comments or questions to Councillor Pease. Parish Councillor Darling then read a prepared list of questions to Councillor Pease.

The first question Parish Councillor Darling asked Councillor Pease was “what do you do?” Councillor Pease responded that he looked after the welfare of the people in his ward. Councillor Darling then asked why he criticized the Parish Council on his Facebook blog. I did not hear the response from Councillor Pease.

Councillor Darling then asked Councillor Pease “why did you order the Litter Picker to work in the Water Park?” and then “where were you when the consultation on the Play Park was held on Saturday?”

I did not hear Councillor Pease’s response to these questions because noise came from the opposite end of the room to which I sat.

There was a reference to Section 106 money which had been allocated to the Community Centre for the car park and outdoor exercise equipment between Councillors Pease and Darling but I could not hear the details. Councillor Darling responded but again I could not hear the details of the response.

At this point both Councillors Darling and Pease shouted at one another. The Vice Chairman of the Parish Council, Councillor Adrian Marshall intervened and stated that he was not prepared to sit in a meeting when there was so much friction, the questions were not part of the meeting and this was not the time for Councillor Darling to be doing this. Councillor Marshall then left the room with a member of the public.

The Chairman stated that the Ward Councillors Report had been completed and the Parish Council should move on to the next item on the agenda.

Councillor Pease proceeded to leave the room. There were raised voices between Councillors Darling and Pease. At this point Councillor Darling rose from his chair and moved towards the door of the room which Councillor Pease was using to leave and physically assaulted Councillor Pease. I heard someone state to call for the police.

Councillor Pease left the building. I understand that Councillor Pease’s spectacles were broken in the attack.

Councillor Darling returned to his seat.

The Chairman stated that the conduct by Councillor Darling was disgraceful and called for a vote on whether Councillor Darling should be asked to leave the meeting. The vote was unanimous and Councillor Darling was asked to leave the meeting which he did.

Alan Macnab,
31st May, 2024.

DECISION NOTICE (142/2024)

Introduction

1. On 14 May 2024, Darlington Borough Council received a complaint from Member of the Public 1 about the conduct of Councillor Colin Pease.
2. The complaint arose from a meeting of Middleton St George Parish Council held on 13 May 2024 and an exchange of words between Cllr Pease and Cllr David Darling ([REDACTED]) that led to a physical altercation.
3. This Decision Notice is my assessment of how the complaint about Cllr Pease should be dealt with. [Note - I have also received a complaint from Cllr Pease about the conduct of Cllr Darling and a separate assessment and Decision Notice has been completed concerning that complaint].

Background Information

4. Member of the Public 1 attended the Middleton St George Parish Council on the 13 May 2024 (as a member of the public). Member of the Public 1 [REDACTED] Cllr Darling, who is a member of Middleton St George Parish Council.
5. Cllr Pease is a Member of Darlington Borough Council and was attending the meeting of Middleton St George Parish Council in his capacity as a Ward Councillor. He is a former member of Middleton St George Parish Council.
6. Item 3 of the Parish Council Agenda was 'The Ward Councillors report'. During that agenda item Cllr Darling asked Cllr Pease a number of questions.

The Complaint

7. Member of the Public 1 sets out [REDACTED] complaint as follows:

"I write to make an official complaint regarding the verbally and physically aggressive behaviour by Cllr Pease in the Middleton St George Parish Council meeting last night.

Cllr Darling questioned Pease on his seemingly negative attitude and approach to matters concerning the Ward. Some of which included him complaining about the Parish Council as well as Officers of Darlington Borough Council, the payment of public funds to a private business, his questioning the allocation of 106 monies to the community centre, and '**ordering**' the litter picker to get on with his work.

Cllr Pease became verbally aggressive, leaning across the table and pointing his finger at Cllr Darling, saying (I quote), "why are you sticking your nose in", followed by "'you can carry on running your own little fiefdom without me" and finally "I'm not listening to that prat" before heading for the door. At this point the altercation between them became physical, and I witnessed at least two punches being thrown at Cllr Darling's face by Cllr Pease. The incident has been reported to the Police. I have evidence of what was said should the Police require this.

Cllr Pease's behaviour is totally unacceptable and has caused me severe distress and anxiety for what was a very frightening episode to witness. At the very worst I would expect a written apology from Cllr Pease for the distress caused and at best I would like to see him removed from office."

Contact with Cllr Pease

8. Cllr Pease has been advised about the complaint and his response is as follows:

"The complaint submitted by Member of the Public 1 is a complete distortion of the facts. This is an act of desperation to cover for the outrageous and violent behaviour [REDACTED]. It was witnessed by members of the Parish Council, two of whom have phoned me since to check on my well-being, and I was told there was a consensus of support for my position.

I was, of course, totally surprised by this assault, as were the other councillors. [REDACTED] along with another councillor, have been looking for issues to criticise me about ever since they lost last year's election. They do not like me asking questions about the funding received by the Community Centre as the sole beneficiary of any development S106 funding and have therefore concocted a pathetic list of 'complaints' in order to blacken my name. They clearly resent my popularity and the support of many of the residents, undermining their goal of being Ward Councillors themselves. This has clearly been building up over some time and he has now had to resort to violence as a last resort.

I have reported the assault to the police and have arranged to be interviewed and provide a statement on Friday evening.

Just to get the facts straight events unfolded as follows:

I arrived at the MSG council meeting at 6.30pm on Monday 13 May.

Item 3 is Ward Councillors Report. I reported that I did not have any major issues to discuss as my recent work had focussed on resident queries and assistance. However, I am happy to take questions.

After a pause, Cllr Darling promptly started to read off a pre-prepared list of complaints against me. This had not been approved by the Parish Council and they were unaware of his intended action.

On completion of his tirade, I said it was a significant list and I would address each point in turn.

I had barely finished commenting on the first point before he took off his glasses and stormed towards me. I could tell by the fury on his face that something unpleasant was about to happen and stood up as he approached. I didn't even get chance to put my notes down before he pushed me and then grabbed me around the head breaking my glasses. There was a scuffle as I defended myself before Parish Cllrs intervened to break it up. Even then he was struggling with them to get at me.

Only once we had been separated did I say some of the things reported by Member of the Public 1 as I was shocked and angry.

I was then carefully escorted outside by the Chair and Dep Chair. They apologised on behalf of the council and said they were not party to his behaviour and assisted me in regaining my composure as I was clearly shaken by the assault before driving home. Cllr Darling was ordered to leave and this was supported by the council members.

I have photographic evidence of the injuries caused, blood on clothes and broken glasses, which I will offer to the police.

As you can see, this differs significantly from the account by Member of the Public 1 and I am 100% convinced this accurate version of events will be supported by Parish Council members as witnesses.

It is clear that Cllr Darling is unfit to serve on the Parish Council and, with such a volatile temper, any public post. Regrettably, although my relationship with the Parish Council is sound, it cannot continue whilst he is in post and he has irretrievably damaged any working relationship with the Community Centre.

It is I who requires a public apology, for him to be removed from the Parish Council, and reimbursement for repair to my glasses."

Members Code of Conduct

9. The Code is available here - [Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 \(darlington.gov.uk\)](https://www.darlington.gov.uk/local-government-association-model-councillor-code-of-conduct-2020)
10. The most relevant parts of the Code of Conduct are respect (Section 1) and disrepute (Section 5). I have reproduced these below:

1.Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

(explanatory text):

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack. In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors. In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor- officer protocol.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

(explanatory text):

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute. You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct bringing the role of councillor or the authority into disrepute.

11. The allegation by Member of the Public 1 is serious and subject to what can be proved to have occurred, a case of failure to treat with respect and also bringing the role or authority into disrepute could be established.

Independent Person

12. I asked the Independent Person for her views about the complaint.
13. The Independent Person considered that there could be a potential breach of the Code of Conduct and that the complaint should be investigated.

Decision

14. I have considered the facts available to me and taken into account the opinion of the Independent Person before reaching my decision.
15. In conducting the assessment, I have considered whether a case can be made out of a potential breach of the Code of Conduct and if so, what should be done.
16. In my view there is material here for a potential finding of a breach of the Members Code of Conduct (subject to an investigation and finding by a Complaints Panel).
17. There is also a complaint from Cllr Pease arising from the same meeting and incident. As there are common issues of fact to be considered I intend to appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation into both matters. I shall confirm who will be conducting the investigation.

Considerations about the investigation

18. Both Cllr Pease and Cllr Darling have referred what happened to the police. I have made the police aware of my involvement and asked if they have any issue with a Code of Conduct investigation proceeding at the same time as a police investigation. I am awaiting clarification. Until such time as I hear back the intention is to progress a code of conduct investigation. If the police raise concerns about the impact of this on any criminal process a further decision may need to be taken about whether to suspend the investigation until the criminal process is concluded.

Terms of reference

19. Under the s.28(6) of the Localism Act 2011 Darlington Borough Council made arrangements for decisions to be taken about whether complaints should be investigated and a process for investigation and determination commenced. In order to carry out this role on 20 March 2014 the Council approved a procedure for handling complaints which came into effect on 1 May 2014 and this is set out in the Council's Procedure for Handling Complaints Against Members.

20. The exercise that I have conducted was an initial assessment of the complaint to determine how it should be dealt with.

Appeal and further consideration

21. There is no internal appeal within the Council about my decision.
22. If you are dissatisfied about the way in which your complaint has been dealt with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman may consider the complaint from the perspective of whether there has been maladministration (you should note that this is not the same as a right of appeal). Further information is available from the attached link <https://www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint/fact-sheets/other-topics/complaints-about-standards-and-member-conduct>

Luke Swinhoe,
Assistant Director, Law and Governance
Monitoring Officer

30 May 2024

Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members

Introduction

1. This Code has been adopted by Darlington Borough Council in compliance with the requirements set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011. This Code defines the standards of conduct which will be required of all Members and co-opted Members of the Council.
2. This Code of Conduct is based on the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct, which was developed in 2020.
3. In addition to the Code of Conduct, the Council has adopted the seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) and 9 principles of conduct developed by the LGA for members. Members will be expected to act in a manner that is consistent with the principles and the principles will be used to help in interpreting the Code. It is however only the Code of Conduct that is enforceable, rather than the Principles of Conduct. More information is set out below under the heading of General Principles.
4. Any person may make a written complaint to the Monitoring Officer that a Member or Co-opted Member has broken the Code. Details about how to complain and the way that complaints are dealt can be found on the Council's website [arrangements-for-dealing-with-members-complaints.pdf \(darlington.gov.uk\)](https://www.darlington.gov.uk/arrangements-for-dealing-with-members-complaints.pdf)
5. It is the personal responsibility of each Member and Co-opted Member to make sure that she/he complies with the requirements of this Code. Advice on the requirements may be sought from the Authority's Monitoring Officer, or a personal legal adviser, however, ultimately it is a decision for the Member or Co-opted Member.
6. In this Code, words denoting any gender shall include all genders.
7. This Code shall be subject to any subsequent changes of law after adoption

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code is encouraged. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

General principles of councillor conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles (Appendix A).

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- (a) I act with integrity and honesty;
- (b) I act lawfully;
- (c) I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- (d) I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.

In undertaking my role:

- (a) I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community;
- (b) I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person;
- (c) I avoid conflicts of interest;
- (d) I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- (e) I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

These principles will be used to help in better understanding and interpreting the Code. However only the specific provisions of conduct set out below are enforceable and not the principles themselves.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:

- (a) You misuse your position as a councillor;
- (b) Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- (a) At face-to-face meetings;
- (b) At online or telephone meetings;
- (c) In written communication;
- (d) In verbal communication;
- (e) In non-verbal communication;
- (f) In electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.

Support and advice

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct.

Standards of councillor conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As a councillor:

1.1 I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.

1.2 I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor- officer protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As a councillor:

2.1 I do not bully any person.

2.2 I do not harass any person.

2.3 I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the council

As a councillor:

3.1 I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As a councillor:

4.1 I do not disclose information:

- a. given to me in confidence by anyone
- b. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless
 - i. I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;
 - ii. I am required by law to do so;
 - iii. the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - iv. the disclosure is:
 - 1. reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - 2. made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and
 - 3. I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.

4.2 I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

4.3 I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

5. Disrepute

As a councillor:

5.1 I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in you or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As a councillor:

6.1 I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

7. Use of local authority resources and facilities

As a councillor:

7.1 I do not misuse council resources.

7.2 I will, when using the resources of the local authority or authorising their use by others:

- a. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and**
- b. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.**

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

Examples include:

- (a) Office support;**

- (b) Stationery;
- (c) Equipment such as phones, and computers;
- (d) Transport;
- (e) Access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As a Councillor:

8.1 I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.

8.2 I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.

8.3 I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be a complainant, witness or involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.

8.4 I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the local authority

9. Interests

As a councillor:

9.1 I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might

arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in **Table 1**, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As a councillor:

- 10.1 I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.**
- 10.2 I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.**
- 10.3 I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.**

In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

Appendices

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix B Registering interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in "The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012". You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

"Disclosable Pecuniary Interest" means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

"Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A 'sensitive interest' is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a 'sensitive interest' you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interests

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***directly relates*** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which ***affects*** –
 - (a) Your own financial interest or well-being;
 - (b) A financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - (c) A financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2**;you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied.
9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) ***affects*** the financial interest or well-being:
 - (a) To a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
 - (b) A reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

10. Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Interests which do not prevent participation

11. You can participate in a decision that relates to the functions of the Council in respect of:-
 - (a) Housing, where you are a tenant of the Council provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
 - (b) School meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
 - (c) Statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
 - (d) An allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
 - (e) Any ceremonial honour given to members; and
 - (f) Setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (*subject to the paragraph below*).

Local Government Finance Act 1992

12. You should note that under Section 106 the Local Government Finance Act 1992, that at any meeting considering the setting of council tax, if you are in arrears of Council Tax (2 months or more) you must make a declaration that you are in Council Tax arrears and you cannot vote on the setting of Council tax. You may commit a criminal offence if you fail comply.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the council) made to the councillor during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a councillor, or towards his/her election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of*) and the council — (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the council. 'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the councillor or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the council for a month or longer

Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the councillor's knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the council; and (b) the tenant is a body that the councillor, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	<i>Any beneficial interest in securities* of a body where— (a) that body (to the councillor's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the council; and (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the councillor, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the councillor is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</i>

* director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

*'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registrable Interest:

- (a) Any unpaid directorships;
- (b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority;
- (c) Any body:
 - (i) Exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (ii) Directed to charitable purposes, or;
 - (iii) One of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

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Criticize your colleague regarding her voting at the Planning Meeting when discussing the Story Development

Something that was not necessary because it was in the Local Plan which started in 2016 during your tenure as Chairman of the PC and alongside your planning guru, Mrs Gilsagon

You criticize the Parish Council regarding the Play Park and in-active swing – and yet don't even bother to show up for the Public Consultation held Saturday.

You question why 106 funds should be made available to the community centre for the new car park

You question 106 funds for the community centre outdoor gym equipment – which incidentally is having an earlier inspection by the suppliers because of its tremendous use

You complain that the community centre is receiving funds from Story Homes which were identified at that Planning meeting and asked for by the community centre

And...the Community 1000 pound part of the Stronger Communities Fund that Ward Councillors have. payment you made an award of 500 pounds to the Medical Centre, A business, why?

What help are you and particularly when you cause dissent in the village when criticizing the Officers of DBC

I could go on with litter picking, John Lynn suggesting you 'ordered' him down to the Water Park – what authority do you have to do this?

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