

# JOINT STANDARDS COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

**Date:** 20 March 2019

**Venue:** East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

**Time:** 7.30pm

**Present:** Councillor Dave Munday (Chairman) (Stanwick Parish Council)  
Councillor Gill Mercer (Vice-Chairman)

**East Northamptonshire Councillors:**

Rosalie Beattie	Annabel de Capell Brooke
Roger Powell	Robin Underwood
Rupert Reichhold	

**Town and Parish Councillors:**

Nigel Rudd	(Warmington Parish Council)
Roy Sparkes	(Oundle Town Council)
Robert Tyman	(Raunds Town Council)
Arthur Whittaker	(Yarwell Parish Council)
Adrian Winkle	(Irthlingborough Town Council)
Vivienne Barnard	(Independent Person)

## 473. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Standards Complaints Committee held on 21 November 2018 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

## 474. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Sortwell (Reserve Independent Member)

## 475. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman invited those who wished to do so to declare interests in respect of items on the agenda.

Councillor Dave Munday declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in respect of the section of item 6 on the agenda relating to consideration of granting a dispensation to enable him to be involved in parish council discussions and decisions relating to the management of Stanwick Cemetery unless those discussions involved any changes in rights, responsibilities or charges for the use of the cemetery plot in which he had a disclosable interest. Councillor Munday undertook to leave the meeting during this discussion.

## 476. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

#### **477. REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

No requests for dispensations had been made.

#### **478. ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided a brief update on Monitoring Officer activity covering the period from the last meeting of the Committee in November 2018 to date.

It was reported that there were two live complaints against East Northamptonshire councillors and also two live complaints against parish councillors. There was also a separate report on the agenda relating to complaints in respect of Easton on the Hill Parish Council.

The Monitoring Officer was also looking to hold two further training events for any new councillors elected during 2019, noting the parish council elections had been delayed until May 2020.

***[The Chairman, Councillor Dave Munday left the meeting prior to discussion of dispensations for councillors]***

Councillor Gill Mercer – in the Chair

The Committee noted the proposal to renew the dispensation relating to Councillor Munday, recognising the balance of facilitating the business of the council whilst being mindful of his particular interest.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report in terms of monitoring of complaint activity be noted;

*[Reason: to demonstrate active monitoring of the local ethical standards position.]*

Agree that a dispensation be granted under Section 33 (2) (c) of the Localism Act to Cllr D Munday, member of Stanwick Parish Council until June 2020 to enable his involvement in Parish Council discussions and decisions relating to the management of Stanwick Cemetery unless these discussions involve any changes in rights, responsibilities or charges for the use of the cemetery plot in which he has a disclosable pecuniary interest.

*(Reason: to allow this councillor to represent his community on issues of wider community concern in relation to the Parish Council's management of these spaces whilst acknowledging the personal interest he has in part of the space.)*

***[Councillor Dave Munday returned to the meeting and retook the chair]***

Councillor Dave Munday – in the Chair

#### **479. COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which provided a summary of the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CfSPL) report on Local government Ethical Standards and proposed some actions that East Northamptonshire Council could take now in relation to its recommendations, including a minor change to Part 9 of the Constitution (code of Conduct Complaints Assessment Process).

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer had attended one of the two roundtable seminars held as part of the Committee's evidence gathering process, on behalf of the Northamptonshire Monitoring Officers' Group.

As part of the findings of the review, it was noted that the report recommended a new model code of conduct be produced by the Local Government Association, however there was no information currently available as to when this work would commence or be completed. It was therefore recommended that no significant changes be made to the ENC Code or be promoted to town and parish councils.

The Monitoring Officer therefore recommended minor alterations to the Councillor code of Conduct at this stage, proposing that town and parish councils be encouraged to adopt the Code of the Shadow Authority as soon as it was available as that was likely to be updated to meet the recommendations and best practice of the CfSPL report.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report in terms of monitoring of complaint activity be noted;

**RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE:**

That changes be made to Part 9 of the Constitution to meet the guidance in R9 and BP9 of Appendix A.

*[Reason: To meet the recommended best practice in relation to the assessment of complaints in relation to the Councillor Code of Conduct.]*

**480. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE AT EASTON ON THE HILL PARISH COUNCIL**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report updating the Committee on progress of the Action Plan arising from the Review of Governance at Easton on the Hill Parish Council, which was commissioned following a number of Councillor Code of Conduct complaints in 2017/18.

The Committee noted that it was important that the Parish Council remained aware of its continued interest and awareness of the review, and the importance of maintaining progress in meeting its recommendations.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Monitoring Officer be requested to write to Easton on the Hill Parish Council:

- i) commending them for the progress to date;
- ii) seeking an additional 9 month update with additional information around who is responsible for taking the proposed actions and when, together with details of the outcomes/changes achieved by the work to date as outlined in the final column of Appendix A;
- iii) conveying the expectation that all recommendations will be implemented by the 12 month report.

*[Reason: To provide further reassurance on the Parish Council's progress in implementing the recommendations of the Governance Review carried out at this council.]*

**Chairman**