

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCILLOR CONDUCT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 24 MAY 2016**

**COUNCILLORS**

**PRESENT** Claire Stewart, Joanne Laban, Katherine Chibah and Alessandro Georgiou, Anne Marie Pearce, Sarah Jewell (Independent Person), Christine Chamberlain (Independent Person)

**OFFICERS:** Asmat Hussain (Assistant Director Legal) Penelope Williams (Secretary)

**Also Attending:** Olwen Dutton (Bevan Brittan)

**10  
WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including the two new committee members Councillors Alessandro Georgiou and Katherine Chibah.

**11  
SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Anne Marie Pearce was the substitute for Councillor Alessandro Georgiou for Item 4 Complaints against Councillors.

**12  
DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Alessandro Georgiou declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 4 Complaints against Councillors as he was one of the complainants and was the subject of the other complaint. He withdrew from the meeting when this item was discussed.

**13  
COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS**

The Committee received the report of the Monitoring Officer on the complaints investigation.

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report and set the context to the complaints.

NOTED

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1. The advice that members had to decide whether or not any further action was required or whether a formal complaint hearing should be heard.
2. No appeal against the decision of the Councillor Conduct Committee was possible except to the Local Government Ombudsman.

Before considering the complaint the committee watched an extract from the 11 November 2016 full council meeting where the incidents, from which the complaints had arisen, had occurred.

Olwen Dutton presented her investigation report to the committee. She highlighted the following:

- Four complaints had been received in total: one from Councillor Alessandro Georgiou about Councillor Haydar Ulus, three from Councillor Haydar Ulus about Councillors Alessandro Georgiou, Terry Neville and Erin Celebi.
- Because they had all been concerned with the events which had occurred at the full Council meeting on 11 November 2016, she had thought it appropriate that they should all be covered in the same investigation.
- Article 10 of the European Human Rights Convention set a high bar for political expression so as not to fall within the category of justifiable comment and free speech.
- The comments of Councillor Neville received after the report had been completed.
- Having investigated the complaint and considered all the evidence, in the light of Article 10 of the European Convention, although she could not condone the behaviour, on balance, she had found that all four complaints were not upheld.
- Her recommendation that the Monitoring Officer should provide refresher training to all councillors on the code of conduct and on the need for all councillors to behave in a way that was fitting for a public meeting in the Council Chamber, with due regard to their office.
- She also felt that members should be discouraged from taking part in "tit for tat" complaints.

NOTED

1. The view of Christine Chamberlain, Independent Person, that the incidents at the Council meeting, as seen in the recording of the meeting, raised fundamental issues about the behaviour of members and their relationships to each other. She had concern that the

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situation had escalated very quickly, in a way that she thought would be unacceptable in a work context. The behaviour was not good for informed debate, the reputation of the councillors or the Council itself. She was also concerned that if the complaints were not upheld then a message should also be put out that such behaviour could not be condoned.

2. These comments were supported by Sarah Jewell, Independent Person.
3. All members of the committee condemned the behaviour that had occurred and felt that members should show greater respect for each other and for the Mayor.
4. The view that if the Mayor had been able to control the initial incident more quickly, the subsequent events would not have occurred. It was suggested that the Mayor should receive more training on how to manage difficult situations.
5. The suggestion that the Monitoring Officer should organise a refresher training session on the councillor code of conduct and that all members should be required to attend. The whips would be asked to ensure that they did.
6. The suggestion that a short statement should be read out by the Mayor, at the start of each Council meeting, reminding members that they must show each other respect, and abide by the Councillor Code of Conduct.
7. The new Mayor had indicated that she would continue the recently introduced practice, of having a comfort break half way through the meeting, which should help to prevent people becoming tired.

**AGREED** that the four complaints were not upheld and no further action was required.

### **14 DISPENSATION REQUEST**

The Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer containing a request for a dispensation from Councillor Bernadette Lappage, the current Mayor, on her disclosable pecuniary interest in matters relating to the North London Waste Authority.

### **NOTED**

1. The Mayor's husband was a senior officer at the North London Waste Authority which would mean that whenever the North London Waste Authority was discussed at Council meetings she would need to

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declare a disclosable pecuniary interest and withdraw from the meeting.

2. The Mayor had requested a general dispensation to cover her year of office to enable her to participate in all Council meetings where issues relating to the North London Waste Authority were discussed.
3. The dispensation has been requested under circumstance (a) "where members of the decision making body have disclosable pecuniary interests in a matter that would "impede the transaction of the business".
4. Although the Mayor did not normally vote at Council meetings, having to leave the meeting as chair could impede the transaction of business.
5. The Independent Persons advised that they thought that the request was reasonable.

**AGREED** that a dispensation be granted to Councillor Bernadette Lappage whilst she was Mayor, for the municipal year 2016/17, in regard to her disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to her husband's position on the North London Waste Authority.

### **15**

#### **COUNCILLOR CONDUCT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

The Committee received a copy of the draft annual report for 2015/16.

**AGREED** to approve the report as the Councillor Conduct Committee Annual Report for 2015/16.

The report would be referred to the Council meeting to be held on 8 June 2016.

### **16**

#### **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

### **17**

#### **WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

The Committee received a draft work programme for 2016/17.

**NOTED** that additional items can be added to the work programme throughout the year.

**AGREED** that the draft work programme should form the basis of items to be considered by the Committee in 2016/17.

**18**

**DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Committee noted the dates agreed for meetings for the 2016/17 Municipal Year:

- Wednesday 6 July 2016
- Wednesday 5 October 2016
- Wednesday 7 December 2016
- Thursday 2 March 2016

**19**

**EXCLUSION AND PRESS AND PUBLIC**