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Councillor David Farry

25 September 2019

Dear Councillor Farry

**Re - COM 211-213
Councillor D Farry Letter of Censure**

I write further to the Standards Committee Hearing Panel on 17 September 2019, which considered a number of complaints against you. This letter relates to complaints COM 211-213

The Monitoring Officer received three complaints regarding your behaviour at the Lighting of the Beacon of Hope Service at Ferryhill Town Hall on 11 November 2019. It was alleged that you attended the service whilst under the influence of alcohol. It was further alleged that you did not complete your Mayoral duties as detailed in the Order of Service nor were you wearing your Mayoral Chains of Office.

The complaints were referred for investigation on 3 January 2019 and the Hearing Panel was convened on 17 September 2019 to consider the Investigating Officers report, your written response to the report and supporting documentation and representations made during the hearing.

The Panel found that you were acting in your official capacity as Mayor at the Beacon Lighting Ceremony. It did not accept your account that you attended the service as a private individual. Members of the public were aware of your position and there was an expectation arising out of material published in advance of the ceremony that you would be in attendance as Mayor. It was therefore reasonable for people to assume that you were attending as Mayor regardless of whether you were wearing the Mayoral Chains. The Panel found that there was no evidence to suggest the complaint was politically motivated or that the complainants had conspired to bring the complaints.

Legal & Democratic Services, Resources

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The Panel also noted that there were inconsistencies in your account. On the one hand, you were not drunk or unstable but on the other you presented evidence as to why you were unstable. The Panel noted in particular that none of those organising the event were aware of the change of circumstances, which meant you were no longer able to attend the event. The Panel found that on the balance of probabilities, you were drunk. Accordingly, you were found to have breached paragraphs 1 and 6 of the Code of Conduct. The Panel considered that your behaviour at the event could reasonably be regarded as disrespectful and brought your office as Mayor into disrepute.

The Panel considered that the public expect a higher standard of behaviour from the Mayor than other elected Members and the behaviour complained of, fell short of what was expected from you both as Mayor and an elected Member.

The Panel were disappointed that they were given cause to be so critical of your behaviour and decided to censure you.

Please note that this formal censure will be published on the Durham County Council website.

Yours sincerely

Councillor B Kellett
Chair of the Standards Committee Hearing