

ASSESSMENT STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8 DECEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors Roberts (Chair), Fitzgerald (Vice-Chair), Bacon, Sinden and Clarke

Independent persons: Jan Gray and Susan Fellows

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

3. COMPLAINT - SB/06/02/2016

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to decide what action to take in respect of a complaint alleging several breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Kim Forward.

On the 14th November 2016 the Monitoring Officer received a complaint concerning Councillor Forward's failure to declare a prejudicial interest at the Full Council meeting on 26th October 2016 regarding her involvement in the Council's Social Lettings Agency Scheme during consideration of the report of the Housing Strategy which was approved by Full Council on 20th July 2016.

A copy of the complaint was appended to the report under Appendix B of the agenda.

The Sub-Committee initially considered if the complaint met the initial tests as set out in para 1(a), (b) and (c) of the Monitoring Officer's report. It was agreed that the complaint did meet para 1(a), (b) and (c) of the test. Members felt that the complaint required further investigation and requested that the Monitoring Officer appoint an independent investigator as per para 6(a) of the report.

The Independent Persons said they needed more details and requested the Monitoring Officer appoint an independent investigator for further investigation.

Councillor Roberts proposed a motion as set out in the resolution below which was seconded by Councillor Sinden.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that: -

The Monitoring Officer appoint an external investigator for further investigation. If the report of the external investigator suggests a breach of any part of the Code, the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer will arrange a public hearing to allow the Assessment Committee to decide what action to take and allow both the complainant and Councillor Forward to make their own submissions.

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Reasons for Decision

The initial assessment has shown that there is a case to answer. The Committee believe that the evidence is sufficient to warrant an investigation.

4. COMPLAINT - SB/06/03/2016

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to decide what action to take in respect of a complaint alleging several breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillor Rob Lee.

On the 16th November 2016 the Monitoring Officer received a complaint concerning Councillor Lee's behaviour and comments towards Councillor Kim Forward at the Full Council Meeting on 26th October 2016.

A copy of the complaint was attached to the report under Appendix B of the agenda.

The committee observed video footage of Councillor Lee at the Full Council Meeting held on 26th October 2016. A transcript of Councillor Lee's speech was appended to the report under Appendix C of the agenda.

The Sub-Committee initially considered if the complaint met the initial tests as set out in para 1(a), (b) and (c) of the Monitoring Officer's report. It was agreed that the complaint did meet para 1(a), (b) and (c) of the test. Members felt that the complaint required further investigation and requested that the Monitoring Officer appoint an independent investigator as per para 6(a) of the report.

Both Independent Members requested the matter be referred to an independent investigator.

Councillor Clarke proposed a motion as set out in the resolution below which was seconded by Councillor Fitzgerald.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that: -

The Monitoring Officer appoint an external investigator for further investigation. If the report of the external investigator suggests a breach of any part of the Code, the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer will arrange a public hearing to allow the Assessment Committee to decide what action to take and allow both the complainant and Councillor Forward to make their own submissions.

Reasons for Decision

The initial assessment has shown that there is a case to answer. The Committee believe that the evidence is sufficient to warrant an investigation.

5. ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

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None.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 12.00 pm)