

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THURSDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

PRESENT:-

Independent Members: Dr Axel Palmer. Cyril Davies was present for minute item 22.

Parish Representatives: Clive Fricker and Kathy Thomas

Bath and North East Somerset Councillors: Jess David, Sally Davis, Duncan Hounsell and Michelle O'Doherty

Officers: Maria Lucas, Michael Hewitt, Jack Latkovic

Independent Person: Tony Drew

11 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair (Dr Axel Palmer) welcomed everyone to the meeting by explaining that this meeting is being held under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The Council has agreed a protocol to cover virtual meetings and this meeting will operate in line with that protocol. The meeting has the same status and validity as a meeting held in the Guildhall.

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION

Councillor June Player and Deborah Russell (Independent Member) had sent their apologies for this meeting. Cyril Davies arrived for the last item on the agenda.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

14 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair informed the meeting that he has agreed to bring a report on a complaint received from a member of the public as urgent item. The Chair confirmed that all Members of the Committee have received the papers on this matter in advance of the meeting.

The Chair suggested that this item should be considered in exempt session as it dealt with personal information in relation to several officers and the complainant after the last item on the agenda. The Committee agreed with Chair's suggestion.

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC NOTICE

The Committee unanimously **AGREED** with the following resolution;

That, having been satisfied that the public interest test would be better served by not disclosing relevant information, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Scheduled 12A for the Act as amended.

Note: The Information Governance Manager has issued a certificate of exemption (attached as Appendix 1) in accordance to Access to Information Arrangements - Exclusion of access by the public to Council meetings.

15 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS (COMPLAINTS MUST GO THROUGH THE STANDARDS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE)

There were none.

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

There were none.

17 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 9TH JULY 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18 REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

Maria Lucas (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the assessment of complaints.

19 ANNUAL REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

Maria Lucas took the Committee through the report, as printed.

Councillor Michelle O'Doherty said that the Council had been doing quite well in complaints department and asked how the Council would monitor outcomes from the recommendations received through Ombudsman's feedback.

Maria Lucas responded that the Council's Complaints Officer, who was employed by Audit West, monitored the Local Government complaints to Ombudsman. Appendix 2 of the report set out information on whether the Council complied with those complaints, which were analysed by the Complaints Officer. Maria Lucas also added that she met regularly with the Complaints Officer, to review complaints on a quarterly basis.

Councillor Jess David said that she welcomed the report. With regard to the last upheld complaint, which was about a parent complaining about the child's access to

education, whilst they were unable to attend school, Councillor David thought that some of the remedies that were suggested there were quite interesting and she asked whether this could be forwarded to the relevant Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (Children) for inclusion in their forward plan.

The Committee welcomed this proposal from Councillor Jess David and would inform the Chair of this suggestion.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Annual Review and note the determinations made by the Ombudsman.

20 PARISHES LIAISON MEETING - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Maria Lucas informed the Committee that under the Constitution she has the authority, to make minor amendments to the Constitution and then to bring those amendments to the attention of the Standards Committee. All other amendments must be agreed by Council.

This amendment was requested by the Parish Liaison Committee, and it was agreed by Maria Lucas in her capacity of the Monitoring Officer of the Council under these constitutional arrangements.

The Standards Committee noted the amendment as presented in the agenda.

21 WORKPLAN FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Maria Lucas took the Committee through the Workplan for Standards Committee.

The Committee agreed that the Annual Report of the Standards Committee should be considered at 19th November 2020, rather than 19th January 2021 meeting.

It was **AGREED** to have the Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 19th November 2020 (subject to its readiness).

22 REPORT ON COMPLAINT

The Chair invited Maria Lucas to take the Committee through the report.

The Committee decided that having considered the terms of reference of the Standards Committee it was outside the remit of Standards Committee to investigate this matter.

On a motion from Councillor Michelle O'Doherty, seconded by Councillor Duncan Hounsell, it was **AGREED** (unanimously) to decline the investigation of the complaint.

The meeting ended at 4.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services