

West Suffolk Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the **West Suffolk Standards Committee** held on **Monday 7 October 2019** at **5.00 pm** in the **Council Chamber, College Heath Road, Mildenhall, IP28 7EY**

Present: **Councillors**

Chair Jim Thorndyke

John Augustine

Max Clarke

Roger Dicker

Robert Everitt

Jim Meikle

9. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Margaret Marks.

10. **Substitutes**

No substitutions were declared.

11. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12. **Election of Vice Chair for 2019/2020**

Further to the last meeting of the Committee when it was resolved to suspend Standing Orders in order to allow the West Suffolk Standards Committee to appoint a Vice Chair for 2019/2020 at a subsequent meeting, the Chair now sought nominations for the role.

Following discussion and advice provided by the Monitoring Officer, Councillor Max Clarke nominated himself as Chair and this was seconded by Councillor Roger Dicker.

There being no other nominations, it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Max Clarke be elected Vice Chair for 2019/2020.

13. **Public Participation**

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

14. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

As the next item on the agenda was exempt, it was proposed by Councillor Roger Dicker, seconded by Councillor Robert Everitt and

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the following items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt categories of information as prescribed in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and indicated against the items and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

15. **Report on Complaints against a Councillor (Report No: STC/WS/19/003) (Exempt: Paragraphs 1 & 2)**

This report set out the detail and submitted evidence in relation to two complaints received in respect of an Elected Member.

The complaints were reviewed jointly (as they concerned the same matter) in accordance with the procedure agreed by the Standards Committee at their meeting in July 2019.

The Independent Person was of the view that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct and recommended that they provide a public apology at a meeting of the Authority in question.

However, the Councillor who was the subject of the complaints had rejected the Independent Person's recommendation on the basis that they had already issued a written apology.

Therefore, in accordance with the complaints handling procedure, the matter had now been referred to the Standards Committee in order for them to review.

Considerable discussion took place by the Committee with Members being of the view that the previously issued written apology was sufficient. Members felt that the apology had been issued promptly and there was no wider adverse reaction from the public which may have necessitated a public apology.

There was also some debate as to whether the Committee believed that the Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct.

Both the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer provided further explanation and advice to the meeting; particularly in relation to the role of the Independent Person and the complaints handling procedure. It was agreed that the wording of the procedure would be looked at in order to provide clarity on some elements.

Councillor Jim Meikle raised a general question in relation to the support offered to Elected Members in respect of their wellbeing given the challenges they can face. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Council would offer support to any Member if there was concerns regarding their wellbeing.

Councillor Max Clarke proposed an amendment to the recommendation set out in Report No STC/WS/19/003, to reflect that the Committee had considered the matter and was of the view that the email apology already made by the Councillor was sufficient and that no further action was necessary. This was duly seconded by Councillor Roger Dicker.

Upon being put to the vote and with the vote being unanimous, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Committee considered the matter and was of the view that the email apology already made by the Councillor was sufficient and that no further action was necessary.

The meeting concluded at 5.45pm

Signed by:

Chair
