Leicestershire County Council

Mr Joseph Boam CC
County Councillor for Whitwick

Date: 2 November 2026
My Ref:
Your Ref:
Contact: Fiona McMillan
Phone:
Email:

Dear Mr Boam CC,

Member Conduct Panel hearing 30 October 2026 – finding of breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct

I am writing in my capacity as the Council's Monitoring Officer, at the direction of the Council's Member Conduct Panel, following the hearing held on the afternoon of Friday, 30 October 2026.

At that hearing, the Panel decided to proceed in your absence, noting that you had not provided a reason for your absence, and to hold the hearing in public.

The Panel unanimously found that you had breached the Members' Code of Conduct in relation to a series of Facebook posts concerning the rerouting of Arriva Service 12 along Church Lane, Whitwick. The posts, which included a digitally created caricature, attributed responsibility to Mr O'Shea CC, the former Cabinet Lead Member for Highways, for the rerouting and the resulting traffic difficulties.

The Panel's findings

The Panel unanimously found breaches of the following provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct:

- **Paragraph 2.28.2** – requires members to cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination;
- **Paragraph 2.3.1** – requires a member to treat other members and members of the public with respect;

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- **Paragraph 2.16** – provides that a member must not bring their role or the Council into disrepute or conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their role or the Council into disrepute.

In relation to paragraph **2.28.2,** the Panel found that your failure to cooperate with the investigation amounted to a breach of that requirement and contributed to an unnecessary use of public resources.

The Panel found that, in relation to paragraph **2.3.1**, robust political criticism, including satire, humour and ridicule, attracts a high degree of protection under Article 10 and does not of itself amount to a failure to treat another councillor with respect. However, the Panel considered that your posts went beyond legitimate satire or political criticism. They personally identified Mr O'Shea CC and attributed responsibility to him for decisions concerning the routing of buses along Church Lane without a sufficient factual basis. The Panel found that those assertions were made at least recklessly as to their truth. The repetition of the allegations across a number of posts compounded their impact and reinforced their personalised nature. Taken together, the Panel considered that the posts constituted a personal attack rather than simply criticism of political decisions or policies and therefore amounted to a failure to treat Mr O'Shea CC with respect.

In relation to paragraph **2.16**, the Panel accepted the investigators' conclusion that a number of statements in the posts were presented as facts but were not supported by the available evidence. These included statements attributing responsibility for the rerouting of Service 12 along Church Lane to Mr O'Shea CC and the former Conservative administration and stating that the route had been signed off as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan in December 2024. However, the Panel found that the proposal to reroute Service 12 along Church Lane arose after the May 2025 election; that the rerouting was a commercial decision by Arriva; that Mr O'Shea CC had ceased to be the relevant Cabinet Lead Member by that time; and that you had been informed of the proposed route change in July 2025. The Panel therefore concluded that the publication and repetition of materially inaccurate statements, presented as fact and used to attribute personal and political responsibility, were capable of lowering public confidence in the office of councillor and in the Council's decision-making processes. The Panel considered that this demonstrated a lack of integrity and brought your role as a councillor into disrepute.

The Panel gave substantial weight to the protection afforded to political expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. However, it concluded that the findings of breach were justified and proportionate because they concerned the repeated presentation of materially inaccurate factual assertions attributing personal responsibility to Mr O'Shea CC, rather than merely political opinion, satire, exaggeration or criticism.

Sanctions imposed

Having made the above findings, the Panel unanimously imposed the following sanctions:

1. **Formal Censure**: You are formally censured for the conduct set out in the Investigation Report;

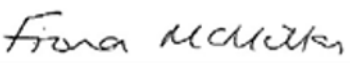
2. **Formal notification:** the Monitoring Officer is to write to you setting out the Panel's decision and sanctions imposed;

3. **Public apology:** You are required to issue a written apology to Mr O'Shea CC, using the wording agreed by the Panel, within 14 days of the hearing. The apology will be published on the Member Conduct webpage of the Council's website alongside this letter. The agreed wording is appended below.

The Panel further decided that a copy of this letter is to be published on the Council's website and displayed on the Member Conduct Webpage for a period of six months.

Please treat this letter as formal notification of the Panel's decision and the sanctions imposed.

Yours sincerely,



Fiona McMillan
Chief Legal Officer & Monitoring Officer

Agreed wording of public apology

I apologise to Mr O'Shea for publishing and repeating inaccurate statements which attributed responsibility to him for the rerouting of Service 12 along Church Lane. I accept that the available evidence did not support those statements and that I should have checked the position before publishing them.