

MINUTES of a meeting of the ASSESSMENT SUB COMMITTEE held in the Board Room,
Council Offices, Coalville on MONDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2013

Present: Councillor A Bridges
Councillor J Cotterill
Councillor C Large

Officers: Ms E Warhurst, Monitoring Officer
Mrs M Phillips, Democratic and Support Services Team Manager

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:- That Councillor J Cotterill be appointed Chair for this meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

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 do 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 a complaint by Councillor R Adams about Councillor T Saffell, both District Councillors of North West Leicestershire District Council. The complaint was that Councillor Saffell had made inappropriate comments which amounted to a public attack on the credibility of officers at a meeting of Council held on 12 August 2013.

The Monitoring Officer explained to Members that under the arrangements for dealing with complaints there is an opportunity for her to work with both parties to ascertain whether an informal resolution of the complaint is possible. A copy of the informal resolution procedure was appended to her report. She further explained that attempts made to reach an informal resolution had been unsuccessful due to the lack of co-operation from Councillor Saffell.

Given that this process had been unsuccessful, the matter has 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 further action;
- request further information from both parties;
- refer the complaint to the Monitoring Officer for investigation;
- determine that no further action be taken in respect of the complaint.

The Committee acknowledged the nature of the Council meeting held on 12 August 2013 given that it was a heated meeting with differing opinions and a number of comments

being made across the chamber.

Because Councillor Saffell is no longer a member of a political group, the Committee felt that he may consider that he is not answerable to anyone. However, Members were of the view that the remarks made by Councillor Saffell and directed at officers were inappropriate particularly given that they were made at a public meeting. However, it was noted that the comments were not directed at any particular officer or officers.

Members acknowledged that the views expressed by Councillor Saffell were ones which he had repeated elsewhere and for which he had shown no remorse given that he stood by those comments. The Committee however felt that Councillor Saffell should be made to understand the inappropriateness of airing his personal views in a public arena and its disappointment that he did not engage with the informal resolution process which may have prevented the need for this meeting.

It was therefore

RESOLVED:- That the Monitoring Officer be requested to write a letter to Councillor Saffell setting out the Committee's disappointment that he was unwilling to engage in the informal resolution process and that they considered his comments to be inappropriate being as they were made at a public meeting. This letter is to be drafted by the Monitoring Officer and agreed by the Chairman.

Reason for Decision

- (i) efforts had been made to try and resolve this matter informally which had proved to be unsuccessful due to the lack of co-operation from Councillor Saffell;
- (ii) the comments made were not becoming of an elected member given that they were made at a public meeting;
- (iii) it was not in the public interest to pursue the complaint further and spend public money on referring the matter for investigation.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.25 am