

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6.10 P.M.

18TH SEPTEMBER 2017

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Oscar Thynne (Chairman), Jon Barry, Colin Hartley, Roger Mace, Roger Sherlock, David Whitaker and Peter Yates

Officers in attendance:-

Anne Streeter	Monitoring Officer
Michael Hill	Team Leader (Communications and Marketing)
Liz Bateson	Principal Democratic Support Officer, Democratic Services

### 1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the 2017/18 municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Yates and seconded by Councillor Whitaker that Councillor Mace be appointed to the position, and, there being no further nominations, the Chairman declared the proposal to be carried.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That Councillor Mace be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the 2017/18 municipal year.

### 2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 January 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

### 3 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

### 4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following were declared with regard to item 8 on the agenda;

Councillor Mace declared an interest in 8/17 of the exempt appendix, being the subject member of the complaint.

Councillor Yates declared an interest in 3/17 of the exempt appendix, having been interviewed by the investigating panel in view of being a member of the Planning Committee at that time.

Councillor Hartley declared an interest in 3/17 of the exempt appendix, being a member of the group which was the subject of the complaint.

Councillor Whitaker declared an interest in 2/17 of the exempt appendix, being a

member of Morecambe Town Council.

Councillor Sherlock declared an interest in 3/17 of the exempt appendix, being a subject member of the complaint.

## 5 ADVICE ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The Monitoring Officer presented a report with regard to bullying and harassment and advised the Committee of how this was defined in other local authorities. The report included Government Guidance Notes on the Equality Act 2010 which defined bullying and harassment as "behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended" and provided examples of bullying and harassment behaviour. Details of employers' responsibilities were also included along with ACAS guidance. It was noted that the City Council's Dignity at Work Policy & Procedure and an Equality & Diversity Policy mirrored the provisions of the Equality Act.

The Committee agreed that the report should be circulated to all Members and recommended that consideration be made to append the definition and examples to the Council's Code of Conduct. Reference was also made to the introduction of the Values and Behaviours Policy for staff and it was suggested that this should be circulated to Members.

### ***Resolved:***

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the report and guidance be circulated to all Members.
- (3) That the Standards Committee recommends to Council that the definition and examples of bullying and harassment, as set out in the report, be appended to the Council's Code of Conduct.
- (4) That the Values and Behaviours Policy be circulated to all Members.

## 6 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

That, in accordance with Section 110A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

## 7 SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS

The Monitoring Officer presented a report which contained a summary of code of conduct complaints which had been received or concluded since the last meeting. The Chairman advised the meeting that 3/17 of the exempt appendix would be dealt with separately and the Monitoring Officer updated Members on other items within the exempt appendix.

***Councillor Sherlock, having declared an interest in 3/17 of the exempt appendix, left the meeting at this point.***

Members considered a draft press release which had been produced to advise how the Independent report had found no evidence of code of conduct breaches at the Planning meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The Committee suggested several revisions and the

Chairman agreed to provide a quote for inclusion in the final press release.

It was agreed that, subject to the approval of those councillors named in the complaint, the Independent report would be circulated to members of the Standards Committee.

Reference was then made to the issue of predetermination and it was agreed that the new Chief Officer (Legal & Governance) be requested to consider the wisdom of having an officer/member briefing and group briefings prior to the Planning meeting and why, to ensure public confidence in the process being open, any additional information disseminated at those briefings could not be passed on in a public forum prior to the meeting.

Members discussed the issue of communication. The Team Leader Communications and Marketing confirmed that a Member Briefing on social media was scheduled for November 2017 and it was agreed that a member briefing or training on press and media in the new year would be appropriate.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the draft press release be amended to reflect the views of the Committee and incorporate a quote from the Standards Chairman.
- (2) That, subject to the approval of the councillors named in the complaint following the Planning meeting in March 2017, the Independent report be circulated to members of the Standards Committee.
- (3) That the Chief Officer (Legal & Governance) be requested to consider the wisdom of having an officer/member briefing and group briefings prior to the Planning meeting and whether, in order to ensure public confidence in the process being open, any additional information disseminated at those briefings could not be passed on in a public forum prior to the meeting.
- (4) That a Member Briefing or training on press and media be arranged in early 2018.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
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