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Unconfirmed Non-Exempt Minutes of a Meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee held on Wednesday 9th September 2020 at 9.30am

Present:

Councillor Northeast (Chair)
Councillor Long
Councillor Seex

2020/2021

This meeting is available to view using the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iABINE9pYo8>

1. Election of a Chairman

It was proposed that Councillor Northeast, as Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, be elected Chair of the Sub-Committee. This proposal was duly seconded, and it was therefore **Resolved** that:

Councillor Northeast be elected Chair of the Standards Sub-Committee.

2. Virtual Meeting Protocol and Use of Mobile Devices

The Chair opened the meeting and explained how it would be conducted and the protocol that would be followed, including how any break in the proceedings due to technical difficulties would be managed.

3. Apologies

There were no apologies.

4. Declarations of Interest

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. The standing declarations were noted.

Councillors Long, Northeast and Seex also declared personal interests as Town Councillors and acquaintances of the Member concerned.

5. Chair's Report and Urgent Items

There was none.

6. Public Forum

In accordance with the Remote Meetings Protocol introduced by the Town Council, members of the public who wished to address the Council or any of its Committees during a remote meeting should have emailed their representations one clear working day before the meeting. There was one:

Mr Chester asked:

The Council's Standing Orders state that Governance and Audit may 'establish when required a Standards Sub Committee to determine how to comply with the recommendations of the Monitoring Officer'. Recommendations from the Standards Board from England are that Standards Committee hearings should be heard in public where legally possible and that an up to date register of complaints should be published. The Arun website currently states that there are no complaints against Councillors, has no in breach notices published and there have been no meetings of the Standards Committee to consider any recommendations of an assessment panel against any members of Littlehampton Town Council. Is there any public openness and transparency in this process at all?

Response:

In thanking Mr Chester for his question, some clarification is required. The Standards Board for England and the regime that went with it was abolished by the Localism Act 2011. The current regime operates with each Council being able to have its own Code of Conduct. Any complaints against Councillors will be received by the Monitoring Officer and judged against this Code and in accordance with the Principal Authority's Local Assessment Procedure. Where complaints are received about a Town Councillor, these will be investigated, and a report put before a meeting of the Town Council's Standards Sub-Committee. At this stage, the matter is confidential, although those who complained and those complained about will have contributed to the investigation, been informed of the findings, and given the opportunity to comment. When the Sub-Committee has reached a decision a notice of such will be placed on either the Town Council or District Council website. This is similar to the arrangements that are in place at the District Council for their members. The Town Council will always consider whether it is in the public interest to discuss exempt matters in public and in doing so whether this

public interest outweighs the need for confidentiality. The Town Council has decided that these matters should be discussed in the exempt part of the agenda and this is picked up in our Standing Orders. The process is open and transparent to both the complainants and the person complained about. The outcome will be available to the public.

I am not aware of any other complaints against Littlehampton Town Councillors and should point out that this is the first under these arrangements. Therefore, there is nothing historically to record publicly. When this matter is decided it will be the first entry on a register.

7. Exempt Business

It was **Resolved** that:

The public and accredited representatives of the press be excluded from the Meeting under Section 100 Local Government Act 1972 due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted.

The following item is confidential in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, being information, which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.

Summary of Matter Discussed in the Exempt Part of the Agenda

8. Exempt Officer's Report

8.1. Code of Conduct Complaint

The Committee received and considered a confidential report (previously circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee only) setting out an investigation into complaints about the conduct of a Town Councillor alleging breaches of the Town Council's Code of Conduct.

The Sub Committee proceeded to consider the allegations, evidence, and proposed resolution. The investigation had concluded that two allegations were substantiated and in accordance with the principal authority's Local Assessment Procedure, an informal resolution was recommended that the Councillor be provided with training. The Monitoring Officer had also provided guidance on what the training should cover and requested that it be completed promptly. Observing the informal agreement of all parties to the Member concerned undertaking training, the Sub Committee considered this an appropriate resolution. It was therefore **Resolved** that:

- 1. A Decision Notice detailing the outcome of the investigation into the breaches of the**

Town Councils' Code of Conduct be prepared.

- 2. The Monitoring Officer's recommendation that training be provided to the Member concerned be approved.**
- 3. That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to arrange for the appropriate training to be delivered independently and as soon as is practicable.**

The meeting closed at 10:16am.

CHAIR