

CONDUCT COMMITTEE



10 MARCH 2015 - 1:00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Miss S Hoy(Chairman), Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor N Russell, C Hawden-Beal.

APOLOGIES: Councillor D Mason, Councillor M J Humphrey, Councillor F H Yeulett

Officers in attendance: Carol Pilson (Corporate Director & Monitoring Officer), Tom Lewis (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Jane Webb (Member Services & Governance)

CND24/13 TO SIGN AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 12 FEBRUARY 2015

The minutes of the 12 February 2015 were confirmed and signed.

CND25/13 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Sam Hoy updated Members:

- Anne Hay had resigned from Conduct Committee due to the fact she was standing in the District election;
- On behalf of the committee Councillor Hoy thanked Anne Hay for her hard work and contribution to the committee;
- Claire Hawden-Beal would be deputising in the interim; Councillor Hoy welcomed Claire Hawden-Beal to the table,
- Recruitment to the vacant Independent Member post would commence as soon as possible;
- Full Council had agreed the process changes discussed at the last meeting therefore this would start with immediate effect;
- The pre-sifting process can still run with just the Chairman and Deputy Independent Person.

CND26/13 MEMBER CONDUCT COMPLAINT – COUNCILLOR OLIVER

Councillor Hoy declared an interest by virtue of being a Wisbech Town Councillor and therefore stepped down as Chairman for the item.

Councillor Skoulding proposed that Councillor Sutton became Chairman; this was seconded by Councillor Russell.

Councillor Sutton stepped in as Chairman.

Councillor Sutton asked that consideration be given to the Confidential Appendix. It was unanimously agreed that under the provisions of the Schedule 12A of the Local Governance Act 1972 (as amended) this remains a Confidential Item.

Members considered a complaint under the Member Code of Conduct against Councillor Oliver of Wisbech Town Council.

Carol Pilson outlined the complaint and reiterated that it was important Members bear in mind the remit of the Committee; this was to consider matters of Member Conduct and whether the Code of Conduct as set out in the Constitution was engaged and then whether the committee considered there to be any breach of the Code. In making that determination it was important at this initial stage that the committee consider only those papers in front of them. Any coverage of the press was not of relevance. Members were only to consider if Councillor Oliver's conduct breached the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Sutton opened the item up for discussion.

Claire Hawden-Beal stated initially her thoughts were this should go forward for further investigation on the alleged breach of confidentiality; Councillor Oliver denied he had leaked the information. Did this mean there was a 'mole' at Wisbech Town Council that did not respect confidentiality therefore she thought an investigation should take place to see how the information had been leaked. This would assure Wisbech Town Council that confidentiality would be kept in the future. Presently there is only Mr Murat's word against Councillor Oliver's and therefore she thought this should be investigated if only for Wisbech Town Council's peace of mind.

Carol Pilson confirmed to Members that the Conduct Committee's remit is in regard to Member Conduct and does not extend to the investigation of Wisbech Town Council's procedures in relation to data protection. For an investigation to be started then it would mean that the Committee believed Councillor Oliver had potentially breached the Code of Conduct himself.

Claire Hawden-Beal explained that an investigation would confirm the mole and in turn repair Councillor Oliver's integrity.

Councillor Skoulding stated he felt sorry for Mr Murat but could not see that Councillor Oliver had done anything wrong. He stated he knew and trusted Councillor Oliver not to speak to the press and therefore his view was that no further action should be taken.

Councillor Russell stated he agreed to a point but that someone had been the mole.

Councillor Skoulding suggested that Wisbech Town Council could ask the press who leaked the information.

Councillor Sutton stated he took on board Claire Hawden-Beal's comments but on the flip side, the leak could be Mr Murat himself; if the committee went to an investigation he was not certain that answers would be gained therefore he was inclined to agree with Councillor Skoulding as he had known Councillor Oliver for four years and was absolutely confident what he has said was the truth.

Clare Hawden-Beal stated she was still concerned for Councillor Oliver but on the basis there was no new information from either of them she agreed with Councillor Skoulding to take no further action.

Councillor Skoulding proposed that no further action be taken; this was seconded by Councillor Sutton and unanimously agreed by the Committee.

(Councillor Hoy declared a non - pecuniary interest by virtue of being a member of Wisbech Town Council.)

CND27/13 CONFIDENTIAL PART OF APPENDIX 1

The confidential appendix was noted.

1:12pm

Chairman