

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THURSDAY, 19TH NOVEMBER, 2020

PRESENT:-

Independent Members: Dr Axel Palmer, Dr Cyril Davies and Deborah Russell

Parish Councillors: Clive Fricker and Kathy Thomas

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

Officers: Michael Hewitt (Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer) and Enfys Hughes (Democratic Services Officer)

Independent Person: Tony Drew

23 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair (Dr Axel Palmer) welcomed everyone to the meeting by explaining that this meeting was 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.

24 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

Not necessary for a virtual meeting.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTION

Councillor June Player sent her apologies for the meeting.

The Chair informed the meeting that Maria Lucas (Monitoring Officer) would shortly be retiring from the Council. Michael Hewitt would be her replacement on an interim basis and was present at this meeting. The Chair wished to thank Maria Lucas for her sterling work supporting the Standards Committee and wished her well in her retirement.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

27 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

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

There were no items from the public.

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

There were no items.

30 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 17TH SEPTEMBER 2020

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The following action was checked:

Minute number 19 (page 2-3) - ANNUAL REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

With regard to one of the complaints, Councillor Jess David thought that some of the remedies that were suggested were interesting and she asked whether this could be forwarded to the relevant Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (Children) for inclusion in their forward plan.

After the meeting it was confirmed that this item had been actioned and forwarded to the relevant Scrutiny Panel for inclusion by the Democratic Services Officer.

31 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chair introduced the item and stated he believed it was good practice to have an annual report. He reminded Members that an updated appendix had been circulated shortly before the meeting.

He noted that at section 3 of the appendix the Standards Committee Membership 2019-20 (not 2018-2019 as printed), Kathy Thomas (Parish Councillor) had been omitted from the list, instead it stated vacancy.

The Interim Monitoring Officer would update the report.

Michael Hewitt (Interim Monitoring Officer) presented the report and stated the Annual Report was a summary of the work of the Standards Committee from April 2019 to March 2020. The report followed a similar format to previous years and the appendix set out the background for the period during which there had been 7 complaints. The report would be considered by Council in January 2021.

It was noted that the number of complaints had dropped but there appeared to be no definitive reason why this was.

RESOLVED that the Standards Committee recommend the Annual Report 2019/2020 to Council.

32 REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF COMPLAINTS

The Interim Monitoring Officer reminded the meeting that an updated appendix had been circulated shortly before the meeting. He stated that Complaint Number 08/20 in the appendix should be recorded as a breach/NFA (no further action).

He informed the meeting that there were four new complaints since the last meeting with one new one received since the report was prepared. Of the 4 outstanding – one related to the same councillor, one related to a previous complainant in respect of registering an interest, one related to a BANES councillor and one a parish councillor.

RESOLVED that the Report on the Assessment of Complaints be noted.

33 WORKPLAN FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chair stated that the training session on oral hearings was still outstanding. This would be arranged once physical meetings resumed.

The Interim Monitoring Officer stated as he was new in the role he had done a brief 'horizon scan'. In respect of the representations made on the new model Code of Conduct, he reported that there was no current update on the website.

RESOLVED to note the Workplan.

The meeting ended at 4.25 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services

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