

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes

FRIDAY, 21 JULY 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A Church (Chair)

Councillors E Fallows, I Herdman, C Jebb, W Rogers, M Spooner,
G Taylor, P Wilkinson and C Wood

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr H Mawdsley

APOLOGIES: Councillor B Emery

1 **CLLR D FOWLER**

Councillors observed a minute's silence having been informed that Cllr David Fowler (parish representative) had recently passed away.

2 **TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY:**

There were no declarations made.

4 **BITE SIZE BRIEFING**

Councillors received a presentation that provided an overview of the work of the Committee. This included the Council's decision making process, the Localism Act 2011, the composition/role of the Committee and the work programme. Members discussed the need for interests to be continually updated.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

5 **STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee considered a report that reviewed the work of the Standards Committee during 2022/2023. This included the Government response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life Review of Local Government Ethical Standards, a review of the Code of Conduct, the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter, the Debate Not Hate Report and regular complaints monitoring reports.

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RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

6 CODE OF CONDUCT - DISPENSATIONS

The Committee considered the grant of dispensations to councillors in the circumstances described within the report for a four year period. Previously, under the old Code of Conduct, general exemptions were provided to all councillors with regard to prejudicial interests in any business of the authority where that business related to certain functions of the authority.

The arrangements introduced by the Localism Act 2011 did not reproduce these exemptions and as a result councillors could effectively breach the Code of Conduct should they take part in a meeting where any of these matters were being discussed and they have a disclosable pecuniary interest in the matter. The Standards Committee has therefore previously granted dispensations as detailed in paragraphs 6.4 and 6.7 of this report for a period of four years.

RESOLVED:

That general dispensations be granted to all councillors, under Section 33 (2) of the Localism Act 2011, in respect of the circumstances outlined in paragraphs 6.4 and 6.7 of the report, for a period of four years.

7 COUNCILLOR INDUCTION PROGRAMME

The report provided an overview of the Councillor Induction Programme launched after the elections in May 2023. The aim of the Induction Programme was to ensure that Councillors are supported to deliver the Council's statutory and corporate obligations, objectives and priorities and are provided with the tools and information required to fulfil their roles. It was reported that the next Code of Conduct seminar would be conducted online which would allow for a recording to be taken for councillors not able to attend.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated

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9 **TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

10 **STANDARDS COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT**

Members were presented with information regarding complaints made under the Code of Conduct in the period since the committee previously met. This included complaints made against two district councillors and three parish councillors.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

_____ Chairman _____ Date