

**Minutes of the Standards Committee Assessment Panel
16 September 2021**

Present:

I. Winter (Chairman)

Councillors:

R.D. Dunn

O. Rybinski

R.W. Sider BEM

356/21 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

357/21 Exclusion of Press and Public

The Panel considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following matter on the grounds that it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

The Panel in making its decision had regard to all circumstances and was satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED that in the interest of having a frank and open discussion about the matter, the press and public are excluded from the meeting.

358/21 Exempt Complaint Assessment Report against Councillor E

The Deputy Monitoring left the meeting whilst this item was considered.

The Panel considered the report of the Monitoring Officer setting out an allegation by way of complaints received from The Deputy Monitoring Officer and a councillor about Councillor E.

The Monitoring Officer presented detailed information about the nature of the complaint and preliminary enquiries and discussion with the Independent Person consulted by way of background to the current complaint.

The Panel then went on to consider the options open to it:

- (a) the Panel is able to ask the Monitoring Officer to direct that the complaints are investigated;

- (b) to direct the Monitoring Officer to take other appropriate action short of a formal investigation, for instance trying to secure an apology;
- (c) alternatively the Panel can decide to take no action in respect of the complaints; this may be where the complaint appears to be trivial, vexatious, malicious, politically motivated or tit-for-tat.

Complaint from Deputy Monitoring Officer against Councillor E

The Panel considered option (c), to take no action, but decided that this was not appropriate bearing in mind that some of the evidence provided was sufficiently substantial and serious to warrant further investigation as there was a potential to be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

In considering option (a), to direct that the complaint is investigated, the Panel considered that if the allegation was substantiated, there potentially had been a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct and the nature of the complaint was serious enough to warrant a full investigation to ensure the Council's reputation was not damaged. The Panel considered that social media training should be provided to all Councillors.

Resolved:

1. To direct the Monitoring Officer to arrange an investigation of the complaint.

Complaint from a councillor against Councillor E

The Panel considered the report of the Monitoring setting out an allegation by way of a complaint about Councillor E.

The Monitoring Officer presented detailed information about the nature of the complaint and preliminary enquiries and discussion with the Independent Person consulted by way of background to the current complaint.

The Panel considered option (c), to take no action, and decided that this was appropriate bearing in mind that evidence provided was not sufficiently substantial and serious to warrant further investigation as there was no potential to be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Resolved:

1. To take no further action.

359/21 Exempt Complaint Assessment Report against Councillor F

The Panel considered the report of the Monitoring Officer setting out an allegation by way of a complaint received from a councillor in respect of Councillor F.

The Monitoring Officer presented detailed information about the nature of the complaint and preliminary enquiries and discussion with the Independent Person consulted by way of background to the current complaint.

The Panel then went on to consider the options open to it:

- (a) the Panel is able to ask the Monitoring Officer to direct that the complaints are investigated;
- (b) to direct the Monitoring Officer to take other appropriate action short of a formal investigation, for instance trying to secure an apology;
- (c) alternatively the Panel can decide to take no action in respect of the complaints; this may be where the complaint appears to be trivial, vexatious, malicious, politically motivated or tit-for-tat.

The Panel considered option (c), to take no action, and decided that this was appropriate bearing in mind that some of the evidence provided could not be substantiated as authentic and the Panel felt that the complaint was potentially politically motivated and was tit-for-tat. .

In considering option (a), to direct that the complaint is investigated, the Panel considered that there was no potential for a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct to have occurred.

Resolved:

1. To take no further action.

360/21 Exempt Complaint Assessment Report against Councillor G

The Panel considered the report of the Monitoring Officer setting out an allegation by way of a complaint received from a councillor in respect of Councillor G.

The Monitoring Officer presented detailed information about the nature of the complaint and preliminary enquiries and discussion with the Independent Person consulted by way of background to the current complaint.

The Panel then went on to consider the options open to it:

- (a) the Panel is able to ask the Monitoring Officer to direct that the complaints are investigated;
- (b) to direct the Monitoring Officer to take other appropriate action short of a formal investigation, for instance trying to secure an apology;
- (c) alternatively the Panel can decide to take no action in respect of the complaints; this may be where the complaint appears to be trivial, vexatious, malicious, politically motivated or tit-for-tat.

The Panel considered option (c), to take no action, and decided that this was appropriate bearing in mind that evidence provided was not sufficiently substantial and serious to warrant further investigation as there was no potential to be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

In considering option (a), to direct that the complaint is investigated, the Panel considered that there was no potential for a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct to have occurred.

Resolved:

1. To take no further action.

361/21 Exempt Complaint Assessment Report against Councillor H

The Panel considered the report of the Monitoring Officer setting out an allegation by way of a complaint received from a councillor in respect of Councillor H.

The Monitoring Officer presented detailed information about the nature of the complaint and preliminary enquiries and discussion with the Independent Person consulted by way of background to the current complaint.

The Panel then went on to consider the options open to it:

- (a) the Panel is able to ask the Monitoring Officer to direct that the complaints are investigated;
- (b) to direct the Monitoring Officer to take other appropriate action short of a formal investigation, for instance trying to secure an apology;
- (c) alternatively the Panel can decide to take no action in respect of the complaints; this may be where the complaint appears to be trivial, vexatious, malicious, politically motivated or tit-for-tat.

The Panel considered option (c), to take no action, and decided that this was appropriate bearing in mind that evidence provided was not sufficiently substantial and serious to warrant further investigation as there was no potential to be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct. The Panel felt that

there was a fine line between robust debate and a potential breach of the Members' Code of Conduct and that in this case it was robust political debate that had taken place. The Panel felt that this complaint could also be politically motivated.

In considering option (a), to direct that the complaint is investigated, the Panel considered that there was no potential for a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct to have occurred.

Resolved:

- 1.To take no further action.