

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE HELD IN
THE ROOM 1.13, WALLFIELDS, PEGS
LANE, HERTFORD ON TUESDAY 29
NOVEMBER 2016, AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT: Councillor C Woodward (Chairman)
Councillor P Boylan

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Martin Ibrahim	- Democratic Services Team Leader
Kevin Williams	- Acting Head of Legal and Democratic Services

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicholas Moss	- Independent Person
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1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was agreed that Councillor C Woodward be appointed Chairman for this meeting.

RESOLVED – that Councillor C Woodward be appointed Chairman for this meeting.

2 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor B Deering.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting held on 25 April 2016, be approved

as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Sub-Committee considered whether or not to pass a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion of the item at Minute 5 below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Sub-Committee also considered whether or not to make the associated report publically available.

The Sub-Committee determined to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion of the matters at Minute 5 below and not to make the associated report publically available.

RESOLVED – that (A) under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the business recorded at Minute 5 below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act, and

(B) the report associated with the business recorded in Minute 5 below, be not made public by virtue of paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

5 INVESTIGATION UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT

The Sub-Committee considered a report on a complaint to the Council's Monitoring Officer regarding an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by a Ware Town Councillor.

The Sub-Committee noted the details of the complaint and the employment of an independent investigator to review the allegations made. The Sub-Committee also considered a

letter of the investigating officer as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'B' of the Monitoring Officer's report.

The investigator had suggested that constructive action needed to be taken and to this end, he had recommended an action plan that sought to improve the functioning of the Town Council over any potential unfairness to Officers or Town Councillors. The action plan was detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' of the report submitted as follows:

- The appointment of an independent person / consultancy to review the Town Council's processes and procedures and review the relationship between the Town Council, the Priory Trust and Ware Priory Trading Limited;
- the training / mentoring of Officers and Councillors to identify and rectify any weakness in their understanding of the Town Council's procedures and the Code of Conduct; and
- training and guidance on conflict resolution with a view to improving working relations between elected Members and Town Council officers through more effective communication and improved conduct. Parties need to work together on a Member / Officer protocol that establishes and ingrains agreed parameters.

The Sub-Committee considered the investigator's recommendations. This consideration also included a telephone conference call involving the absent Councillor B Deering. The Sub-Committee also considered the advice of the Monitoring Officer and the Independent Person.

The Sub-Committee concluded that on the basis of the investigation officer's letter, it would be minded to determine that a breach of the Code of Conduct had occurred. However, given the suggestion by the investigating officer, the Sub-Committee supported the complaint being dealt with informally by the Council's Monitoring Officer. The Sub-Committee also

agreed the suggested action plan subject to a three month deadline and a report back that satisfactory progress was being made.

The Sub-Committee approved the recommendations now detailed.

RESOLVED – that (A) the complaint be dealt with informally by the Council’s Monitoring Officer;

(B) all Town Council Members and Officers be involved in the process; and

(C) the Town Council fund and implement an Action Plan as identified within Essential Reference Paper ‘C’ of the report submitted, to address the concerns identified within the report and that any necessary training, conciliation and mentoring be available to all Town Council Members and Officers, subject to implementation within three months and a report back that satisfactory progress was being made.

The meeting closed at 10.49 am

Chairman
Date