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## STANDARDS COMMITTEE - CONSIDERATION SUB-COMMITTEE

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Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds, LS1 1UR on  
Monday, 8th March, 2010  
at 11.00 am

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### MEMBERSHIP

#### Independent Members

Mike Wilkinson (Chair)

#### Councillors

Councillor David Blackburn

Councillor Colin Campbell

#### Parish Members

Councillor Paul Cook      Parish Member

## **CONFIDENTIAL AND EXEMPT ITEMS**

The reason for confidentiality or exemption is stated on the agenda and on each of the reports in terms of Access to Information Procedure Rules 9.2 or 10.4(1) to (7)(c). The number or numbers stated in the agenda and reports correspond to the reasons for exemption / confidentiality below:

### **9.0 Confidential information – requirement to exclude public access**

**9.1 The public must be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that confidential information would be disclosed. Likewise, public access to reports, background papers, and minutes will also be excluded.**

### **9.2 Confidential information means**

- (a) information given to the Council by a Government Department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or
- (b) information the disclosure of which to the public is prohibited by or under another Act or by Court Order. Generally personal information which identifies an individual, must not be disclosed under the data protection and human rights rules.

### **10.0 Exempt information – discretion to exclude public access**

**10.1** The public may be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that exempt information would be disclosed provided:

- (a) the meeting resolves so to exclude the public, and that resolution identifies the proceedings or part of the proceedings to which it applies, and**
- (b) that resolution states by reference to the descriptions in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (paragraph 10.4 below) the description of the exempt information giving rise to the exclusion of the public.
- (c) that resolution states, by reference to reasons given in a relevant report or otherwise, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**10.2** In these circumstances, public access to reports, background papers and minutes will also be excluded.

**10.3** Where the meeting will determine any person's civil rights or obligations, or adversely affect their possessions, Article 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998 establishes a presumption that the meeting will be held in public unless a private hearing is necessary for one of the reasons specified in Article 6.

**10.4** Exempt information means information falling within the following categories (subject to any condition):

- 1 Information relating to any individual
- 2 Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
- 3 Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
- 4 Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or officer-holders under the authority.
- 5 Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
- 6 Information which reveals that the authority proposes –
  - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment
- 7 Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime
  - (a) Information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality.
  - (b) Information which relates in any way to matters concerning national security.
  - (c) Information presented to a Standards Committee, or to a Sub-Committee of a Standards Committee, set up to consider any matter under regulations 13 or 16 to 20 of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008, or referred under section 58(1)(c) of the Local Government Act 2000.

# A G E N D A

Item No	Ward	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p><b>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded)</p> <p>(*In accordance with Procedure Rule 25, written notice of an appeal must be received by the Chief Democratic Services Officer at least 24 hours before the meeting)</p>	
2			<p><b>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</li> <li>2. To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</li> <li>3. If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</li> </ol> <p><b>RESOLVED –</b> That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:-</p>	

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
3			<p><b>LATE ITEMS</b></p> <p>To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.</p> <p>(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes)</p>	
4			<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>To declare any personal/prejudicial interests for the purpose of Section 81(3) of the Local Government Act 2000 and paragraphs 8 to 12 of the Members' Code of Conduct.</p>	
5		10.4(7c)	<p><b>FINAL INVESTIGATION REPORT - CASE REFERENCE 0910004</b></p> <p>To consider the final report of the investigator and decide whether to accept the investigator's finding, or whether to refer the matter to a hearing.</p>	1 - 228



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Tel: 0113 39 50261

**Not for Publication:** Appendix 1 to this report has been identified as exempt information by reason of 10.4(7C) of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

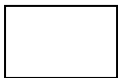
## Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance)

### Standards Committee – Consideration Sub-Committee

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Subject: Final Investigation Report – Case Reference 0910004

#### Electoral Wards Affected:



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

## 1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the investigator in relation to case reference 0910004 to the Consideration Sub-Committee for consideration.
- 1.2 The final investigation report and its appendices (attached as Appendix 1) have been marked as exempt in accordance with Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(7C) which allows any information presented to the Standards Committee for the purposes of its consideration function to be considered as exempt information. Standards for England advise that the investigator's final report should normally be presented to the Standards Committee as an appendix to a covering report of the Monitoring Officer, and that both these reports can be considered exempt under paragraph 7C until the Standards Committee decides whether it wishes to meet in public.
- 1.3 The Consideration Sub-Committee must decide whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. The investigator has reviewed the information contained in the interview records and her report, and whilst she does not consider that there is any need for extensive redactions to be carried out, she does consider that some care may need to be exercised in relation to the disclosure of the final report into the public domain. The investigator considers that this matter relates to a sensitive neighbour dispute which could be aggravated by the contents of the interview transcripts of the parties if they were made public. Therefore the investigator requests that this is taken into account by the Members of the Consideration Sub-

Committee when they are deciding whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

- 1.4 Furthermore, Standards for England advise that that the Consideration Sub-Committee should consider the effect of Regulation 17(4) of the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 which allows the subject Member to prohibit the publication of a notice, stating that the Standards Committee has found that there has been no failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. However, Standards for England also advise that in most cases the public interest in transparent decision making by the Standards Committee will outweigh the subject Member's interest in limiting publication of an unproven allegation that has not yet been determined.
- 1.5 Members of the Consideration Sub-Committee should be aware that if they choose not to exclude the press and public and to publish the final report and appendices, and then subsequently decide that they accept the investigator's finding of no failure, they will be overriding the subject Member's right to choose whether to prohibit the publication of a notice about the outcome of the case. This is because the press and public will already be in possession of the full details of the case before the outcome of the consideration meeting is known.

## **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 The original complaint was initially considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2009. The Assessment Sub-Committee decided to refer part of the complaint to the Monitoring Officer for investigation. The Assessment Sub-Committee decided to take no further action on the remainder of the complaint, and the complainant did not request a review of this decision.
- 2.2 On 15<sup>th</sup> September 2009 the investigation was delegated to an external solicitor, Ms Claire Lefort of Weightmans Solicitors.
- 2.3 Ms Lefort issued a draft report of the investigation on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2010 for the parties to comment on. The final report was subsequently issued on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

## **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 A copy of the final report and the supporting documentation is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. As a result of her investigation, the investigator has concluded that there has not been a failure to comply with the Code during the alleged incident. The investigator has concluded that the email sent by the Councillor was misjudged, but that the comments in the email were not improper or inappropriate. Therefore the conduct was not sufficient to breach the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 3.2 The Consideration Sub-Committee must now consider whether:
- It accepts the investigator's finding of no failure (a "finding of acceptance"), or
  - The matter should be referred to a hearing; and
- If the matter is to be referred to a hearing whether:
- The matter should be referred to the Hearings Sub-Committee for determination; or
  - The matter should be referred to the First-Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) for determination.

- 3.3 The Consideration Sub-Committee should note that it may only decide to refer the matter to the First-Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) for determination if:
- It has determined that the action it could take against the subject Member would be insufficient were a finding of failure to be made; and
  - The Principal Judge (or his Deputy) of the First-Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) has agreed to accept the referral.
- 3.4 When making the above decisions the Consideration Sub-Committee will only consider the final report, it will not interview witnesses, nor take representations from the complainant or subject Member.
- 3.5 The Consideration Sub-Committee may also make recommendations to the Authority on matters arising from the final report.
- 3.6 If the Consideration Sub-Committee makes a finding of acceptance, it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable, arrange for a notice to be published stating that the Consideration Sub-Committee have found that there has not been a failure on the part of the subject Member to comply with the Code of Conduct. This notice shall not be published if the subject Member requests this.

#### **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 4.1 The Consideration Sub-Committee should carry out its consideration of the final report in accordance with the Standards Committee Procedure Rules. Therefore when making the above decisions the Consideration Sub-Committee will only consider the final report, it will not interview witnesses, nor take representations from the complainant or subject Member.

#### **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The legal implications are set out in the main body of the investigator's report.

#### **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 As a result of her investigation, the investigator has concluded that there was no failure to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct by the subject Member during the incident.

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Consideration Sub-Committee must decide whether:

a)

- It accepts the investigator's finding of no failure (a "finding of acceptance"), **OR**
  - The matter should be referred to a hearing; and
- If the matter is to be referred to a hearing whether:
- The matter should be referred to the Hearings Sub-Committee for determination; or
  - The matter should be referred to the First-Tier Tribunal (Local Government Standards in England) for determination.

**AND**

- b) It wishes to make recommendations to the Authority on matters arising from the final report.

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