

Minutes of the meeting of the STANDARDS  
HEARINGS PANEL held at 10.00 am on  
Friday, 9th August, 2019 at Main Committee  
Room, Civic Centre, Stone Cross, Rotary Way,  
Northallerton, DL6 2UU

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Present

Councillor P Atkin  
D B Elders

Councillor N A Knapton

Independent Person

Independent Person Mr R Martin

Parish Council Representative

Parish Councillor D Atkinson

Also in Attendance

Councillor M S Robson

SHP.1 **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

**THE DECISION:**

That Councillor N A Knapton be elected Chairman for duration of the meeting.

(Councillor N A Knapton in the Chair)

SHP.2 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**THE DECISION:**

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during consideration of the items of business at minute no SHP.3 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 as the Panel was satisfied that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

SHP.3 **ALLEGATIONS ABOUT A DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBER**

**The subject of the decision:**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report seeking consideration of an allegation that Councillor Webster failed to comply with the provisions of the District Council's Code of Member Conduct by incorrectly completing his Register of Interests Form.

**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 Monitoring Officer's report and accompanying documents, the written representations of the complainant and the written and oral representations of Councillor Webster.

The Panel noted that it was alleged that Councillor Webster failed to record a relevant shareholding in Webster (Farmers) Limited in the section entitled "Securities (Shared) in a Body Owning Land in the District" on his Register of Interests Form.

Councillor Webster informed the Panel that Webster (Farmers) Limited does not own any land within the District and, therefore, on completing the form the 'Securities' section was left blank.

Councillor Webster told the Panel that he provided information on his Register of Interests Form over and above what was required in order to ensure his interests were transparent. The Panel noted that, alongside other interests, Councillor Webster had recorded an interest in Webster (Farmers) Limited under two other sections of his Register of Interests Form.

The Panel concluded that Councillor Webster had completed his Register of Interests Forms correctly.

The Independent Person was in agreement with the Panel's findings.

It followed that, in the Panel's view, the Councillor had not breached the Code of Conduct.

In reaching its findings the Panel concluded that the Register of Interests of Form may appear ambiguous to Members and the public. Therefore, it was the Panel's view that a review of the Council's Register of Interests Form should be carried out by the Monitoring Officer to ensure clarity on the types of interests which must be registered.

**THE DECISION:**

The complaint alleging that Councillor Webster had breached the Code of Conduct is not upheld.

The Panel recommends that the Monitoring Officer review the Council's Register of Interests Form.

The meeting closed at 10.40 am

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Chairman of the Panel