

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Audit and Governance Standards Sub- Committee

(to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Thursday, 26 March 2015

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor M J Ford, JP (Chairman)

(Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: L Keeble and D J Norris

**Also
Present:**



1. CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chairman announced that unfortunately, the Designated Independent Person, Mr David Basson, was stuck in severe traffic and that with the local motorway closed, was not able to attend the meeting. He confirmed that Mr Basson would be available via telephone for consultation. Councillor C J Wood confirmed that he was happy with this arrangement and that the meeting should continue.

It was proposed by the Chairman that the public and representatives of the Press be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the matters to be dealt with involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Having been duly seconded, it was RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting, as the Sub Committee considers that it is not in the public interest to consider the matters in public on the grounds that they will involve the disclosure of exempt information, as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Private Session

The Chairman confirmed that this Standards Sub Committee had been convened to consider an allegation of a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct against Councillor Christopher Wood at a meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 25th February 2015.

The Chairman explained how the meeting would proceed, that it would be held in private session and that all information should be treated as confidential unless the Standards Sub Committee later resolves to remove the exemptions from publication.

At this point, the Chairman invited the Solicitor to the Council to address the Standards Sub Committee to clarify some legal points.

The Chairman invited the Monitoring Officer to present his report. The Monitoring Officer then answered clarification questions put to him about the allegation and the subsequent investigation by members of the Standards Sub Committee. Councillor C J Wood did not have any questions at this stage.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor T M Cartwright was called upon to outline the complaint he had raised about Councillor Wood's alleged conduct at the Planning Committee meeting. Councillor Cartwright then answered clarification questions put to him about the complaint by members of the Standards Sub Committee. Councillor C J Wood and the Monitoring Officer did not have any questions at this stage.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor C J Wood was called upon to respond to the complaint about his alleged conduct at the Planning Committee meeting. Councillor C J Wood then answered clarification questions put to him

about the alleged conduct by members of the Standards Sub Committee. The Monitoring Officer did not have any questions at this stage.

Councillor T M Cartwright was thanked for his attendance and in accordance with the Localism Act Section 38, left the room and took no further part in the discussion.

The Chairman distributed copies of a written statement provided by the Designated Independent Person, Mr David Basson, which gave his preliminary views on the on the allegation. There were no clarification questions about the allegation by members of the Standards Sub Committee or by Councillor C J Wood.

The Monitoring Officer was invited to give his final summary of the investigation into the alleged misconduct.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor C J Wood gave his final summary.

At this point, the Chairman adjourned the meeting to enable the Members of the Standards Sub Committee to deliberate and reach a conclusion. Councillor C J Wood and the Monitoring Officer left the room and took no part in the deliberation.

The Chairman confirmed that having considered all the reasons given for the call-in, the Standards Sub Committee now had to consider the recommendations as set out in the report, that being:

- (a) to determine whether or not a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct has taken place; and
- (b) that subject to the decision at recommendation (a), determines what action(s) should be taken, in accordance with Standards Arrangements, as approved by Council on 21 June 2012.

Following the deliberation of the Standards Sub Committee and consultation with Mr David Basson, the Council's Designated Independent Person, a motion was proposed and seconded to resolve that a breach of the code had taken place; that the appropriate actions would be to censure Councillor C J Wood and to instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange training for Councillor C J Wood, with a focus on the expected behaviour by a member at public meetings. These actions are in accordance with paragraphs 8.1.2 and 8.1.6 of Appendix A to the report.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared CARRIED

The Chairman proposed that the report, including the minute of the decision be no longer treated as exempt information and be open for public inspection. Having been duly seconded, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct had taken place;

- (b) Councillor C J Wood would receive a letter of censure and that the Monitoring Officer be instructed to arrange training for Councillor C J Wood, with a focus on the expected behaviour by a member at public meetings; and
- (c) that the report, including the minute of the decision be no longer treated as exempt information and be open for public inspection.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 6.52 pm).