

**Minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee
8 August 2024**

Present:

Young (Chair)

Councillors:

M.M. Attewell

C. Bateson

D.L. Geraci

554/24 Disclosures of Interest

There were none.

555/24 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.

556/24 Exempt Complaint Assessment Report against Councillor B

The Panel considered the report of the Monitoring Officer setting out two complaints that had been received from two councillors about Councillor B.

The Monitoring Officer detailed the allegations that had been made and the key considerations for the assessment panel.

The Panel were advised that the Independent Person had been consulted by the Monitoring Officer and that they had considered that there was a case to be answered in relation to the allegations made.

The Panel went on to consider the complaints having regard to the Assessment Criteria. It identified that there appeared to be a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct under paragraphs 7 and 9 (as detailed below):

7. "You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving in your public post, in particular as characterised by the above requirements, by leadership and example."

9. "You must treat others with respect. This means treating people fairly and equitably and with courtesy, compassion and sensitivity. You should treat other people equally as you yourself would expect to be treated. You must never use behaviour which a reasonable person would consider as offensive, overbearing, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating."

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 complaint is 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 complaint; 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, but decided this was not appropriate and considered that further action was necessary.

In considering option (a), to direct that the complaint is investigated, the Panel considered that at this time this was not an option they wanted to use before option (b) was exhausted.

The Panel considered option (b), and agreed to direct the Monitoring Officer to take other appropriate action.

The Panel agreed on the following appropriate action:

1. The Monitoring Officer request that Councillor B apologise to both complainants and the other councillor referred to within the first complaint. Councillor B is also asked to apologise, via the Monitoring Officer to the Sub-Committee.
2. Councillor B to remove both social media posts referred to in the two complaints.

3. Both 1 and 2 are to be actioned within two weeks of the meeting minutes being published.
4. In the event that an apology not be forthcoming, the Monitoring Officer instigates an internal investigation into the complaints, for consideration by a separate hearings sub-committee.

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that the Panel directs the Monitoring Officer to advise Councillor B of the Sub-Committee's findings and requests as detailed in 1 to 4 above.