

West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee

Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury councils

West Suffolk
working together

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Joint Standards Committee** held on **Monday 13 April 2015** at **6.00 pm** at the **Conference Chamber, West Suffolk House**, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3YU

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman Eddie Stewart
Vice Chairman Jim Thorndyke

Bob Cockle
Carol Lynch

Derek Redhead

9. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

Councillor Roger Dicker was unable to attend the meeting.

10. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes at the meeting.

11. **Public Participation**

Agenda Item 4. – Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014

Mrs Sara Beckett addressed the Joint Committee with regard to the minutes of the last meeting (15 December 2014) which were attached to the agenda as Item 4.

She drew attention to Minute No 8 which concerned Members' consideration of exempt Report No JST/JT/14/002. The report in question set out the findings of the Investigating Officer and the Independent Person following a Code of Conduct Investigation.

Mrs Beckett advised those present that she had been the complainant, whom the Joint Committee had resolved to receive a written apology. However, she was yet to have received this apology from the Member in question.

In light of the outstanding apology, the Monitoring Officer advised Mrs Beckett that the Chairman and herself had produced a letter for the Member requesting in the strongest possible terms that they comply the resolution of

the Joint Committee and issue a written apology to Mrs Beckett. The Chairman read out the content of this letter to the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the Localism Act had very much curtailed the powers of the Joint Committee. However, she suggested that a way forward could be for Mrs Beckett to consider making another formal complaint.

12. **Minutes**

On consideration of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014 Councillor Carol Lynch raised concern that the recommendation in respect of Minute No 8 (exempt Report No JST/JT/14/002) did not specifically state that the resolution was made having considered the report of the Independent Person.

She proposed that an amendment be made to the minute to reflect this and this was duly seconded.

With 4 voting for the motion and with 1 against, the minutes of 15 December 2014 were accepted as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendment being made:

8. **Report of Code of Conduct Investigation (Exempt – para 1) (Report No: JST/JT/14/002)**

RESOLVED:

That, having considered the report of the Independent Person, the Committee found that there had been a breach of Paragraph 1 of the Code of Conduct and that the sanction imposed be that the Member be asked to submit a written apology to the complainant.

It was also agreed that the wording of the apology did not need the prior approval of the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer.

13. **Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business raised.

14. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as prescribed in Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and indicated against each item.

15. **Alleged Breach of the Code of Conduct (Exempt - para 1) (Report No: JST/JT/15/001)**

The Monitoring Officer presented this report which requested that the Joint Committee consider whether there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct in this case and, if so, what sanction to impose.

Members considered the report of the Investigating Officer and the report of the Independent Person together with all supporting documentation.

Councillor Jim Thorndyke, who was present at the meeting at which the complaints referred to, also spoke on the matter and offered his opinion.

The Joint Committee were of the opinion that there had been a breach of Paragraph 1 of the Code of Conduct, however, in light of the Member in question having already apologised and resigned from the membership of the Committee at which the incident took place that no further action was required.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That, having considered the report of the Independent Person, the Committee found that there had been a breach of Paragraph 1 of the Code of Conduct but that no sanction be imposed beyond the action already taken by the Member.

It was also agreed that no letter would be sent to the Member other than the outcome of investigation letter sent by the Monitoring Officer.

The Meeting concluded at 6.35 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
