

Standards Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Thursday, 16 March 2017 at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Standards Committee members present:

Councillors I Amos, M Anderton (Vice-Chairman), B Birch (Chairman), R Duffy and Moon.

Officers present: Liesl Hadgraft (Monitoring Officer and Head of Business Support) and Roy Saunders (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager).

Also present: Barry Parsonage (Independent Person) Councillor Orme and Alderman McCann.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Michael Vincent, and Helen Kay (Independent Person).

14 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor R Duffy declared a non-pecuniary significant, non-pecuniary, other interest in complaint Ref: 2017/01, included in the Summary of Current Complaints (agenda item 4) because she had an involvement in that complaint. She said that she would leave the meeting before that item was discussed.

15 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 10 November 2016 and 7 February be confirmed as a correct record.

16 **Current Complaints: Summary**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a schedule summarising complaints of alleged breaches of the Council's Code of Conduct which were currently being processed or had been completed since the last report to the Standards Committee. Ms Hadgraft said that brief details of each of the complaints were included in the schedule. She provided further information to the Committee at the meeting, as follows:

Ref: 2015/07(ii)

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that she had reported at the last Standards Committee that a meeting was to be arranged with the complainant to establish further facts. That meeting had now taken place and the complainant had requested that a new complaint be raised. This complaint had therefore been superseded by complaint 2016/18 which was referred to later on in this schedule.

Ref: 2016/04

The investigation being undertaken by an external body was still ongoing and there was therefore nothing new to report.

Ref: 2016/05

As indicated in the schedule, the investigation carried out by an external agency had been completed. In the absence of any evidence of misconduct, no further action would be taken and the complaint had been concluded.

Ref: 2016/11(a)

Complaint Ref: 2016/11 had been split in to two parts (a) and (b) because it related to two subject members who, during the later stages of the complaints process, had had to be dealt with separately because of their different circumstances. A special Standards Committee Hearing had been held on the 7 February 2017 to consider complaint Ref: 201/11(a). The hearing had concluded that the subject member had breached the code of conduct and had made a recommendation to the relevant Parish/Town Council to report this finding at its next Council meeting. That meeting had now taken place and the minutes from the meeting had been published. She confirmed that the minutes did include a reference to the findings of the Standards Hearing as requested. This complaint was therefore now concluded.

Ref: 2016/11 (b)

At its last meeting the Standards Committee had discussed the fairest way to deal with this complaint which had been received and dealt with under the first stage of the Council's process. Following an investigation the findings had been reported to those involved. The then subject member had not accepted the findings, had not carried out the sanction that had been requested (which was a public apology at the next council meeting) and had then resigned as a Councillor. It had been agreed that, rather than just report those findings to the Council concerned with a recommendation to record the outcome in its minutes, it would be appropriate to offer the opportunity to the individual to a Standards Hearing, particularly as the details of this case were intrinsically linked to complaint 2016/11(a) and it had already been agreed that it was would be appropriate to convene a hearing for that case.

However, the individual had subsequently declined the offer of a hearing and the matter now had to be formally concluded. She therefore intended, following this meeting, to write to the council concerned with the original findings of the investigation and her decision and to recommend that this be reported at its next meeting in a similar way to the previous case. This complaint would then be concluded.

Ref: 2016/12

As set out in the schedule, this complaint had also dealt been dealt with at the Standards Hearing on 7 February and had now been concluded.

Ref:2016/17

Similarly complaint Ref: 2016/17 was linked to Ref: 2016/12 and other complaints from the same parish/town council. It had been concluded, following the conclusion of those complaints, that no further action would be taken in respect of this complaint.

Ref: 2016/18

This was the complaint that had superseded complaint Ref: 2015/07, which had been referred to earlier in the meeting. The meeting which had taken place with the complainant had highlighted that the content of this complaint was similar to complaint 2015/07(i), as the same members were involved and the category of complaint was the same. She was awaiting fresh evidence from the complainant to support the new allegation before determining whether or not an investigation should be undertaken.

Ref: 2016/19

This complaint had now been investigated, but no evidence of a breach of the code of conduct had been found and the complainant had been notified of the outcome.

Ref: 2017/01

Following the initial assessment of this complaint referred to in the schedule, arrangements were being made for the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person to meet with the subject member, but that meeting had not yet taken place.

Ref: 2017/02

Following the meeting referred to in the schedule, further training was in the process of being arranged for the subject member. A further update confirming whether or not the required training had been undertaken, would be made to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the summary of current complaints submitted by the Monitoring Officer and her verbal report on each of the complaints referred to in public session of the meeting, be noted.

17 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting was currently due to be held at 6pm on Thursday 15 June 2017.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and finished at 6.28 pm.