

**MINUTES of the meeting of Standards Committee held at
The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road,
Hereford on Friday, 14th January, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.**

Present: Robert Rogers(Independent Member) (Chairman)

**Councillors John Edwards and Peter Harling
David Stevens (Independent Member)
Richard Gething (Parish and Town Council Representative)
John Hardwick (Parish and Town Council Representative)**

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

**34. HEARING FOLLOWING AN INVESTIGATION UNDER SECTION 59 OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**

This Committee heard an allegation against Councillor Ray Cooper, a member of Bromyard and Winslow Town Council, that he failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.

**35. REPORT OF AN INVESTIGATION UNDER SECTION 59 OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**

The Committee considered details of an investigation into an allegation against Councillor Ray Cooper under section 59 of the Local Government Act 2000 which had been undertaken by Steven Kingston, an Ethical Standards Officer, together with the report of his findings.

36. DECISION

Having considered the written evidence put forward and all the evidence presented to it at the hearing, the Committee made its decision which is summarised in the following Decision Notice:

SBE CASE NUMBER(S)	SBE4483.03, SBE4517.03, SBE4530.03
MEMBER	Councillor Ray Cooper
AUTHORITY	Bromyard and Winslow Town Council
SUMMARY OF ALLEGATION	It is alleged that Councillor Ray Cooper breached the Code of Conduct by: on 22 July 2003 failing to treat the Clerk of the Council with respect; and on 29 July 2003 failing to treat the Clerk, Councillor Pearl Briggs, and the Assistant Clerk with respect.
DATE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARING	Friday 14 January 2004
STANDARDS COMMITTEE PANEL MEMBERS	Mr Robert Rogers (Independent Member) (Chairman), Councillor John Edwards (Herefordshire Council), Mr Richard Gething (Parish Council Representative), Mr John Hardwick (Parish Council Representative), Councillor Peter Harling (Herefordshire Council), Mr David Stevens (Independent Member)

DECISION

We have carefully considered the evidence and arguments presented before us today. We find that on 22 July 2003 and on 29 July 2003 Councillor Ray Cooper breached paragraph 2(b) of the Council's Code of Conduct which requires that members should treat others with respect.

We have taken into account the evidence of Councillor Dauncey that Councillor Cooper's behaviour has improved beyond all recognition, and that both he and Councillor Briggs, the Mayor, have told us that he is now a very good councillor, and we have given weight to the fact that these are the two of the three complainants who are still on the council.

We have also had in mind the very lengthy period of time this matter has been outstanding. But in view of the breach of paragraph 2(b) of the Code we have no alternative but to impose a penalty, which is one of censure.

Our recommendation to Bromyard and Winslow Town Council is that they proceed with the training for councillors mentioned in Councillor Briggs's evidence this morning. The Herefordshire Association of Local Councils and this Committee are ready to support that process.

We have significant concerns about the length of time this investigation took to be completed, and this and other procedural matters will be covered in our full decision.

Our Decision Notice will be made available today and will be posted on the Herefordshire Council's website today. Our full decision will be published as soon as possible.

Brockington
35 Hafod Road, Hereford
Date: 14 January 2005