

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

STOURPORT-ON-SEVERN/BEWDLEY ROOM, WYRE FOREST HOUSE,
FINEPOINT WAY, KIDDERMINSTER

21ST JANUARY 2016 (5.00PM)

Present:

Councillors: J D Smith (Chairman), J R Desmond (Vice-Chairman), H E Dyke, I Hardiman, N Knowles and S J Williams.

Co-opted Member: Rev J A Cox.

Parish Council Representatives: R Hobson, L Green and C Edginton-White.

Observers:

There were no members present as observers.

ES.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Phillips and Mr R Reynolds (Co-opted Member).

ES.2 Appointment of Substitutes

Councillor S J Williams was appointed as a substitute for Councillor J Phillips.

ES.3 Declarations of Interests by Members

No declarations of interest were made.

ES.4 Minutes

Decision: The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Councillor C Edginton-White entered the meeting at this point (5.05pm).

ES.5 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision: Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in paragraphs 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The Committee received a short legal briefing from the Monitoring Officer.

The meeting resumed at 5.11pm in open session.

ES.6 Breach of Members Code of Conduct

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer which asked Members to consider a report from the Independent Person following two complaints received relating to the conduct of a Member.

The Monitoring Officer reiterated the legal situation relating to the Committee.

Members were advised the meeting was not a tribunal or judicial forum seeking to apportion blame, establish negligent behaviour or any functions performed by the civil or criminal courts. The meeting was purely a forum to maintain and promote high standards for Councillors.

The Committee were meeting on this occasion to consider a referral from the Independent Standards Member on a very specific point, and the matter before the Committee was whether the social media posts reproduced on the agenda fell below the standards expected of Members. It was not about the right or wrongs of the events.

The Monitoring Officer outlined the series of events and tabled a letter from the Member in question which had been received by the Chairman of the Committee. A copy of the letter is attached as appendix 1 to the minutes.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the letter had been posted on the "We love Stourport-on-Severn" Facebook site.

Decision:

The unanimous decision of the Ethics and Standards Committee was that the language used on the social media site fell well below the standards expected from a Councillor, and unanimously censured the behaviour of the Member. The Committee calls for the Councillor to receive further Reputation Training on the use of social media and invites the Councillor to make a donation to the Chairman's Charity.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 5.36pm.