Decision Notice

Date of Determination:	16th October 2026
Complainant:	Councillor Lynette Bowers-Flint
Councillor:	Councillor Michael Staines
Investigating Officer:	Shahin Ismail

Summary of Complaint:

On 3 November 2025, the Council received a complaint from Councillor Bowers-Flint regarding comments made by Councillor Staines as part of the Public Question Time at a Planning Committee meeting on 28 October 2025. The complaint expressed concern that the statement was misleading and dishonest and could result in the integrity of the Planning Committee being brought into question, decisions taken could be subject to legal challenge, and sullied the name and professionalism of Council Officers.

Code of Conduct

The Complaint was considered against the following provisions set out within the Braintree District Council Code of Conduct:

a. I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute;
b. I treat other Councillor's […] with respect; and
c. I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf or, the local authority.

Standards Hearing Findings:

On 16 October 2026, the Standards Sub-Committee having regard to the views of the Independent Person and the information contained within the investigation report, and having had an opportunity to hear from the investigator and Councillor Staines directly, determined that Councillor Staines conduct did breach the first obligation under the Councils Code of Conduct, namely that his actions had brought his role as a Councillor and the Council's into disrepute.

The Standards Sub-Committee, having regard to the information before it, agreed with the findings set out within the investigation report, that Councillor Staines had not breached the remaining two obligations.

The Standards Sub-Committee considered that the statement made at the Planning Committee could be considered as attempting to draw a connection between the Council, a political party, the developer and their associated companies. The Standards Sub-Committee were satisfied that on the information before them that there was no evidence that such a link existed. Whilst a Councillor is able to robustly represent community concerns, make statements and raise questions, it was important that those issues were raised in a constructive and professional way, and that sweeping statements are not made without the benefit of an evidence base, and that wording used is clear so

as to avoid any misinterpretation.

Sanctions

The Standards Sub-Committee in reaching its decision has imposed the following sanctions:

a. Councillor Staines is required to issue an apology that will be read out at the next available meeting of the Planning Committee. Such apology must acknowledge that the implied link between the parties did not exist. The words of that apology must be agreed with the Monitoring Officer.

Kim Mayo

Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer