

Minutes of a meeting of the **Standards (Hearing) Sub-Committee** of the Purbeck District Council held in the Council Chamber, Westport House, Wareham on 19 December 2016 at 9.15am.

Present:-

Councillors Pellegrini (Parish Councillor), Unsworth and Wharf.

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting: Tina Dudley, Democratic Services Officer; David Fairbairn, Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) and Kirsty Riglar, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer).

Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Standards (Hearing) Sub-Committee.

1.15/16 **Election of Chairman for the meeting**

Resolved that Councillor Wharf be elected Chairman for the meeting.

2.15/16 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

3.15/16 **Urgent items**

The Chairman reported there were no urgent items.

4.15/16 **Public participation time**

No members of the public attended for this item.

5.15/16 **Declarations of Interest by Members**

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest for the meeting.

6.15/16 **Councillor M**

The Sub-Committee was informed that on 1 February 2016 the Standards (Assessment) Sub-Committee had considered a complaint that a number of Town Councillors had breached the Town Council's Code of Conduct. The Sub-Committee had decided that the complaint should be investigated and subsequently the Deputy Monitoring Officer carried out an investigation.

Members then considered whether the report should be considered in public. It was noted that there was a presumption that the meeting would be held in public since openness and transparency were important factors in maintaining public confidence in standards arrangements.

**Resolved** that the hearing be heard in public as it was important to maintain openness, transparency and confidence in the standards arrangements.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the task for the Sub-Committee was to consider the report and decide to accept, or not, the Deputy Monitoring Officer's conclusions. He advised that the Sub-Committee could:

- if it did not accept the Deputy Monitoring Officer's report and findings, dismiss the complaint;
- refer the complaint to the Monitoring Officer to seek an informal resolution; or
- accept the report and its findings and proceed to a formal hearing in order to make a final decision on whether the Town Councillors (formerly identified collectively as Councillor M) breached the Code of Conduct of Wareham Town Council, and if so, to decide whether any sanction should be imposed.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented her report, outlining her findings and conclusions of the investigation into complaints that a number of Town Councillors had breached the Code of Conduct during a meeting of the Wareham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held on 12 November 2015. She explained that following an investigation involving three complainants and seven Town Councillors, she had reached the conclusion that two Town Councillors had breached the Code of Conduct and that the remaining five had not.

The three members of Wareham Town Council present at the meeting, Councillor David Budd, Councillor Keith Critchley and Councillor Keith Green, confirmed that they were happy that the findings of the report, which had not found them to have breached the Code of Conduct, were true and accurate. The two members of the Town Council who had been found to have breached the Code of Conduct, Councillor Mike Wiggins and Councillor Nicola Wiggins, were not present at the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9.30am and reconvened at 9.56am.

The Chairman stated that the Sub-Committee accepted that an apology was given to the complainants, however, it was important that staff were treated respectfully. Councillors must show leadership and the Sub-Committee found that Councillor Mike Wiggins and Councillor Nicola Wiggins failed to show such leadership and respect; this was disappointing. Both Councillor Mike Wiggins and Councillor Nicola Wiggins would therefore be censured.

**Resolved that:**

- (1) Councillor Mike Wiggins and Councillor Nicola Wiggins be censured:
- (2) the Monitoring Officer communicate the decision of the Standards (Hearing) Sub-Committee to all members of Wareham Town Council; and
- (3) Members of Wareham Town Council be offered refresher training into the Code of Conduct.

The meeting ended at 9.57am

Chairman