

**Exempt classification removed by Monitoring Officer on 11 August 2023**

REPORT TITLE: COMPLAINTS RELATING TO DENMEAD PARISH COUNCIL

27 JANUARY 2023

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER: Lisa Kirkman

Tel No: 01962 848501 Email [lirkman@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:lirkman@winchester.gov.uk)

WARD(S): DENMEAD

PURPOSE

To outline the position at Denmead Parish Council Parish Council in respect of complaints made by Councillors and staff against other Councillors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That in reference to the wider findings and recommendations concerning the council at page 104 of the investigation report, the Sub-Committee agree and/or amend and/or add to those recommendations for the report to be formally endorsed and released to Parish Council.

- 1 It is recognised that a complaint of this nature is highly unusual. This because there were several complaints against Councillors made by Councillors and involving staff, with the office of the MO having to refuse many subsequent complaints in order to be able to draw a line and pursue the investigation.
- 2 Due to the resource requirements to undertake an investigation of this size the Council instructed VWV LLP to carry out the investigation into the initial complaints, and this instruction was later extended to include the further complaints. The Investigation was led by Mark Heath, who has previously assisted the Council. The investigation report can be found at Appendix 1.
- 3 The process for dealing with complaints states that the MO needs to be satisfied that the investigating officer's report is sufficient. The current MO reviewed the entire file/report and listened to the audio recordings and was satisfied that the report, for the complaints made, is sufficient.
- 4 The process for dealing with complaints is set out in appendix 2. Particular attention should be paid to parts 6 and 7 of the process so members can see the stage we are at now.
- 5 The independent person (IP) and MO have discussed the report at length. They agreed that the Standards Sub-Committee should see the report to both agree/amend/comment/add to the wider findings and recommendations (page 104 of appendix 1 refers).
- 6 Some specific considerations for the sub-committee to consider are outlined below but this list is not exhaustive;
  - a) Are the time frames set out reasonable? (paras 17.11.1, 17.11.2, 17.11.3 of appendix 1)
  - b) Should this Standards Sub Committee approve the action plan or could this be a matter for Audit & Governance Committee?
  - c) There is a recommendation about training for members and training for the chairman. (paras 17.16,17.26 of appendix 1). Would the standards sub-committee like to see and approve a programme of training? Should there be a time frame for this? Should there be proof of completion?
  - d) Would the standards sub-committee want assurances as to the effectiveness of the mediation once undertaken? Or could the mediation be explicitly referenced in the action plan in order to track progress? (para 17.11.3 appendix 1)
  - e) Should there be a deadline imposed for the apologies referenced? (para 17.28 appendix 1)
  - f) Are there any further recommendations that you consider should be included?
  - g) Should the MO engage with ward members on this parish issue? If yes – how?

APPENDICES:

EXEMPT Appendix 1: Report of an Investigation by VWV LLP appointed by Winchester City Council concerning complaints relating to Denmead parish Council

Appendix 2: Part 5 Winchester City Council Constitution - Codes and Protocols - 5.3  
– Members Complaints Procedure