

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THURSDAY, 21ST JULY, 2011

PRESENT:-

Independent Members: Susan Toland (Chair),

Parish Representatives: Councillor Nick Stevens and Councillor Reg Williams

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Sally Davis and Nigel Roberts

Officers: Amanda Brookes (Corporate and Community Law Manager), Debbie Incedon (Investigating Officer), Ann Swabey (Democratic Services Officer)

12 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the hearing.

13 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Clerk drew attention to the Emergency Evacuation Procedure.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION

Apologies were received from Councillor Veronica Packham, Councillor Eleanor Jackson, Dr Cyril Davies and Deborah Russell.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

16 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was none.

17 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS AND CO-OPTED AND ADDED MEMBERS RELATING TO THE GENERAL BUSINESS OF THE COMMITTEE

There were none.

18 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MEETING OF 23 JUNE 2011

The minutes were agreed as a correct record with the exception of a minor amendment asked for by Councillor Williams who had asked about the cost of hearings.

19 STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARING PROCEDURE

The Chair explained the procedure for the conduct of hearings.

20 CONSIDERATION OF AN INVESTIGATING OFFICER'S REPORT ABOUT ALLEGATIONS OF BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT - CASE NO 32-10 B&NES

The Chair introduced this item and asked the Members to decide whether they wished to move into private session in order to consider the complaint.

The Members **RESOLVED** unanimously to consider the report in public session.

The Chair drew the Members' attention to the additional information which had been submitted by former Councillor Willcox and informed the meeting that the Complainant (Councillor Tony Marwood) had requested the opportunity to respond to this information. The Members decided that Councillor Marwood should be allowed to speak as a witness.

The Investigating Officer introduced the report and informed the Members that she had found that former Councillor, Mr Stephen Willcox, had breached Section 3(1) of the Code of Conduct in that, at the Clutton Parish Council meeting of 20th December, he had failed to treat Parish Councillors with respect and that he had also breached Section 3(2)(b) of the Code in that, at the same meeting, he exhibited bullying behaviour.

The Chair asked Mr Willcox whether he needed any clarification of the Investigating Officer's report as presented. Mr Willcox queried the inclusion of information in the report that referred to events after the 20th December meeting. The Investigating Officer replied that both Mr Willcox and Councillor Marwood had themselves raised issues about events which happened after 20th December. Nevertheless, she stood by her report and conclusions, which were based on events at the 20th December Parish Council meeting. Mr Willcox accepted the Chair's invitation to comment further, following Councillor Marwood's evidence.

Councillor Marwood commented that the report and the statements within it were accurate in his opinion. He added that a meeting called by Barratts (the developers), was attended by 160 people from Clutton. These unprecedented numbers showed clearly the views of the villagers.

The Members of the Standards Committee then withdrew to consider the evidence in private. After their adjournment, they reconvened in public and announced their decision.

Decision

The Standards Committee has carefully considered the complaint in the light of the evidence before it concerning the events of the Clutton Parish Council meeting on 20th December 2010. In making its decision, the Committee has disregarded events and information after the 20th December.

It has concluded that on the night of 20th December 2010, former Councillor Willcox failed to treat Parish Councillors with respect and that his behaviour was insulting and humiliating. As a result, he attempted to undermine them. The Committee has concluded that Mr Willcox breached Section 3.1 and 3(2)(b) of the Code of Conduct. The Committee records that it censures Mr Willcox.

The meeting ended at 6.23 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services