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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Standards Committee

Date: Wednesday, 8th March, 2023

Place: Committee Room 3 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor I Shead (Chair)
Councillors M Borton, A Jones and *P Collins

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: G Gilbert and R Harris
J Morgan and J Tetley (Independent Persons)

Also in attendance: Representing the Investigator (H Nichol – Hertfordshire County Council) and the complainants Mrs T White and Ms K Abbott.

**Councillor Buck, a member of the Committee, attended the hearing declaring himself as an observer only and took no part in the Committee business.

Start/End Time: 6.30 pm - 8.55 pm

747 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Cox, Dent, Hooper (substitute: Cllr Collins), Moyies and Nelson.

748 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

749 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below, on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

750 Complaints Against a Councillor - Reference 22/001 and 22/002

The Committee considered a report in respect of complaints made against Councillor Woodley made by two complainants (reference 22/001 and 22/002).

The complaints alleged that Councillor Woodley had breached the Members' Code of Conduct ("The Code") by failing to comply with paragraph 3.1 of the Code ("you must treat others with respect"), paragraph 3.4 ("you must not bully or

harass any person”) and paragraphs 6 – 10 (“The Disclosure of Interests and the Effects of Interests on Participation”). The reference to “the Code” is to the Members’ Code of Conduct at the time as the complaints were made prior to the adoption of a new Code of Conduct which was adopted by the Council in March 2022.

The Committee conducted a Hearing in accordance with the Complaints against Members Rules.

Councillor Woodley attended the Hearing and made representations.

The two complainants also attended the hearing. One of the complainants made representations.

The Investigator’s representative presented the report which concluded that Councillor Woodley had breached the Code.

The Committee carefully considered the matter and the information before them, and sought and took into consideration the views of the Independent Persons.

Decision:

1. The Committee resolved that Councillor Woodley had failed to comply with paragraph 3.1 of the Code (“you must treat others with respect”) and paragraphs 6 – 10 (“The Disclosure of Interests and the Effects of Interests on Participation), specifically part 10.3 of the Code.

2. The Committee, in considering the actions available upon a finding of breach of the Code, and on the basis that it was a proportionate action to take, determined that it should issue a reprimand against Councillor Woodley to make clear its severe disapproval in relation to the breach. The Committee also determined that the findings should be reported to Full Council.

*The formal Decision Notice is available for public inspection as provided for at paragraph 9.2 of the Complaints Against Members Rules.

Chair: _____