

Town Council
11th April 2019 at 4.15pm

Present: Councillors: D Abbott
J Carroll
D Dixon-Wilkinson
Ms J Hillyard
M Kennedy
Mrs T McMahon
C Slough
AS Swain
T Welch (Arrived 4.20pm)
K Wattingham

Officers: Clare Evans Town Clerk
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 0

Apologies: Councillors: Ms S Thorne
Mrs Y Farrell

9863 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms S Thorne and Councillor Mrs Y Farrell.

9864 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

9865 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

None.

Councillor M Kennedy asked why Councillor Ms J Hillyard, Councillor J Carroll and Councillor Mrs T McMahon had not declared an interest, as they had done previously, as this was against the Nolan Principles and code of conduct? Members were advised that it was up to the individual member of council to declare any interests they had.

Councillor Carroll requested it be noted in the minutes that he made no comment; however, he requested the question be worded exactly how it was asked.

Councillor Hillyard clarified that she had never declared an interest.

9866 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

- Report from the external investigator

Resolved: In accordance with Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the item set out below on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the general interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

9867 REPORT FROM THE EXTERNAL INVESTIGATOR

Members were advised that this meeting had been called at the request of Cllr Abbott and Cllr Hillyard through the Chair Cllr Wattingham.

The Clerk had been instructed to include the following wording on the agenda:

“Having commissioned a report of an External Investigator at the meeting dated 20 December, and the report having been received, to consider the recommendations therein, and make appropriate resolutions in relation to this.”

Due to the timing of the report being received and the instruction to call a meeting it had not been possible for officers to consider the report or to advise / seek advice on implications of the recommendations and comments contained within. As such it was suggested that the report be noted at this stage so that further consideration of the report and its recommendations could be undertaken.

Should members not be minded to agree the recommendation below members were requested to fully consider the following in seeking to reach an agreement:

- Corporate Implications, such as:
 - Implications for other committees
 - Policy implications
 - Staff implications
- Legal Implications, such as:
 - Power available to carry out project
 - Contract / SLA?
 - Need for legal advice?
- Financial Implications, such as:
 - Financial Regulations
 - Budget availability? Specify what budget code
 - Quotes / tenders sourced
- Risk Implications, such as:
 - Service delivery
 - Capacity
 - H&S
 - Reputation
- Equalities Implications

Members were advised that there had been a public version of the report produced which had personal information removed. Several members confirmed that they had not yet seen the public report.

Members had received advice that this meeting should not be held as it was within the purdah period and any resulting decisions could be deemed as political decisions.

Members raised concerns regarding the implications of holding such a meeting within the purdah period and some members stated that they were in attendance under duress.

A member confirmed unequivocally that there were inaccuracies within the report, of which an example was given, and raised further concerns over the possibility of the report containing further inaccuracies.

Several members stated that they considered it unfair that they had been put in the position of having to attend this meeting and felt that the advice received from NALC via officers on not to go ahead, should have been acted upon.

It was confirmed that correspondence from the monitoring officer had confirmed that the meeting would be able to go ahead, if confidentiality was upheld. The Clerk confirmed to members that an e-mail had been received from a resident, sent directly to the Clerk, the content of which suggested that the details of this meeting had not remained confidential.

It was proposed that the meeting discontinue:

Proposed by: Cllr Swain Seconded by: Cllr Dixon-Wilkinson

Members for: 5 Members against: 4 Abstentions: 1

Accordingly, the meeting concluded.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 4.36pm

Dated this day of 2019

Chairman