

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

10.00 A.M.

22ND APRIL 2024

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Hamish Mills (Chair), Prof Chris Harris (Vice-Chair), Joanne Ainscough, Ruth Colbridge, Paul Newton, Sarah Punshon and Sam Riches

Also in attendance:-

Jackie Waring – Independent Person  
Subject Member & Subject Member's Representative

Officers in attendance:-

Luke Gorst	Chief Officer - Governance and Monitoring Officer
Paul Washington	Investigating Officer
Phillip Abel	Democratic Support Officer

### 13 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 11 January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

### 14 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

### 15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made at this point.

### 16 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

***Resolved:***

That, in accordance with Section 100A(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.

### 17 STANDARDS COMPLAINT 7/23

The Committee considered an exempt report from the Monitoring Officer regarding a Code of Conduct complaint concerning a Parish Councillor. Details of the alleged breach were detailed in the exempt report.

The Subject Member and Investigating Officer were invited to join the meeting and the Chair introduced those present including the Independent Person who was present in an advisory non-voting capacity.

In accordance with procedure, the Subject Member's representative raised procedural issues regarding the investigation and evidence presented. These were addressed by

the Chair before continuing.

The Investigating Officer presented the report and invited questions from both the Subject Member and Committee. Once there were no further questions the Chair invited the Subject Member and their Representative to make their statements. The Subject Member answered questions from their own Representative before responding to questions from the Investigating Officer and the Committee.

***The meeting adjourned at 11:50 for a short recess and reconvened at 12:00***

Upon reconvening, the Subject Member's Witnesses were invited into the room and they answered questions from the Subject Member's Representative before the Chair invited questions for the Witnesses from the Committee.

The Investigating Officer and Subject Member then made their closing statements.

***The meeting adjourned at 12:35 in order for the Committee to determine whether in their opinion the Subject Member had breached the Code of Conduct. The Subject Member, their representative, the Witnesses and Investigating Officer left the meeting at this point. The meeting reconvened at 13:20***

On reconvening, the Chair confirmed that on balance, the Committee found no breach of the Parish Council code of conduct.

However, the Committee did have concerns that by undertaking their own investigation into the issues detailed in the exempt report the Subject Member risked bringing the Parish Council into disrepute when it was not clear what action points had been set by the Parish Council at the relevant meeting.

The Committee strongly reminded the Subject Member to follow the correct procedures should they have any concerns of wrongdoing by other councillors.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the Subject Member did not breach the Parish Council's Code of Conduct
- (2) That the Subject Member be reminded to follow correct procedures should they have any concerns of wrongdoing by other councillors.

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Chair

(The meeting ended at 1.25 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Phillip Abel, Democratic Support - email [pabel@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:pabel@lancaster.gov.uk)**

