

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 16 April 2018** at **3.00 pm** at the **Council Chamber, District Offices**, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY

Present: **Councillors**

Chairman David Bowman
Vice Chairman John Burns

Forest Heath District Council

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Chris Barker
Rona Burt

Jim Thorndyke
Julia Wakelam

48. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

49. **Substitutes**

There were no substitutes present at the meeting.

50. **Public Participation**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

51. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2017 were unanimously accepted as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

52. **Local Government Ethical Standards: Consultation (Report No: JST/JT/18/002)**

The Joint Committee was advised that the Committee for Standards in Public Life had undertaken a consultation on Ethical Standards in Local Government, with the deadline for responses being 18 May 2018.

Accordingly, the Monitoring Officer had produced a proposed response to the consultation on behalf of the West Suffolk Councils, which was attached as Appendix A to Report No JST/JT/18/001, and sought the views of the Joint Committee on this.

Whilst Members appreciated the need to comply with the specified word limit for the response, the Joint Committee asked that it be reworked to directly make reference and respond to the questions posed in the consultation document.

It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would carry out the amendments as requested and would email the amended response to all Members of the Joint Committee together with the consultation document for reference.

If agreement from all Members was able to be received via email then the response could be submitted, following authorisation from the Joint Committee Chairman. However, if Members still had concerns an additional meeting of the Joint Committee would need to be held prior to 18 May 2018.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the proposed response to the consultation be reworked as requested. Following which it be circulated to all Joint Committee Members for their views and subsequent relevant next step.

53. Exclusion of the Press and Public

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That, under Section 100(A) 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 Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and indicated against each item.

54. Report on Complaint (Report No: JST/JT/18/002) (Exempt: Para 1)

The Joint Committee was requested to consider the findings of the Monitoring Officer in relation to a complaint against a Councillor and to determine whether they wished to support the recommendations proposed.

All parties had been advised of the report before the Joint Committee, however, neither the complainant or the Councillor were present at the meeting.

In response to the report before Members the Councillor concerned had submitted further correspondence to the Monitoring Officer which was tabled to the meeting.

Whilst the Joint Committee was largely in agreement that the Councillor was not acting in the capacity of an Elected Member at the time of the incident it was, however, acknowledged that the individual was very widely known as a Councillor.

Accordingly, it was agreed that a strongly worded letter would be sent to the Councillor from the Chairman of the Joint Committee explaining that the Joint Committee considered the posts in question to have been highly inappropriate and had the potential to have brought their office into disrepute. Therefore, the Councillor was advised to act with more care on social media and to undertake training on this aspect.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That:-

1. The findings of the Monitoring Officer be supported in that the Councillor was not acting in the capacity of an Elected Member at the time of the incident; whilst noting, however, that the individual was very widely known as a Councillor;
2. A strongly worded letter be drafted by the Monitoring Officer and to be sent to the Councillor from the Chairman of the Joint Committee explaining that the Joint Committee considered the posts in question to have been highly inappropriate and had the potential to have brought their office into disrepute; and
3. The Councillor be advised to act with more care on social media and to undertake training on this topic.

The meeting concluded at 3.52 pm

Signed by:

Chairman
