

MINUTES of a meeting of the ASSESSMENT SUB COMMITTEE held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on TUESDAY, 2 OCTOBER 2018

Present: Councillor R Ashman, J Clarke and D Harrison

Officers: Mrs M Meredith and Miss E Warhurst

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Ashman be appointed Chair for the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All members of the Assessment Sub-committee declared that they had been contacted by phone or email by the subject member about the complaint but had made no comment.

4 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Members of the Assessment Sub-committee were asked if they had any reason to consider that the public and press should be excluded from the meeting.

RESOLVED THAT:

The meeting remain open to the public and press on the grounds that the matters scheduled to be discussed did not disclose confidential or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, relating to information presented to a Standards Committee or one of its Sub Committees.

5 ALLEGATIONS OF A FAILURE TO OBSERVE THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Members considered a report relating to two complaints made about Councillor J Bridges who is a District Councillor of North West Leicestershire District Council. The two complaints had been made by Mr Sharpe and Mr Redfern, and whilst they were related, had been dealt with separately up until this point.

The complaint made by Mr Sharp was that Councillor J Bridges had breached the code of conduct by the way in which he handled the request to call-in planning application 17/01327 in that he had been deceitful, which had resulted in members of the public being deprived of the opportunity to make representations at the Planning Committee.

The complaint made by Mr Redfern was that Councillor J Bridges had breached the code of conduct and was not open and honest about the call-in request relating to application 17/01327.

The Monitoring Officer explained to Members that under the arrangements for dealing with complaints there was an opportunity for her to work with both parties to ascertain whether an informal resolution of the complaint was possible. It was noted that Mr Redfern and Councillor J Bridges had been fully co-operative and open during this process, however it

Chairman's initials

had not been possible to reach an informal resolution. Mr Sharpe had also agreed to hold his complaint in abeyance whilst the informal resolution process took place.

Given that the informal resolution process had been unsuccessful, the matter had been referred to the Assessment Sub-Committee in order that it could consider the report and determine whether to:

- refer the complaint to the Monitoring Officer to take other action;
- request further information from the parties;
- refer the complaint to the Monitoring Officer for investigation;
- take no further action in respect of the complaint.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted the additional information which had been received from the parties following the publication of the agenda, and in particular she emphasised that Mr Sharpe had wanted to be clear that the loss of ability to speak to the planning application was not a breach of the Code of Conduct but was a result of the breach; Mr Redfern had wanted the Sub-Committee to be clear that his complaint was not about the failure to call-in the planning application, but about his conduct and misleading Mr Redfern.

Members considered the details of the complaint. They acknowledged the history of the application site and the heightened emotions around the planning application. Members also expressed disappointment that it had not been possible to resolve the matter informally and felt that having the answers to Mr Redfern's questions could help to clarify matters. Members sought advice from the Monitoring Officer on the options available to them.

The meeting was adjourned for deliberation at 4.13pm and reconvened at 4.56pm.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Monitoring Officer take further action and undertake to convene a further meeting with all parties in order to attempt to achieve an informal resolution, to be concluded within one month.

If the matter could not be resolved within one month, the Assessment Sub-committee would reconvene to determine the next steps.

The Chairman explained that the reason for the decision was to give all parties the opportunity to clarify the issues which were still outstanding. It was emphasised that there was no obligation for anyone to attend this meeting, however the Sub-committee asked for the full co-operation of all parties to resolve the matter informally as stated.

The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.58 pm

Chairman's signature