



**MINUTES of  
JOINT STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
22 AUGUST 2019**

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**PRESENT**

Chairman	Councillor Mrs M E Thompson
Vice-Chairman	Councillor R G Boyce MBE
Councillors	M W Helm, R H Siddall, C Swain and Anderson
Parish Councillors	Councillor J E Anderson
In Attendance	Councillors M R Edwards, M S Heard, C Mayes, C Morris and N J Skeens

**187. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES**

The Chairman drew attention to the list of notices published on the back of the agenda.

For the benefit of all in attendance she introduced Parish Councillor John E Anderson, the Parish representative on the Committee from Southminster Parish Council.

**188. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none

**189. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 June 2019 be received.

**ATTENDANCE LIST** to note that the attendance list be updated to include Councillor John E Anderson as he was in attendance at the meeting on 20 June 2019.

**RESOLVED**

- (ii) that subject to the above amendment the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 June 2019 be confirmed.

## **190. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Councillors R G Boyce, MBE, and M W Helm, in the interest of openness and transparency, advised that they had both been present at the meeting of the South Eastern Area Planning Committee where the alleged incident took place.

## **191. REPORT INTO AN ALLEGED BREACH AGAINST THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Committee received the report of the Monitoring Officer in respect of the alleged breach against the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Chairman asked the Monitoring Officer to take the Committee through the report.

In advance of the discussion the Monitoring Officer clarified the rules of debate for all in attendance. He advised that in accordance with Procedure Rule 20 of the Council Constitution a Member of the Council may speak at Committee meetings of which they are not a member, by prior arrangement with, and at the discretion of, the Chairman. In response to queries raised the Monitoring Officer further advised that the Constitution had legal effect, it was published on the website and it was the responsibility of all Members to follow the rules of the Constitution. The Chairman then reported that no one had requested to speak in advance of the meeting.

Both the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer clarified that since Councillor Bassinger had requested support from Councillor Heard he would be partaking in the proceedings of the meeting alongside Councillor Bassinger.

The Monitoring Officer, addressing his report, outlined the sequence of events leading up to this juncture. He advised that subsequent to discussion with the Independent Person, Norman Hodson, it was agreed that this issue be investigated further by the Monitoring Officer. The two key issues were:-

- a) Should Councillor Bassinger have declared a disclosable pecuniary interest because the development was likely to affect Councillor Bassinger's home in accordance with paragraphs 4.2, 7.1 and 8.1 of the Members' Code of Conduct; and,
- b) If he should have declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, did he believe that he was bound to declare it or was it simply poor judgement.

He said that a judgement needed to be formed by each member of the committee as to what they think the reasonable man in the street, in possession of the full facts, would perceive.

Following statements from both Councillor Bassinger and Councillor Heard a lengthy debate ensued on the aforementioned key issues. The general consensus was that a disclosable pecuniary interest should have been declared. This was further compounded by Councillor Bassinger's own wording used in the call-in reason on the committee report. However, it was acknowledged that the declaration made was largely down to

inexperience, there was no malicious aforethought involved and it was more a case of poor judgement.

Councillor Boyce, given the general consensus of the committee, formally proposed a motion that Councillor Bassinger should have declared a disclosable pecuniary interest. This was duly seconded.

At this point, 13:06pm, the Chairman adjourned the meeting due to public disturbance. The Chairman then re-opened the meeting at 13:06 and put the motion that Councillor Bassinger should have declared a disclosable pecuniary interest to the Committee. Upon a vote being taken this was carried.

The Chairman then addressed the issue of 'A sanction' and drew Members' attention to the options outlined in the Monitoring Officer's report.

Councillor Siddall proposed Option C) *Require that more training is undertaken to understand more clearly the requirements of the Code*; as the most appropriate option. This was seconded by Councillor Swain.

Further discussion took place on the sanctions and the Chairman proposed an amendment to Councillor's Siddall's proposal to include Option B) *Issue a formal censure in the form of a letter which is publicised on the Council's website*. This was duly seconded by Councillor Helm. The Chairman put the amendment to the Committee to agree that Option B) be added to the original motion of Option C) from Councillor Siddall. Upon a vote being taken this was carried.

The Chairman then put the substantive motion to the Committee that, having previously established that it was a disclosable pecuniary interest, Option B) *Issue a formal censure in the form of a letter which is publicised on the Council's website* and Option C) *Require that more training is undertaken to understand more clearly the requirements of the Code*. Upon a vote being taken this was carried.

Following discussion with the Monitoring Officer, the Chairman proposed that the content of the letter be agreed in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee and that Councillor Bassinger have sight of the letter prior to publication. This was duly seconded by Councillor Siddall. The Chairman put the proposal to the Committee and it was carried.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That Councillor Bassinger should have declared a disclosable pecuniary interest;
- (ii) That the sanction includes Option B) *Issue a formal censure in the form of a letter which is publicised on the Council's website*; and Option C) *Require that more training is undertaken to understand more clearly the requirements of the Code*;
- (iii) That the content of the letter be approved by the Chairman and that Councillor Bassinger have sight of the content in advance of publication.

**192. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THE CHAIRMAN DEEMS ARE URGENT**

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 1.17 pm.

MRS M E THOMPSON  
CHAIRMAN