

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS HEARING COMMITTEE
HELD AT NELSON TOWN HALL
ON 8TH NOVEMBER, 2022**

PRESENT –

Mrs P. Higginbottom – Chairman (In the Chair)

Members of the Panel:

*Councillor F. Ahmad
Councillor B. Newman
Councillor J. Purcell
Councillor M. Stone
Councillor A. Sutcliffe*

Officers present:

*Howard Culshaw
Emma Barker
Lynne Rowland*

*Monitoring Officer
Litigation and Regulatory Lawyer
Committee Administrator*



1. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded of the requirements of the member Code of Conduct concerning the declaration of interests.

2. INVESTIGATION REPORT

The meeting of the Standards Hearing Committee had been called to consider a report of an investigation into complaints made against Town Councillor Yvonne Tennant. Town Councillor Tennant was not present at the meeting, but had submitted a written representation, which had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting. A late request to adjourn the meeting had been made by Town Councillor Tennant. The Committee noted the request but agreed to proceed with the hearing.

The investigation had been carried out by the Council's former Monitoring Officer, Philip Mousdale, who had since retired from the Council. The report was therefore presented to the Committee by the Council's current Monitoring Officer, Howard Culshaw.

It was reported that, between 9th and 12th June, 2022 four complaints had been received relating to the social media activity of Town Councillor Tennant and the language used within her posts.

In accordance with the Council protocol on complaints against Councillors the then Monitoring Officer wrote to Town Councillor Tennant with details of the complaints. Town Councillor Tennant responded promptly and in detail, denying that she was in breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct.

It was decided that an investigation of the complaint would be carried out. The Complainants and Town Councillor Tennant were informed of this on 14th July.

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Full details of the complaints received, together with Town Councillor Tennant's response were provided in the report along with the then Monitoring Officer's conclusions and findings. He concluded that Town Councillor Tennant was acting in her capacity as a town councillor and that some of the comments were offensive and disrespectful. His finding therefore was that there was sufficient evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct.

The Committee carefully considered the investigation report. Their attention was also drawn to the written representation of Town Councillor Tennant in which she refuted having ever broken the Code of Conduct. There were no witnesses called to give evidence.

On the evidence provided in the Officer's report the Committee found that, in making the posts on Facebook referred to in the report, Town Councillor Yvonne Tennant was acting in her capacity as a Town Councillor. The posts she shared on Facebook, albeit on her private Facebook page, mentioned the Town Council. Whatever the intention, those posts became public.

The Committee considered these posts to be a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members as the language used was offensive, disrespectful and fell short of the high standards of behaviour expected. The following sanctions were imposed:-

SANCTIONS

- (1) That the findings in respect of Town Councillor Yvonne Tennant's conduct be published.
- (2) That the findings be reported to the Town Council for information and it be recommended that she apologise to the Council.
- (3) That the Town Council be recommended to censure Town Councillor Yvonne Tennant.
- (4) That Town Councillor Tennant's Group Leader be recommended to remove her from any or all committees or sub committees of the Council.

CHAIRMAN _____