

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a special meeting of the Standards Committee of the Bolsover District Council held as a Virtual on Monday, 19 October 2020 at 15:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor R. Jaffray in the Chair

Councillors Tricia Clough, Andrew Joesbury, Clive Moesby and Deborah Watson.

Officers:- Sarah Sternberg (Solicitor to the Council & Monitoring Officer), Victoria Dawson (Head of Housing Management and Enforcement), Nicola Calver (Governance Manager) and Alison Bluff (Governance Officer).

### **STA24-20/21      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors David Downes and James Watson.

### **STA25-20/21      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

### **STA26-20/21      PUBLISHING OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS**

Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer regarding whether outcomes in relation to complaints made against Members should be published. Arguments for and against publication were set out in the report.

At its meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020, Committee were made aware that some authorities, such as Devon and Cornwall, already carried out publishing of decisions so the public could see how complaints against members had been progressed and handled.

Members had resolved to look at the detail of Devon and Cornwall councils' publishing of Member complaints and 2 copies were attached to the report. However, it was noted that Devon and Cornwall councils' published complaints were lengthy documents with the full reasoning for the decision and the Monitoring Officer advised against giving so much detail in a public notice.

The Monitoring Officer felt that Standards Committee should ask all District Councillors and Parish Councils for their views before taking a decision on whether to publicise and if so at what level. This would assist with it being known that this was what happens if Members did decide to publish.

Committee also considered a supplementary report of the Monitoring Officer which noted the Committee for Standards in Public Life's (CSPL) review report "Local Government Ethical Standards". Amongst the good practice recommendations of the CSPL report, was one in relation to the publication of the outcomes of complaints against

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members. Committee was asked to consider the Monitoring Officer's views regarding this which were set out in the supplementary report.

In response to a Member's query, the Monitoring Officer advised that Freedom of Information requests to name an anonymised Member would be dealt with under data protection.

A Member referred to the options at 1.8 in the original report regarding 'Publicise cases from a specific period of time (say every 3 months) with full names redacted'. He proposed that this include whether it was a Parish or District Councillor, the nature of the complaint and the outcome of whether there had been an investigation or not. If an investigation had taken place then a report regarding the outcome be presented to Standards Committee at a later date. The Monitoring Officer replied that she would include this as part of a proposal and present to the next meeting of Standards Committee. Any agreed proposal would then be sent to District Councillors and parish/town councils for their consideration.

Members agreed that 'Publicise cases from a specific period of time (say every 3 months) with full names redacted', be every 6 months.

Moved by Councillor Andrew Joesbury and seconded by Councillor Tricia Clough

**RESOLVED** that 1) the Monitoring Officer presents to the next meeting of Standards Committee, a proposal for a six monthly list of (anonymised) complaints made against Members to be published, to include;

- i) whether a complaint was a Parish or District Councillor,
- ii) the nature of the complaint and the outcome of whether there had been an investigation or not,
- iii) if an investigation had taken place then a report regarding the outcome be presented to Standards Committee at a later date.

2) any agreed proposal made at the next meeting be sent to District Councillors and parish/town councils for consultation,

3) parish/town councils are asked in addition to seek the views of their individual Councillors and ask that they send responses to the Monitoring Officer,

(3) Following the consultation, a report be presented to Standards Committee on the outcome of consultation.

(Monitoring Officer)

The meeting concluded at 15:15 hours.