

Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS  
HEARINGS PANEL held at 4.30 pm on  
Wednesday, 17th January, 2018 at Council  
Chamber, Civic Centre, Stone Cross, Northallerton

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Present

Councillor Mrs C S Cookman Councillor N A Knapton  
G W Dadd

Independent Person

Mr R C Pennington (Independent Person)

Parish Council Representative

Parish Councillor Mrs C Artingstoll

SHP.30 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**THE DECISION:**

That Councillor G W Dadd be elected Chairman for duration of the meeting.

(Councillor G W Dadd in the Chair)

SHP.31 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**THE DECISION:**

The Panel considered whether to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the items of business at minute no. SHP.32 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act. The Panel was satisfied that the public interest in disclosing the information outweighed the public interest in maintaining the exemption.

The Panel resolved to hear the matter in public.

SHP.32 **ALLEGATIONS ABOUT DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBERS**

The Panel noted that the complainant had informed the Council that she would not be attending the hearing and that she had not requested an adjournment. The Panel was satisfied that it had all relevant information before it, including that provided by the complainant, and that a fair hearing could take place. The Panel was also satisfied that it was in the public interest for the complaint to be dealt with in a timely manner and therefore the matter was dealt with in the complainant's absence.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST DISTRICT COUNCILLOR C ROOKE

**The subject of the decision:**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report with regard to an allegation that Councillor Rooke had failed to comply with the provisions of the Council's Code of Member Conduct by:

- (i) conducting himself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as failing to treat others with respect; and
- (ii) conducting himself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his authority or his office as a Member of the Authority into disrepute.

**Alternative options considered:**

The Panel considered all the options available but having concluded that Councillor Rooke had not breached the Code of Conduct, none of the alternative options were deemed appropriate.

**The reason for the decision:**

The Panel considered:

- the Deputy Monitoring Officer's report;
- the written submissions of the complainant;
- the oral submissions of Councillor Rooke; and
- the District Council's Code of Conduct.

The Panel considered the written submissions of the complainant who stated that, at a Planning Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Councillor Rooke (who was sitting as a Member of the Planning Committee) talked and laughed during the presentation of a planning application and, in doing so, failed to treat those present at the meeting with respect and brought his Authority into disrepute.

Councillor Rooke told the Panel that during the two and half hour meeting he had spoken intermittently to the Members of the Planning Committee sitting adjacent to him. Councillor Rooke informed the Panel that he had no recollection of laughing during the meeting and that he did not believe his behaviour caused a disturbance to the conduct of the meeting.

The Panel concluded that Councillor Rooke had spoken with two Members of the Planning Committee sitting adjacent to him throughout the course of the meeting. However, the Panel was satisfied that this communication did not amount to a failure to treat others with respect, nor was it conduct that brought Councillor Rooke's office into disrepute.

**THE DECISION:**

The complaints alleging that Councillor C Rooke had breached the Code of Conduct (namely by failing to treat others with respect and bringing his Authority or his office into disrepute) are not upheld.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST DISTRICT COUNCILLOR D A WEBSTER

**The subject of the decision:**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report with regard to an allegation that Councillor Webster had failed to comply with the provisions of the Council's Code of Member Conduct by:

- (i) conducting himself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as failing to treat others with respect; and
- (ii) conducting himself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing his authority or his office as a Member of the Authority into disrepute.

**Alternative options considered:**

The Panel considered all the options available but having concluded that Councillor Webster had not breached the Code of Conduct, none of the alternative options were deemed appropriate.

**The reason for the decision:**

The Panel considered:

- the Deputy Monitoring Officer's report;
- the written submissions of the complainant;
- the oral submissions of Councillor Webster; and
- the District Council's Code of Conduct.

The Panel considered the written submissions of the complainant who stated that, at a Planning Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017, Councillor Webster (who was sitting as a Member of the Planning Committee) talked and laughed during the presentation of a planning application and, in doing so, failed to treat those present at the meeting with respect and brought his Authority into disrepute.

Councillor Webster told the Panel that, during the hearing, he had spoken on occasion with Members of the Planning Committee sitting adjacent to him. Councillor Webster informed the Panel that his conduct was appropriate and had not disrupted the course of the meeting. Councillor Webster informed the Panel that he had taken an active role in the proceedings and contributed to the Planning Committee's discussion.

The Panel concluded that, during the meeting, Councillor Webster had communicated with other Planning Committee Members. However, the Panel was satisfied that this communication did not amount to a failure to treat others with respect, nor was it conduct that brought Councillor Webster's office into disrepute.

**THE DECISION:**

The complaints alleging that Councillor D A Webster had breached the Code of Conduct (namely by failing to treat others with respect and bringing his Authority or his office into disrepute) are not upheld.

The meeting closed at 4.45 pm

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Chairman of the Panel