
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12th October, 2023

Present: Councillor Kath Pratt (in the Chair), Councillors Steven Smithson (Vice Chair), Zak Khan, Rennie Pinder and Judith Addison

Altham Parish Councillor Rennie Pinder

Apologies Councillors Danny Cassidy, Noordad Aziz, Mike Booth, Steve Button and Paul Cox

256 Apologies for absence, Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Cassidy, Aziz, Button, P. Cox and Booth.

Councillor Addison acted as substitute representative for Councillor Cassidy.

257 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 19th December 2022 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved - That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.

258 Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Letter 2023

The Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) submitted a report to inform the Committee about the annual Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO's) letter for 2022/23. She informed the Committee that the Local Government's Office produced much less statistical data now than they had done in previous years, however, reported that the pattern of complaint was constant with a low number of complaints and a low number upheld. Reference was made to changes in the Council's complaints policy and to changes in the complaint process from a 3 stage to a 2 stage system.

Resolved (1) That the Committee welcomed the Ombudsman's letter for 2022/23 and noted the report;
(2) That the Committee noted the Council's new complaint policy and the new two stage complaint process.

259 Standards Review 2022/23

The Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) submitted a report to provide the Standards Committee with a summary of standards matters relating to 2022/23. She referred to an increased number of complaints made about councillor conduct in 2021/22 after there had, previously, been very few complaints referred to the Standards Assessment Panel and no formal investigations for approximately 10 years. In comparison to the

increased amount of complaints in 2021/22, the number of complaints in 2022/23 referred to the Assessment Panel had almost halved and therefore, the pattern showed that the increase in 2022/23 could be considered a blip. She gave details of the three different findings that Standards Assessment Panel could find in respect of the complaints it considered and the report provided details of the way complaints were dealt with in 2021/22 and 22/23. The report also showed that the attendance rate for Councillors attending Member training on the Code of Conduct continued to be low.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

260 Grant of Dispensations

The Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) submitted a report seeking the granting of dispensations to a number of Hyndburn Councillors and Altham Parish Councillors, to vote on the issues as outlined below:

Hyndburn Councillors:

- An allowance, payment or indemnity given to Members;
- Ceremonial honours given to Members;
- Setting Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation;
- Setting a local Council Tax reduction scheme for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time or any superseding legislation; and
- Setting a local scheme for the payment of business rates, including eligibility for rebates and reductions, for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 as amended from time to time and any superseding legislation.

Altham Parish Councillors:

- The setting of a parish precept

The Hyndburn Borough Councillors who submitted applications for dispensations were:

Councillors Heather Anderson, Mike Booth, Stephen Button, David Parkins, Mohammed Younis, Loraine Cox, Melissa Fisher, Zak Khan and Kate Walsh. The remaining 26 Councillors already had dispensations in place.

The Altham Parish Councillors who submitted applications for dispensations were:

Parish Councillors John Halstead, David Murray, Rennie Pinder, Robert Dexter-Stubbs, Joseph Threlfall and Jon Chadwick.

Two Altham Parish Councillors did not submit applications for dispensations: Parish Councillor Joshua Haworth and Helen Hummerston.

The applications for dispensations requested by the Hyndburn Councillors and Parish Councillors were for four years to cover a period of 13th October 2023 to 12th October 2027.

Councillor Zak Khan declared a personal interest in the item relating to the Hyndburn Councillors due to the inclusion of his own application for a dispensation and, therefore, did not take part in the vote.

Resolved

- That the applications for dispensations from the Hyndburn Councillors and Altham Parish Councillors, as listed in the minutes above, were approved for a period of 4 years from 13th October 2023 to 12th October 2027.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed