

# Case Summary - Wyre Borough Council

**Case no.** SfE-000107 SfE-000118, SfE-000121, SfE-000122  
**Member(s):** Councillor Peter Gibson  
**Date received:** 26 Nov 2010  
**Date completed:** 21 Feb 2011

## Allegation:

Failure to treat the leader of the opposition group with respect and, in so doing, bringing his office and the authority into disrepute

## Standards Board outcome:

The ethical standards officer found that the member did not breach the Code of Conduct .

## Case Summary

1. Four similar complaints were made against Councillor Gibson, the Leader of Wyre Borough Council. These were that he had failed to treat a political opponent with respect during the Council meeting on 21 October 2010, falsely accusing him of a breach of confidence, breaking an undertaking regarding the calling of a by-election, having a poor attendance record at Council meetings and being opportunistic and having a negative approach. He was also accused of showing disrespect to members of the public who had attended the meeting to present a petition regarding the placing of memorials in Council cemeteries. It was alleged that the disrespect shown to his political opponent brought both his own office as a councillor and the authority into disrepute.
2. Councillor Gibson explained why he considered that there had been a breach of confidence and explained the undertaking regarding the by-election. Any undertakings given were made in the course of a private conversation and could not be verified. The ethical standards officer (ESO) considered that it was plausible that Councillor Gibson had formed the view that there had been a breach of undertakings given.
3. The DVD recording of the Council meeting showed that there were robust exchanges between both parties. However, the ESO took the view that Councillor Gibson's language and the content of his remarks fell within what a reasonable observer might regard as in keeping with normal political debate. The ESO found nothing improper in Councillor Gibson's views or in the way in which they were expressed.
4. The ESO did not find that Councillor Gibson had failed to treat his political opponent with respect. Given that finding, he did not consider that Councillor Gibson's conduct had brought either his office or the authority into disrepute.

## **Relevant paragraphs of the Code of Conduct**

3(1), 5

**18 April 2011**