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The Disciplinary Tribunal, following its hearing from 10 to 17 June 2013, determined that Ms Deborah Annells, a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Taxation (CIOT), had committed six separate breaches of the fundamental principle of integrity as set out in the Professional Rules and Practice Guidelines of the CIOT (PRPG, 2011 edition). These breaches arose from complaints made by one client, one former colleague and a former joint venture partner in Singapore. Upon allegations of dishonesty being proved, two further charges were not pursued.

Ms Annells, who submitted detailed written submissions in her defence, did not attend the hearing and was not represented for most of the hearing. She denied any charges of dishonesty. However, the Tribunal found that:

- 1) She had dishonestly used trust funds, entrusted to the care of AzureTrustees, to make payments of HK \$ 5,200,000 that were not for the benefit of any of the beneficiaries of the trust, although no trust moneys were ultimately lost;
- 2) She had failed to separate and maintain bank accounts belonging to the AzureTax Group and its associated companies, all of which she controlled, from client funds held by or on behalf of the Group or its associated companies;
- 3) She sought to deceive a solicitor acting for one of the trusts managed by one of her companies by relying on a bank statement which she knew or ought to have known was forged;
- 4) She dishonestly withdrew US \$ 10,000 from a Singapore company which was part of AzureTax Group and put it into an account operated by one of the Azure Hong Kong companies;
- 5) and 6) She dishonestly submitted two applications to add an Azure service company as a bank signatory to a client company's bank account without the knowledge of their owners.

The Tribunal recorded that Ms Annells had continually denied all the charges, except charge 2, which was broadly admitted and, whilst she had expressed regret about the whole matter and in particular any distress caused to the one client who complained, she had never acknowledged that she had been guilty of any kind of wrongdoing nor given any indication that she had any insight into the seriousness of the charges found against her.

Against this background, the Tribunal determined that the only possible sanction was to order Ms Annells' expulsion from membership of the CIOT. The Tribunal also ordered that she should pay costs of the hearing in the sum of £62,375.

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