

individual the subject of deliberations of a Hearings Panel established under S228(6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011.

RESOLVED

That the information in the Monitoring Officer's report be considered as exempt information relating to an individual under Section 228(6) and (7) of the Localism Act 2011 and that the press and public be excluded from the meeting.

5. INVESTIGATION REPORT

The Monitoring Officer reported that on 29th June he received complaints from Councillors W. Blackburn and M. Iqbal about a racist joke being shared on Councillor Carroll's Facebook page.

In accordance with the Council protocol on complaints against councillors he wrote to Councillor Carroll asking for her comments to help him decide what action he should take. He also discussed the complaint briefly with the Council's Independent person.

On 10th July he informed the complainants and Councillor Carroll that he had decided to carry out an investigation of the complaint. His interviews with Councillor Carroll and the complainants were set out in the report, along with his findings as follows –

1. *I consider the post to be derogatory and insulting to benefits claimants, and also racist.*
2. *I also consider that a councillor who allows such an inappropriate post to stand on their Facebook page or passes it on to other users is acting in breach of the Council's Code of Conduct. In my view it is a failure to treat people with respect and falls short of the high standards of leadership and example expected of all councillors. This is even more the case when the councillor holds or has held high office.*
3. *Councillor Carroll says she shared it unwittingly, intending to delete it. I have asked several colleague Facebook users whether this is possible but all have told me that Facebook does not work in this way. It is not possible to delete another's post – you can only Like, Share or Comment. You can also Hide it (which you might well do if you consider it offensive or inappropriate) so that it does not appear on your newsfeed.*
4. *Whether the sharing was intentional or in error my view is that a councillor who uses Facebook must ensure that they are able to use it competently. Social media is fundamentally about sharing content and creating conversations. It is also very transparent. Councillors are encouraged to use it. As a councillor and former Mayor, Councillor Carroll's Facebook pages will be viewed by many other users and inappropriate content compromises her position as a councillor.*

Councillor Code of Conduct Hearings Panel (14.08.2017)

He concluded that there was sufficient evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and that the matter should be considered by a Hearings Panel of the Council.

The Panel carefully considered the investigation report of the Monitoring Officer. Councillor Carroll was asked a number of questions. There were no witnesses called to give evidence.

On the evidence provided in the Monitoring Officer's report and Councillor Carroll's representations at the meeting, the Panel confirmed the findings set out in the report; concluded that this amounted to a breach of the Council's Code of Conduct for Councillors; and imposed the following sanctions -

SANCTIONS

- (1) That the findings in respect of Councillor Carroll be published and the Monitoring Officer asked to issue a press release with a copy the investigation report and this be sent to all Members of the Council.
- (2) That the findings be reported to Council with a recommendation to censure Councillor Carroll.
- (3) That the Council also be recommended to remove Councillor Carroll from any committees other than West Craven Committee for a period of 12 months.
- (4) That Councillor Carroll be required to undergo training in the use of social media and that this be made available to all Councillors.

Chairman