

MINUTES OF **STANDARDS COMMITTEE INITIAL ASSESSMENT**
HEARING PANEL
MEETING DATE **Thursday, 13 December 2018**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Linda Woollard (Chair), Bill Evans, Colin Coulton and D Haley

OFFICERS: Dave Whelan (Legal Services Manager/Interim Monitoring Officer) and Charlotte Lynch (Trainee Governance and Member Services Officer)

PUBLIC: 0

5 Apologies for Absence

None.

6 Declarations of Interest

None.

7 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the press and public be excluded for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

By virtue of Paragraph 1: Information relating to any individual.

8 Initial Assessment Hearing

The Panel considered a report and background information on two similar complaints by two members of the council against Councillor A.

The complaints both centred on Councillor A's response to a question concerning a Tweet posted by another member of Councillor A's group, which was brought to their attention at a Council meeting. It is alleged that Councillor A's response to this question constitutes a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

Councillor A denied any wrongdoing.

The Panel carefully considered all the evidence before it. There were some differences between Councillor A's version of events and those of the complainant councillor.

The Interim Monitoring Officer informed the Panel that Councillor A stated that she had access to an audio recording of the meeting, which could facilitate a more informed decision.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Hearing be deferred until audio recording and transcript are provided, to allow more informed consideration.

9 Initial Assessment Hearing

The Interim Monitoring Officer presented a report on a complaint against Councillor B from an officer of the Council concerning information shared on social media.

The complaint had previously been considered by Hearing Panels on 30 August 2017 and 26 July 2018. At the meeting of the 26 July 2018, the Hearing Panel requested that Councillor B apologise to the officer concerned.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an update on the situation to members, and to decide if and/or what additional measures should be taken against Councillor B.

The Panel were informed that the Interim Monitoring Officer had wrote to Councillor B on a couple of occasions requesting that an apology be given. No response to those emails had been received and no apology given.

The Panel again carefully considered the complaint and conduct of Councillor B. The various options available to the Panel were also considered.

The Panel did not consider this complaint would warrant the time and expense of a formal investigation, in part due to the limited powers of sanction at the Panel's disposal. Nevertheless, the Panel felt that there was no justification for Councillor B's conduct in this regard and expressed their sympathy for the officer concerned.

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That the Interim Monitoring Officer write a strongly-worded letter to Councillor B criticising her conduct in regards to the complaint itself and her lack of cooperation throughout the Hearings process.

Chair

Date