

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN
ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 6 MAY 2008 AT
4.30 PM

PRESENT:

District Council Members:

Councillor J Warren.
Councillor M Wood.

Parish Councils' Representative:

Mr B Taylor

Town Councils' Representative:

Mrs E Woods

Independent Members:

Mr J Morphew
Mr A Walker

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Simon Drinkwater	- Monitoring Officer
Jeff Hughes	- Head of Democratic and Legal Support Services

STANDARDS BOARD REPRESENTATIVE:

Mr M Jones

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Town Councillor J Hedley	- Defendant
Town Councillor J Cook	- Defendant's representative

677 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor N C Poulton.

678 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Committee endorsed the Chairman's remarks and placed on record its appreciation and thanks to past Committee Chairman Councillor J Warren for his work in that capacity.

679 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee considered whether or not to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion of the item of business detailed at Minute 682 below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Committee agreed that this item should be considered in public. The Monitoring Officer would make available copies of the agenda and report therein on this matter to the press and public. The Committee considered that the schedule of evidence accompanying the Ethical Standards Officer's report and Councillor Hedley's written response should remain confidential.

ACTION

RESOLVED ITEMS

680 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Committee noted that, under revised statutory provisions, future meetings would need to be chaired by an independent member.

RESOLVED – that Mr A Walker be elected Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the

current Civic Year.

681 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 6 February 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

682 COMPLAINTS IN RESPECT OF A TOWN COUNCILLOR
– STANDARDS BOARD REFERENCES SBE 19488.07
AND 19505.07

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report on the complaints received by the Standards Board in respect of a member of Hertford Town Council (Councillor J Hedley).

The Committee noted that the Standards Board had decided that the complaints should be investigated.

Following an investigation, the Board's Ethical Standards Officer had concluded that the Town Councillor had failed to comply with paragraphs 3(1), 3(2)(b) and 5 of the Town Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

The Ethical Standards Officer had decided to refer the matter to the District Council's Standards Committee for determination.

The Monitoring Officer advised that a copy of the Ethical Standards Officer's (ESO's) report on the complaints was appended to his report.

The Monitoring Officer outlined the process to be followed to consider this matter.

The Monitoring Officer invited Councillor Hedley to admit, or otherwise, that he had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct in the manner described in the ESO's report.

Councillor Hedley commented that he thought the ESO's report detailed the facts of the events fairly. Councillor Hedley stated he accepted the conclusion reached by the

ESO in respect of each complaint.

The Committee considered what action should be taken given Councillor Hedley's admission of having failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.

The Committee considered oral submissions made by Councillor Hedley and his representative concerning the events the subject of complaints, and in particular their comments on a member of staff and their view of the impact this individual was having in relation to the conduct of Town Council business. The Committee noted Councillor Hedley's assertion that his behaviour on 26 July 2007 was intended to protect the position of another member of staff.

The Committee concluded that Councillor Hedley had failed to comply with paragraphs 3(1), 3(2)(b) and 5 of the Code on the basis detailed in the report now submitted.

Having come to the conclusion that Councillor Hedley had failed to comply with provisions of the Code of Conduct, the Committee considered whether or not to impose sanctions.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted the sanctions available to the Committee.

In determining a penalty, the Committee considered Councillor Hedley's representations in mitigation and also details of guidance from the Standards Board.

The Committee agreed that Councillor Hedley be suspended from the office of Councillor of Hertford Town Council for a period of three months with immediate effect.

The Committee further agreed that Councillor Hedley should, as soon as possible, receive further training on the Code of Conduct and undertake an anger management course.

RESOLVED – that as a consequence of his failure to comply with the provisions of Sections 3(1), 3(2)(b) and 5 of the Hertford Town Council's

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Members' Code of Conduct in relation to the matters now detailed, Councillor J Hedley be suspended from the office of Councillor of Hertford Town Council for a period of three months with immediate effect and that he should, as soon as possible, receive further training on the Code of Conduct and undertake an anger management course.

The meeting closed at 5.47 pm

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Chairman
Date