

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK

STANDARDS COMMITTEE – PANEL HEARING

Minutes from the Meeting of the Standards Committee – Panel Hearing held on Wednesday, 15th December, 2021 at 2.00 pm in the Assembly Room, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn PE30 5DQ

PRESENT:

Councillors C Hudson, C Manning and S Nash

Councillor S Patel – Subject Member

Councillor Mrs V Spikings – Subject Member's Representative

Under Standing Order 34:

Via Zoom

Councillors S Dark, Mrs E Nockolds, A Ryves and S Squire

In Person

Councillor T Parish

Officers:

In Person

Alexa Baker, Monitoring Officer

Noel Doran, Senior Solicitor

Via Zoom

Noel Doran, Investigating Officer's Representative

1 TO CONSIDER THE LOCAL INVESTIGATION AS TO AN ALLEGATION AGAINST A BOROUGH COUNCILLOR

The Monitoring Officer welcomed everyone to the Hearing.

The Democratic Services Officer conducted a roll call of those present at the Hearing.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED: That Councillor S Nash be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee Panel Hearing.

3 MOTION TO ADJOURN THE HEARING

The Chair, Councillor Nash proposed the following motion to adjourn the hearing in view of the following reasons:

Following discussion with Panel Members in respect of timings and substitutions he proposed that the Hearing be adjourned to a later date. Under the Localism Act 2011, Section 27 the council as an authority had the duty to promote high standards of conduct thus the relevant authority must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority. This duty is based on the ethical standards of public life as set down by the Nolan Principles.

For Agenda item 4 and for the record the complaint was raised by Councillor Parish on the 23 April 2021. It was decided by the Monitoring Officer that the matter be directed to a Standards Committee Panel on 23 September 2021. Standards Committee training was arranged and attended by some Members on the 10 December 2021. It was suggested by the trainer during the training that six weeks would be a reasonable period of time to read and digest the report. Panel Members received the report on 9 December 2021 allowing the Panel only 5 days to formulate any questions and to clarify any details for themselves which even though an admission of guilt and an apology had been tabled was not in his opinion provided sufficient time.

Notwithstanding the short notice provided on inspection of the hearing notes there appeared to the Chair that there may be items which may be exempted from discussion in public whereby personal or business details might be disclosed contrary to Schedule 12, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972. In view of the Chair's lack of instruction on those matters concern was expressed that the spontaneity of questioning of those items on the agenda that the Panel had not been advised to that effect and no redactions had been indicated. Further, in respect of substitutions, Councillor Hudson had been drafted into the Panel at the very last minute and receiving her paperwork if she had received the paperwork possibly yesterday or today. Councillor Hudson has not yet as far as I am aware received training for the Standards Committee.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Manning and agreed by the Panel.

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DATE OF ADJOURNED HEARING

The Adjourned Hearing will take place on 31 January 2022 at 9.30 am in the Assembly Room, Town Hall, Saturday Market Place, King's Lynn.

The meeting closed at 2.07 pm