

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Standards Committee was held on Friday 22 September 2023.

PRESENT: Councillors J Kabuye (Chair), J Ewan (Vice-Chair), D Davison, S Dean, D McCabe, M Storey, J Thompson and S Platt (as substitute for G Wilson)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors D Jones, M Saunders and G Wilson
J Race (Independent Person)
L Garvey and C Hobson

OFFICERS: S Lightwing, C Cunningham and A Wilson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: were submitted on behalf of Councillors M Smiles and G Wilson

22/6 **WELCOME AND EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and read out the Building Evacuation Procedure.

22/7 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest at this point in the meeting.

22/8 **MINUTES - STANDARDS COMMITTEE - 3 JULY 2023**

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 3 July 2023 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

22/9 **PROCEDURE FOR A STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARING**

A copy of the Procedure for a Standards Committee Hearing was included in the agenda pack for information.

22/10 **ANY OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED**

None.

22/11 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair sought the views of the Committee, the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Investigating Officer, as to whether the complaint should be heard in public or private session.

Having heard the representations it was:

ORDERED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

22/12 **STANDARDS COMPLAINT: IKEN REF: 15427**

The Investigating Officer presented her report, a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting, regarding an investigation which had been undertaken in accordance with the prevailing legislation and guidance in relation to an allegation that Councillor Jones had breached the Members' Code of Conduct in that she failed to treat another person with civility and respect, failed to not bully, harass or intimidate another person, did not comply with the Code in respect of conduct at meetings and brought her role and the local authority into disrepute.

A summary of the complaint, details of the relevant legislation, protocols and Members' Code of Conduct, the review process, findings of fact and conclusions were presented by the Investigating Officer.

Committee Members, the Subject Member and the Independent Person were given the opportunity to question the Investigating Officer in relation to her report.

The Subject Member presented their response to the Investigating Officer's report, and called upon two witnesses.

The Investigating Officer, Committee Members and the Independent Person were given the opportunity to question the Subject Member and the witnesses.

It was **ORDERED** that the Standards Committee would hear the second complaint: IKEN Ref: 15391, at this point in the meeting as it was linked to the first complaint: IKEN Ref: 15427.

22/13

STANDARDS COMPLAINT: IKEN REF: 15391

The Investigating Officer presented her report, a copy of which had been circulated prior to the meeting, regarding an investigation which had been undertaken in accordance with the prevailing legislation and guidance in relation to an allegation that Councillor Jones had breached the Members' Code of Conduct in that she failed to treat another person with civility and respect, failed to not bully, harass or intimidate another person, did not comply with the Code in respect of conduct at meetings and brought her role and the local authority into disrepute.

A summary of the complaint, details of the relevant legislation, protocols and Members' Code of Conduct, the review process, findings of fact and conclusions were presented by the Investigating Officer.

Committee Members, the Subject Member and the Independent Person were given the opportunity to question the Investigating Officer in relation to her report.

The Subject Member presented their response to the Investigating Officer's report. The Investigating Officer, Committee Members and the Independent Person were given the opportunity to question the Subject Member.

The Standards Committee went into private session to consider both complaints.

Having considered the Investigating Officer's report, the supporting documentation, the Investigating Officer's comments and questioning, the Subject Member's and the witnesses' comments, the Committee considered the findings of fact, and based on those findings, whether Councillor had failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Independent Person was consulted and provided his views.

In regard to the allegations, the Standards Committee unanimously supported the findings of the Investigating Officer's Reports. The Committee concluded that Councillor Jones had breached the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of both complaints.

It was **ORDERED** that the following sanctions be imposed:

1. Councillor Jones to write a letter of apology to each of the complainants within 28 days of the date of this Standards Committee.
2. Councillor Jones to undertake further training in relation to the Code of Conduct and Conduct at meetings within 28 days of the date of this Standards Committee.
3. Councillor Jones would not be eligible to be a member of the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel for a period of 12 months from the date of this Standards Committee meeting.

