

# **STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING**

### **Minutes**

**FRIDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2022**

PRESENT: Councillor G Bond (Chair)

Councillors J Aberley, B Emery, I Herdman, K Jackson and P Wilkinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor W Rodgers and Mr H Mawdsley

APOLOGIES: Councillors E Fallows, T Hall, P Taylor and D Fowler

8 **TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

9 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY:**

There were no declarations made.

10 **DEBATE NOT HATE REPORT**

Consideration was given to the Debate Not Hate report issued by the Local Government Association under its civility in public life programme. The purpose of the programme was to address intimidation, standards of public and political discourse and behaviour in public office and provide support and advice to councils and councillors.

Councillors discussed the high levels of abuse and intimidation recorded at a national level and the lower levels experienced locally. A number of tools were available to assist councillors which included advice available via the Council's intranet and access to a confidential counselling service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Consideration was given to the Debate Not Hate report issued by the Local Government Association under its civility in public life programme. The purpose of the programme was to address intimidation, standards of public and political discourse and behaviour in public office and provide support and advice to councils and councillors.

Councillors discussed the high levels of abuse and intimidation recorded at a national level and the lower levels experienced locally in relation to planning matters.

## **Standards Committee (SMDC) - 18 November 2022**

A number of tools were available to assist councillors which included advice available via the Council's intranet and access to a confidential counselling service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

### **11 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER**

Discussion took place on the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the period April 2021 – March 2022. Two complaints had been upheld against Council, which related to Council Tax payments and enforcement action. The impact on the reputation of the Council was discussed given the financial climate.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter, Appendix A to the report, be noted.

### **12 REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Council's Code of Conduct for councillors was reviewed in line with best practice. It was proposed to revise the code to incorporate an element of the Local Government Association's model code with regards to other interests and deciding when it is appropriate to withdraw from participating in respect of the matter relating to that interest.

RESOLVED:

That Council be recommended to adopt the proposed revised Code of Conduct.

### **13 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to Section 100A(2) and (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings whereby it is likely that confidential information as defined in Section 100A (3) of the Act would be disclosed to the public in breach of the obligation of confidence or exempt information as defined in Section 100 I (1) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed to the public by virtue of the Paragraphs indicated.

### **14 TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**Standards Committee (SMDC) - 18 November 2022**

15 **STANDARDS COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT**

Members considered a report on complaints made under the Code of Conduct in the period since the Committee last met.

The meeting closed at 10.42 am

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Date