

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE (SMDC) DECISIONS

FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A Church (Chair)

Councillors B Emery, E Fallows, I Herdman, V Miller, P Turner, V Wheeldon and C Wood. Mr Berrisford, Miss V Miller and Mr P Turner.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor(s) P Roberts

APOLOGIES: Councillors C Jebb, M Spooner, G Taylor, P Wilkinson, Mr L Jackson, Councillor W Rogers and Mr P Carnall

24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, IF ANY.**

Councillor O'Shea substituted for Councillor Spooner following receipt of his apologies.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

27 **URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS, IF ANY (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN).**

There were no urgent items of business.

28 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER**

The report advised members of the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for the period April 2023 – March 2024. The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter summarised complaints and enquiries received by it in relation to the Council. The letters were published on the Ombudsman's website together with specimen data used to inform the Ombudsman's Annual Report.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Letter (included at Appendix A to the report) be noted.

29 **SMDC STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

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The Committee considered a report that reviewed the work of the Standards Committee during 2023/2024. This included the following matters; Code of conduct – dispensations, Councillor Induction Programme, the Local Government Ombudsman Annual Letter, Monitoring complaints received regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Members suggested that Councillors be reminded of what training was available to them. The Executive Director (Government and Regulatory Services) advised members that an urgent decision had been taken regarding the dispensation of a current councillor based on medical grounds. He explained that to wait until the next full Council meeting would result in the councillor being disqualified for not attending a meeting within the last 6 months. The decision had been made after consultation with group leaders and the Chairman of the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

30 PROPOSED PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS

Members received a report to consider the adoption of the proposed Parental Leave Policy for Councillors produced by the Local Government Association (LGA).

Members expressed their delight at the policy. The Executive Director (Governance and Regulatory Services) advised that an amendment to the policy had been proposed. The proposal was that bereavement leave should be amended to “minimum of 4 weeks”.

RESOLVED:

That the Council adopts the LGA Parental Leave Policy for Members (attached at Appendix A).

31 REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES

Members received a report presenting proposals to revise the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Members suggested that the “paper analysis” referred to in 9.1 and 9.3 be included as an appendix to the procedure rules.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be recommended to Council for approval.

32 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

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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

33 STANDARDS COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT

Members were presented with information regarding complaints made under the Code of Conduct in the period since the committee previously met. This included complaints made against one parish/town councillor and four district councillors.

The meeting closed at 9.40 am

Chairman