

21 July 2025

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Kia ora [REDACTED]

Official information Request: Conduct complaint against South Wairarapa District Council Mayor

I am writing to you in response to your request received 14 July for the following information:

Could I please receive information held by the SWDC and referenced in the 11 July media report entitled "Conduct complaint against South Wairarapa mayor unfounded" (WTA). The text of this report is copied below to facilitate your prompt response to this request.

The requested information is:

- a) An advisory letter by Andrew Little of Gibson Sheat prepared for the SWDC, or directly for Mayor Martin Connolly, during 2025 in response to a formal complaint made against Mr Connolly under the Council's Code of Conduct.*
- b) A report by Scott Doolan of BusinessCentral prepared for the SWDC, or directly for Mayor Martin Connolly, during 2025 in response to a request that Mr Doolan investigate the complaint against Mr Connolly.*
- c) An answer to this question: What were the amounts paid by the Council in fees to Mr Little / Gibson Sheet and to Scott Doolan / BusinessCentral for their professional services?*

We have assessed your request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). I have received information to provide the following response:

- a) The letter received from Mr Little on 14 March 2025 is attached.
- b) The report prepared by Scott Doolan on 4 April 2025 is attached.
- c) No costs were incurred by the Council in relation to the Mayor's legal representation. However, an expenditure of approximately \$5,203.72 (exclusive of GST) to undertake an independent investigation, initiated under Clause 13.2 of the South Wairarapa District Council's Code of Conduct. This clause empowers the Council to commission an impartial and unbiased review in response to specific concerns raised.

We then received additional questions from you relating to this matter on 18 July and we have assessed your request under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). I can provide you with the following response:

- 1) *When complaints of this nature are made, the Code requires the Chief Executive to obtain an independent assessor's view on the seriousness of the complaint and appropriate next steps. You received such a view in writing from Gibson Sheat consultant Andrew Little on 14 March 2025. Given Mr Little's advice that the matter "failed to meet any factual or legal threshold for investigation by a wide margin", why did you thereafter commission an investigation?*

Mr Little was not engaged by SWDC, Mr Doolan was engaged to assess the complaint on behalf of SWDC.

- 2) *Did SWDC pay for the services of Mr Little as independent assessor? If so, what was this cost?*

No, Mr Little was engaged by Mayor Connelly personally.

- 3) *On what basis did SWDC contract Scott Doolan of BusinessCentral to undertake an independent investigation of the complaint? What was the cost to SWDC of using Mr Doolan's professional services?*

Mr Doolan was engaged to review the complaint and to advise if any further action was required. The engagement cost \$5,203.72 (exclusive of GST).

- 4) *Did you consult with any of SWDC's elected representatives, including Mr Connelly, Cr Sadler-Futter and/or Cr Plimmer, before deciding to contract Mr Doolan as an independent investigator?*

No. Please see extract from the Code of Conduct:

Principles

The following principles will guide the investigation into, and assessment of, complaints made against a member for breaching the Code of Conduct:

- » The complaints process will be independent, impartial, and respect members' privacy.

- 5) *What actions have you taken on the basis of Mr Doolan's investigation report, as received by your Principal Legal Advisor on 4 April 2025?*

None as no further action was recommended by the investigator. The response from the investigator was provided to Mayor Connelly and the matter deemed closed.

- 6) *Did you initiate any attempt at mediation between Mr Connelly and councilors over the substance of the complaint which was signed by Mr Plimmer and five others? If you did not attempt mediation as an option specified in the Code of Conduct, why not?*

The report from the investigator did not find grounds to proceed with the complaint. Please see extract below. Mediation is an option if the assessor does not dismiss the complaint.

Role of the initial assessor⁶

On receipt of a complaint an initial assessor will undertake an assessment to determine the relative merit and seriousness of the complaint, and the nature of the subsequent process that will be followed. The complaint may be dismissed if the initial assessor finds them to be trivial, vexatious, frivolous, or politically motivated.

If a complaint is not dismissed, the initial assessor (or independent investigator in a one-step process) may initiate one of the following:

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. If this request is selected it will be published at <https://swdc.govt.nz/lgoima-proactive-release/>, with your personal information removed.

You have a right to request a review by the Ombudsman on this response. Further information about this process can be found on <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/what-ombudsman-can-help/complaints-about-government-agencies/how-make-complaint> or email info@ombudsman.parliament.nz

Nāku noa, nā



Janice Smith

Chief Executive Officer

14 March 2025

By Email

Janice Smith
Chief Executive
South Wairarapa District Council
P O Box 6
Martinborough 5741

Email janice.smith@swdc.govt.nz

Dear Ms Smith

HW Mayor Martin Connelly - Council Code of Conduct Complaint

1. We act for His Worship the Mayor, Martin Connelly.
2. We refer to the letter dated 4 February 2025 from a number of South Wairarapa District Council ("SWDC") councillors¹ addressed to you and the deputy mayor regarding an alleged breach of the SWDC Code of Conduct and "the LGA". We shall refer to the letter as the complaint letter. The complaint letter was handed to Mr Connelly on 4 March 2025.
3. The complaint letter was not accompanied by any advice about how the complaint would be handled. On this basis, we assume the complaint will be handled in accordance with the code of conduct approved by the SWDC on 15 December 2021 which we further understand to be the code of conduct approved in accordance with clause 15 of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002 ("the Act") as required by section 48 of the Act.
4. We note the complaint letter was also addressed to the deputy mayor. It is not clear why the letter has been so addressed, and in doing so the members making the complaint have acted outside the requirements of the code of conduct. We will make no further reference to the deputy mayor because that position plays no role in the processing of the complaint.
5. Under clause 13 and Appendix C of the code of conduct, a complaint under the code of conduct which concerns the Mayor must be referred to you as chief executive. The code provides that the chief executive "will forward that complaint to an independent investigator for a preliminary assessment to determine whether the issue is sufficiently serious to be referred, with recommendations if necessary, to the Council or an adjudicative body for assessing and ruling on complaints". Although Appendix C requires the chief executive to inform the person complained about of the name of any investigator and the process for dealing with complaints, no such advice or information has been provided to Mr Connelly.
6. It is arguable that the chief executive can make an assessment of whether there is a matter fit for referral to an investigator for even a preliminary assessment. A complaint totally lacking any factual foundation or otherwise misconceived should not compel the chief executive of the local authority to incur the cost and inconvenience of referral to a third party.

¹ C Olds, R Gray, M Bosley, A Plimmer, K McAulay, A Ellims

7. For the reasons which follow, we contend the complaint letter is totally without factual foundation or is otherwise misconceived.
8. As we understand them, the complaints against Mr Connelly are:
 - (i) as a member of the SWDC Grants committee considering an application from (and awarding a grant to) Booktown Featherston, Mr Connelly “declined to identify any involvement or association with Booktown”, even though another member, on advice from staff, apparently declared a conflict of interest as a “friend of Booktown”, and
 - (ii) Mr Connelly nominated the chair of Booktown and “lobb[jed] councillors on behalf of his personal nomination” for a position as the SWDC appointee on Destination Wairarapa “without declaring a personal association with either the organisation or the individual he was nominating”.
9. The complaint letter concludes:

The failure to publicly disclose an association with Featherston Booktown, or a personal relationship with a person he was advocating for a council appointment, and then to use his position to secure financial gain for the organisation and attempt to secure a personal appointment is in clear violation of our Code of Conduct and the LGA and potentially opens up the entire council to an allegation of corruption.
10. The complaint letter asserts a “violation of our Code of Conduct and the LGA” but does not specify which parts of the code of conduct or “the LGA” (which we understand to refer to the Local Government Act 2002) have been clearly violated.
11. In reality, Mr Connelly has not breached the SWDC code of conduct. He has not even come close to breaching it.
12. Clause 7 of the SWDC code of conduct requires that members “not participate in any Council discussion or vote on any matter in which they have a pecuniary interest, other than an interest in common with the general public”. The clause refers to the Local Authorities (Members’ Interests) Act 1968 (“the LAMIA”). The term “pecuniary interest” is defined in section 5 of the Local Government Act 2002:

pecuniary interest, in relation to a member, means a matter or activity of financial benefit to the member.
13. The Local Government Act 2002, in sections 54A to 54H, sets out the requirements for pecuniary interests declarations. Section 54E(1)(e) requires disclosure of:

the name of any organisation or trust and a description of the main activities of that organisation or trust if –

 - (i) *the member is a member of the organisation, a member of the governing body of the organisation or a trustee of the trust (as applicable); and*

- (ii) *the organisation or trust receives funding from, or has applied to receive funding from, the local authority, local board, or community board to which the member has been elected.*

14. Section 6(1) of the LAMIA prohibits a member from voting on or taking part in the discussion of any matter in which the member has, directly or indirectly, any pecuniary interest. Subsection (2) defines pecuniary interest in terms of an ownership, employment or controlling stake in a company contracting with a local authority. The provisions of LAMIA do not apply to the complaint made against Mr Connelly.
15. In relation to the first complaint against Mr Connelly, that he continued to sit on the committee which awarded a grant to Booktown, we advise that Mr Connelly held no pecuniary interest in relation to Booktown. Booktown is a charitable trust. It does not have members. It has a board of trustees. Mr Connelly is not a member of the board of trustees. A person can be a “friend of Booktown” by making a contribution which funds book vouchers for children. Unlike a genuine membership-based organisation, a contribution of this nature to the Booktown Trust carries no ongoing obligations to the Trust, such as compliance with membership rules. Making a contribution to a charitable trust does not constitute a pecuniary interest in the charitable trust. It is not a matter or activity of beneficial interest to the donor. In any event, in Mr Connelly's case, as a matter of fact, he made no donation to Booktown in the financial year which is the subject of the complaint (FY 2023/24). There is no basis on which a declaration was required by Mr Connelly. We note that the complaint makes no claim that the grant to Booktown did not meet the relevant criteria for a grant. This is not surprising in view of the fact, as we understand it, that grants had been made previously to this recipient.
16. To the extent another member of the SWDC Grants committee disqualified themselves on the basis of advice from a staff member that being a friend of Booktown created a potential conflict of interest, that advice was plainly incorrect. Being a friend of Booktown by making a donation to it does not meet any definition of pecuniary interest (which is the mischief the SWDC code of conduct expressly seeks to address) and there cannot, therefore, be any question of a conflict of interest, nor a breach of the code of conduct.
17. For completeness, we draw your attention to advice from council officers that we have seen in relation to conflicts of interest. An example is as follows:

*I must also remind **ALL** elected officials to be recording **ANY** monetary gifts or donations to community groups so that we have a clear and transparent process for decision making. Making such gifts and donations is not the conflict, and anyone can make such payments if they wish to, **BUT** the potential for perceived conflict does arise if that support is not clearly notified and able to be considered.*

If you are a financial supporter of any community group, it may need to be taken into account if there is a funding request to Council. The members at the table need to be able to discuss whether the potentially conflicted person remains or removes themselves from the process.

This advice appears to hedge its bets (making a gift or donation is not the conflict; if you are a supporter, it may need to be taken into account), however we point out that it is not a

requirement of any legislation, nor of the code of conduct, to record “**ANY**” (which in context means “all”) monetary gifts or donations. The interests of transparency and the avoidance of corruption require effective steps preventing members from benefiting financially from decisions of the Council. It is possible members may make all sorts of donations, such as contributing to street collections, participating in a religious offertory (particularly in a religious organisation which enjoys rates relief) or other randomly solicited donations. None of these gives rise to a financial benefit to the donating member and so no conflict arises. It is possible the Council may have to revise some of its advice to members.

18. In relation to the second complaint against Mr Connelly, that he nominated a person who is the chairperson of the Booktown Trust board and that he “lobbied” for the appointment, we make the following comments:
- (i) it is not clear what the breach of the code of conduct is, but it is clear there is no pecuniary interest alleged
 - (ii) Mr Connelly, like other members, is likely to know a number of people in the community. Merely knowing someone who is nominated for a position, or even nominating that person, is not a conflict of interest unless that person has a close personal relationship (generally defined as a spouse, direct family member and sometimes a more distant family member such as an aunt, uncle, cousin, niece or nephew, or a business partner). Asserting there is a personal relationship, as the complaint letter does, is not enough to claim a conflict of interest
 - (iii) the person Mr Connelly nominated and supported is a well-known identity in Wellington and Wairarapa who has a strong marketing background and is a strong contributor to the community, and whose skill-set is consistent with the role which was the subject of appointment (a seat on the board of Destination Wairarapa)
 - (iv) the complaint letter does not specify what constitutes “lobbying”, but Mr Connelly advises he spoke in favour of his preferred candidate only at the meeting at which the appointment was made. That is what members should do. Speaking at an open meeting in favour of a candidate for a role which is contested does not constitute lobbying in the usually understood meaning of the term
 - (v) in any event, the candidate Mr Connelly spoke in favour of was not appointed. Another candidate, someone who also enjoys a high community profile in Wellington and Wairarapa and who is equally suited to the role, was the successful appointee.
19. It would, in our view, be an unusual form of accountability for a member to face a complaint for supporting an unsuccessful candidate or any other resolution. Such a consequence in such circumstances would be more likely to have a chilling effect on robust debate at the Council table and would almost certainly infringe on a member’s rights under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.

20. In our view, the complaint made about Mr Connelly fails to meet any factual or legal threshold for investigation by a wide margin. It would be a considerable waste of Council resources to embark on an investigation into a complaint that is so lacking.
21. We request confirmation of the following:
- (i) what steps you now intend to take in response to the complaint
 - (ii) in the event you refer the complaint to an investigator for a preliminary assessment, who the investigator is, as required by the SWDC code of conduct.
22. We advise that Mr Connelly reserves his rights in all respects.
23. We look forward to your response as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely
GIBSON SHEAT



Andrew Little
Consultant | Employment, Public, Litigation & Māori Development

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Partner Reference: **Dahl Calder**

4 April 2025

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
South Wairarapa District Council

Sent via email at: [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

COMPLAINT AGAINST MAYOR MARTIN CONNELLY

You engaged my services to conduct an independent assessment of the complaint made against the Mayor of South Wairarapa District Council ("SWDC"), Martin Connelly.

This letter outlines my commentary and findings:

1. The complaint is dated 14 March 2025 and signatories to this letter are six current councillors of the South Wairarapa District Council.
2. I note that in accordance with the SWDC Code of Conduct my role is to 'undertake an assessment to determine the relative merit and seriousness of the complaint, and the nature of the subsequent process that will be followed'. Further, 'the complaint may be dismissed if the initial assessor finds them to be trivial, vexatious, frivolous or politically motivated'.
3. The complaint letter states the following:

This complaint alleging that the Mayor has breached both our Code of Conduct and the LGA by failing to disclose associations, interests or membership in an organisation, namely Featherston Booktown, and then used his position on the SWDC Grants committee to secure a grant of approximately \$25,500 during the FY 2023-2024, the largest single grant in this triennium.

There is no doubt that Mr Connelly has made numerous donations to local organisations as he has often stated so in his facebook posts and public statements. Naturally there is nothing wrong with making personal donations. Of concern however, as shown by the official register and minutes of meetings, is that Mr Connelly has repeatedly failed to disclose such donations and or interactions/associations and yet continues to sit on the SWDC Grants Committee approving the applications made by those same organisations for ratepayer funded grants.

A very public example of this occurred in the SWDC grants committee, when deliberating the particular grant to Booktown. The Chair of the committee asked for advice from staff if being a friend of Booktown created a potential conflict of interest. He was advised that it could be interpreted as such and so he removed himself from any further involvement

in the application deliberations having publicly acknowledged his previous support of Booktown.

Mr Connelly, however, despite that very public example of how to ethically behave, declined to identify any involvement or association with Booktown. He was then totally instrumental in persuading the remaining two members to support his position of granting the entire \$25,500 to Booktown.

This lack of disclosure was further compounded by Mr Connelly, nominating and lobbying councillors on behalf of his personal nomination of the chair of Booktown for a position as the council appointee on Destination Wairarapa, again without declaring a personal association with either the organisation or the individual he was nominating.

The SWDC code of conduct clearly states that an elected person will “not use their position to improperly advantage themselves or anyone else”. The failure to publicly disclose an association with Featherston Booktown, or a personal relationship with a person he was advocating for a council appointment, and then to use his position to secure financial gain for the organisation and attempt to secure a personal appointment is in clear violation of our Code of Conduct and the LGA and potentially opens up the entire council to an allegation of corruption.

4. I note that Mayor Connelly has provided a response via his legal representative Mr Andrew Little in a letter dated 14 March 2025. This letter clearly outlines Mayor Connelly’s rebuttal of the claims made and legal positioning. Given the comprehensive nature of the responses contained in the letter by Mr Little, I decided in the circumstances that there was no need for an in-person interview with Mayor Connelly.
5. The first part of the complaint relates to the claim that Mayor Connelly has failed to disclose associations, personal relationships, interests or membership in an organisation, namely Featherston Booktown.
6. Featherston Booktown is a registered Charity pursuant to the Charities Act 2005. The legal name is the ‘Featherston Booktown Trust’.
7. Featherston Booktown is a year-round literature development organisation whose largest individual project is the annual Karukatea Festival, held in May.
8. The Karukatea Festival is a significant regional/national cultural event involving collaborations with Mana Whenua – and regional and national literary festivals and organisations, as well as strong community involvement through the Young Readers Programme in schools and Festival volunteers.
9. I have reviewed the Auditor-General’s publication on *Managing conflicts of interest: A guide for the public sector* (2021).
10. SWDC does have a conflict of interest disclosure register. Mayor Connelly has listed the following conflicts of interest:
 - a. Featherston RSA
 - b. Greytown Working Mens Club
 - c. Greytown Menz Shed

- d. South Wairarapa Bridge Club
- e. Greytown Heritage Trust
- f. Lake Ferry Holiday Park Offer Report
- g. Woolworths Ltd Petition
- h. Reading Street Roding Update

11. Mayor Connelly has not listed Featherston Booktown as a conflict of interest.
12. The Charities Services website lists all current and past officers / trustees of Featherston Booktown Trust. Mayor Connelly is not listed as having ever been a current or past officer / trustee.
13. There is no evidence that Mayor Connelly has any decision-making responsibilities with Featherston Booktown that could conflict him.
14. There is no evidence that Mayor Connelly has any financial interest in Featherston Booktown.
15. It is noted that the Featherston Booktown website states you can be a 'friend of Booktown' by making a \$100 donation. The website confirms that Mayor Connelly made a financial donation of \$100 for 2025.
16. Mr Little confirms that Mayor Connelly made no donation to Featherston Booktown for the FY 2023 / 2024 which is the subject of the complaint.
17. Even if Mayor Connelly has made a donation for the FY 2023 / 2024, there would be no financial conflict as he does not stand to financially gain or lose anything.
18. I note that there are six complainants. Having conducted an initial assessment of the complaint, Councillors Kaye McAulay and Martin Bosley were selected to be interviewed. The rationale for this is that both were on the Finance Committee which relates to the granting of the \$25,544 to Booktown in 2023, as stated in the complaint.
19. I interviewed Councillors Bosley and McAulay on 24 March 2025. It is noted that Councillors Bosley and McAulay informed me that the writer of the complaint was Councillor Plimmer.
20. They were both provided with an opportunity to provide information / evidence that substantiates the claims made in the letter.
21. They essentially both outlined to me that it was public knowledge that Mayor Connelly was an 'avid' and 'vocal' supporter of Featherston Booktown, that the Mayor had been seen socialising with Peter Biggs (Chairperson of Featherston Booktown) and they had been seen having lunch together. No other information was provided beyond these assertions.
22. No evidence has been provided to me that Mayor Connelly has any relative or close connection (blood or marriage link) to any person at Featherston Booktown.

23. I find that the onus is on the complainants to substantiate their claims.

24. It is noted the Auditor-General has stated that:

Having an interest does not necessarily mean you have a conflict of interest

Having a personal interest, on its own, is not what causes a conflict. Everyone has multiple roles and interests at work, at home, in their extended families, or in the community. A potential conflict of interest arises only where your duties or responsibilities as an employee or office holder in a public organisation overlap with one of your other roles or interests.

These other interests do not necessarily mean you have any conflicts of interest. An interest becomes a potential conflict of interest only if it overlaps in some way with your role as an elected member.

For example, your interest might result in a potential conflict of interest if:

- *your business puts in a bid to provide goods or services to the council;*
- *the sports club is located on land leased from the council; or*
- *the voluntary organisation seeks funding from the council to help fund its activities.*

25. Mayor Connelly is the Mayor of SWDC and likely to have extensive contacts and relationships with a wide range of people, communities and businesses within South Wairarapa.

26. Featherston Booktown is clearly a well-known organisation within the South Wairarapa region. It is therefore also reasonable to conclude that Mayor Connelly would have some type of relationship with those involved with Featherston Booktown.

27. The Auditor-General has stated that:

"...it is unrealistic to expect the employee or office holder to have absolutely no connection with or knowledge of the person concerned. New Zealand is a small and interconnected society. Simply being acquainted with someone, having worked with them, or having had official dealings with them is not something we would consider to cause a problem"

28. Mayor Connelly has openly and transparently declared conflicts of interest as noted in point 10 of this letter.

29. If Mayor Connelly did have a conflict of interest with Featherston Booktown, then no information or reasoning has been provided as to why he would withhold declaring this.

30. No evidence has been provided by the complainants, nor have I obtained any information in this investigation, that would lead me to reasonably conclude that Mayor Connelly would be required to disclose any conflict of interest with Featherston Booktown. Furthermore, no evidence has been provided that Mayor

Connelly has somehow personally benefited from any funding grant to Featherston Booktown.

31. A core allegation made in the complaint relates to the granting of \$25,500 to Featherston Booktown:

"...that very public example of how to ethically behave, declined to identify any involvement or association with Booktown. He was then totally instrumental in persuading the remaining two members to support his position of granting the entire \$25,500 to Booktown".

32. The actual grant amount to Featherston Booktown was \$25,544 in 2023.
33. Featherston Booktown had made the \$25,544 funding application, which was discussed by the Finance Committee on the 13 September 2023.
34. In attendance at this meeting was Mayor Connelly, Councillors Martin Bosley, Aaron Woodcock and Narida Hooper.
35. Minutes were kept and the meeting was recorded and posted on YouTube. I have viewed this video footage.
36. Part B of the meeting has Mary Biggs from Featherston Booktown presenting the funding application. The following is transcribed from this meeting post Mary Biggs' presentation. I have highlighted in yellow salient comments made.

<i>Martin Bosley</i>	<i>Perfect, thank you very much. Any questions?</i>
<i>Mayor Connelly</i>	<i>Am I allowed?</i>
<i>Martin Bosley</i>	<i>Of course, yeah.</i>
<i>Mayor Connelly</i>	<i>Sorry, I thought you were over time. One very quick question - you're seeking twenty-five thousand dollars from the council. Is that twenty-five thousand dollars...does that go to the young readers program?</i>
<i>Mary Biggs</i>	<i>Yes, it is going straight to the young readers program. That will give the council their primary funder role, which I think is really important for the council. You've supported us for the previous two years as the key sponsor.</i>
<i>Mayor Connelly</i>	<i>That's the answer, thank you.</i>
<i>Martin Bosley</i>	<i>Woody?</i>
<i>Aaron Woodcock</i>	<i>Not much. It's a great little event. Been there myself over time. The young readers thing's a great thing to get kids into books. This is awesome. When you speak about the cultural part of it with the Māori stuff and that which is great, is there any emphasis on any of the other stuff around the South Wai, especially like Featherston has a lot of culture with the old army camp that's free, and the Valiant and the [x] track, and what goes on at Cross Creek and all that back in the day. Is there any input on that side of things?</i>
<i>Mary Biggs</i>	<i>In the young readers program less so than in the Karukatea Festival program. We will be running an event in one of the museums at next year's Festival. And we do try to schedule program events that focus on local history as well as local writing, writers, but that's a movable feast each year depending on what writers are around. But we are very aware Featherston is also a place of historic interest and in that book lovers app we'll be focusing on that in this next year, telling those stories.</i>

Aaron Woodcock	<i>That's cool thanks very much</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Narida?</i>
Narida Hooper	<i>Ever so quickly, kia ora Mary, nice to see you again. Thank you for your presentation. I think it's a fantastic event, Featherston Booktown, and only one request - can we try for David Walliams next year?</i>
Everyone	<i>[Laughter]</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Just one question from me, Mary. Thanks for being patient, I appreciate it. Is it next year, the international book towns? [Yeah] So this would dovetail in with that?</i>
Mary Biggs	<i>No, um International Organisation of Book Towns global conference is in March.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Okay.</i>
Mary Biggs	<i>The Young Readers Festival leads into the Karukatea Festival, which is in May, the second week of May.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Right, okay.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Funding for that is being done separately, is that right?</i>
Mary	<i>The IOB funding I have put a funding application into the...</i>
Nicki	<i>...Creative Communities Scheme. They're meeting on Monday night.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>OK, cool. Thank you very much for your time.</i>

37. It is clearly evident from this recording that Councillors Woodcock and Hooper are supportive of Featherston Booktown's funding application.
38. Part C of the meeting has the Finance Committee deliberating the funding applications. The following is transcribed from this meeting related to Featherston Booktown. I have highlighted in yellow salient comments made.

Martin Bosley	<i>We will now discuss the allocation of the community youth grants.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Yes. So moving through this, if we look at the obviously fair number of applications for money, if we could give an indication first as to who we feel should get a hundred percent of the fundings that they've asked for. Do we have any preferences as to who that would be, and I'm happy to lead that charge by saying Wellington Free Ambulance.</i>
Aaron Woodcock /Narida Hooper	<i>I would second that. I'm on the same boat there. Narida's giving a thumbs up as well. [All agree]</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Secondly, that I sort of felt strongly about - and again all open to discussion - Martinborough Waiwaste and Food Box because it does seem to be more regionally focused now as opposed to just Martinborough.</i>
Aaron Woodcock	<i>I'm happy with that. [Narida also indicates agreement]</i>
Aaron Woodcock	<i>And also, after the Scout group saying that they're actually the only Scout group in the district and it's kids from all the towns, and it's a reasonably small amount, I'm more than happy to grant them in full too myself.</i>
Martin Bosley and Narida Hooper	<i>[Agreed]</i>
Amy	<i>[Question around approving multi year support.t Committee confirms they are not approving anything yet, just giving an indicator]</i>

Mayor Connelly	<i>I would support Booktown too.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Yes, Booktown as well.</i>
	<i>I should declare at this moment, I didn't declare it earlier on because it didn't occur to me, that I have a conflict of interest around Country Village Heaven Trust in that I am a member of that and I subscribe to that as a member.</i>
Aaron Woodcock	<i>We are thinking Booktown. What do you think about Booktown Narida?</i>
Narida Hooper	<i>Yes, Booktown is fabulous</i>
Aaron Woodcock?	<i>And that's a thing for the kids too.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Then, who didn't present but is in here, is Featherston Community Centre Charitable Trust who are providing food and support for those in need. We didn't really get much from them, but is that a crossover between what's happening with Martinborough Waiwaste?</i>
Aaron Woodcock	<i>Are they tied to the foodbank in Featherston?</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Yes they are. So I think for me initially, that for me those are who I think would be 100%.</i>
Mayor Connelly	<i>You would add Featherston Community?</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>No, I was just wondering...</i>
Aaron Woodcock	<i>The other one I was wondering what people think about is Access Radio? Once again it's a fairly small amount and they do a lot for the community right throughout the district and provide a service and a voice for people and Community organizations and the council.</i>
Mayor Connelly	<i>I would regard it very much as a nice to have.</i>
??	<i>Yeah, I don't feel comfortable giving – as tight we are with funds – \$3000 to them. It would be good probably to do something but maybe not all of it.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>In terms of 100%, what do we think there? Martinborough Waiwaste, Greytown Scout group, Booktown and Wellington Free Ambulance.</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Now Booktown, was that a multi-year? Was that for the next three years? I didn't ask Mary that question</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>Didn't say in their application if it was a multi.</i>
?	<i>[Brief multi year funding comment].</i>
Martin Bosley	<i>So it's Booktown (\$25,544), Wellington Free Ambulance (\$11,750), Greytown Scout (\$2,200), and Waiwaste (\$15,000) and that leaves us about \$5,000 left.</i>

39. Mayor Connelly and Councillors Bosley and Hooper all supported 100% funding for Featherston Booktown.
40. I have also listened to other Finance Committee meetings where funding applications are discussed. The Mayor and other Councillors are openly supporting or not supporting various funding applications, which is part of their obligations to openly discuss the merits of each funding claim. There is nothing in the discussions related to Featherston Booktown that is dissimilar to the discussions of other funding claims; certainly nothing that would reasonably lead me to conclude that Mayor Connelly somehow engaged in predetermining the outcome of Featherston Booktown's funding claim.

41. Having listened to the meeting, there is no factual basis for the claim that Mayor Connelly was somehow 'totally instrumental' in persuading any of the Councillors to support this funding application.
42. I found that there is no reasonable basis to conclude that Mayor Connelly failed to declare a conflict of interest related to Featherston Booktown. Therefore, I find there was nothing untoward in Mayor Connelly nominating and lobbying Councillors to support his personal nomination of the Chair of Featherston Booktown for the position of council appointee to Destination Wairarapa.
43. I have also considered it was 18 months from the date of the granting of the \$25,544 to Featherston Booktown to the date of the complaint. If Mayor Connelly's conduct was so egregious, then I would have reasonably expected this to have been raised at the time.

Findings:

44. I have reviewed the SWDC Code of Conduct, and the obligations placed on elected members.
45. Having considered all matters, my assessment on the merit of the complaint is that is without any foundation. I consider the complaint to be frivolous.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Doolan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Scott Doolan
Consultant