

EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Standards Committee held the Coltman VC Room, Town Hall on Monday 6th September 2021.

Present:

Councillors Mrs J Killoran (Chairman), R Faulkner, D F Fletcher, R Grosvenor and C Sylvester.

Officers Present:

Mrs A Wakefield (Solicitor and Monitoring Officer) and Mrs M Henchcliffe (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

Also Present:

Mr W Qneibi (Parish Councillor).

Apologies for absence was received from Mrs A Trenery (Parish Councillor) and G Goodall (Independent Person).

31/21 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest at the commencement of the meeting.

32/21 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor D Fletcher was appointed vice-chairman for the ensuing year.

33/21 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7th April 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Voting concerning the above decision was as follows:

Those voting for the motion	Those voting against	Those abstaining
Councillor D Fletcher		Councillor R Faulkner
Councillor Mrs J Killoran		Councillor R Grosvenor
Councillor C Sylvester		

34/21 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business pursuant to Rule 12.

35/21 **MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCILLORS**

The Monitoring Officer updated Members on the decision notices issued since the last meeting on 7th April 2021.

She reported that a number of complaints had been received from Borough Councillors and in relation to parish councils, and in six instances she found there were no breaches, including one matter where she had determined the issue was capable of being addressed through the Member issuing a clarification to the person conducting the interview.

Three other matters had been referred for external investigation including one matter regarding a complaint from a Borough Councillor against another Borough Councillor, one matter regarding Horninglow and Eton parish council was being and going matter regarding Mayfield parish council which had previously been reported to the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer also reported that an extraordinary Council meeting has been convened to appoint an interim Monitoring Officer, due to her leaving the Authority. She informed Members that Chris Ebberley, formerly Deputy Monitoring Officer with the Council, had kindly agreed to take on the post for 3 to 4 months, alongside his other duties at Staffordshire County Council. After January 2022 the Council would be looking to appoint a full time Monitoring Officer.

Councillor Grosvenor commented that the appointment of the Monitoring Officer was a matter for full Council.

She also confirmed that Caroline Elwood had been appointed as interim Council Solicitor from Tuesday 14th September 2021.

A number of questions were asked regarding the role of the Standards Committee by Councillor Grosvenor. He suggested that in his opinion the Committee should take a far more proactive role going forward including the initial consideration of whether to investigate a complaint, advising Members on the appropriate Declarations of Interests, considering aspects of the current Code of Conduct and arranging training for Member, and expressed concern that the current system was wasteful of taxpayers money in undertaking investigations and dealing with complaints. He also queried what was best proactive in terms of the length of service of the Independent Person.

After some debate Councillor Grosvenor proposed that the Council looked at reviewing the terms of reference so that the Standards Committee could be proactive in dealing with Members conduct. This motion was not seconded.

Further discussions took place with Members indicating it would be helpful to seek Officer advice on the merits of the various matters raised.

At the close of the meeting, the Chairman and Committee Members conveyed their sincere thanks to Angela Wakefield (Monitoring Officer) for all her hard work and support as Monitoring Officer.

Chairman