

## **Standards Sub-Committee – 6 July 2006**

Minutes of a meeting of a Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee held in the Principal Committee Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on Thursday 6 July 2006 at 2.00 pm

Present: Mr D Baker (Chairman)  
Councillor Mrs Allgrove and Town Councillor E Warren

Officers: Mr J J Thornberry (Monitoring Officer), Mr G P Dyke (Member Services Manager)

### **Mrs C Grant, Trull Parish Council**

The Sub-Committee considered an allegation that Mrs C Grant a former Parish Councillor of Trull Parish Council failed to declare an interest and withdraw from the Chamber at a Parish Council Meeting on 14 September 2005 contrary to Paragraph 10(a) of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

The Chairman opened the meeting by reading details of the allegation and introduced Members of the Sub-Committee. In addition to Members of the Sub-Committee Mr Jeremy Thornberry Monitoring Officer was present to advise the Sub-Committee, Mr David Greig Parish Liaison Officer was present as the Investigating Officer and Mr G P Dyke, Member Services Manager was responsible for servicing the Sub-Committee.

### **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Mrs J Allgrove declared a personal interest as a Member of Comeytrowe Parish Council, Vice-Chair of Somerset Association of Local Councils and a Borough Councillor.

The Chairman explained the format the Hearing would follow. The Sub-Committee would hear the facts of the case, receive the report of the Investigating Officer and consider whether any breach of the Code of Conduct had taken place. If it had, the Sub-Committee would then consider what sanctions should be applied.

Mr David Grieg Parish Liaison Officer who was the Investigating Officer in this case, presented in some detail his report. Having examined the circumstances of this case his conclusion was that there had been a clear breach of Section 10A of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct. A draft report had been sent to Mrs Grant, the complainant Mrs Leamon and the Clerk of the Parish Council but no comments had been received. Therefore the draft report had become his final report.

The Investigating Officer explained that he had also spoken to Keith Sanders who was then a Parish Council Member. It was acknowledged that there was no implication or suggestion of impropriety in his case

There were a number of mitigating factors in this case details of which were submitted as part of the Investigating Officer's report.

Following questioning of the Investigating Officer by Members of the Sub-Committee the Sub-Committee adjourned at 2.20 pm. The meeting reconvened at 2.45 p.m. when it was announced that the Standards Sub-Committee had reached the following decision after considering the facts of the case:

Mrs Cherry Grant had failed to declare a personal and prejudicial interest and there had been a breach of Section 10(a) of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

The Sub-Committee's reasons for this decision were that it was clear from the investigation that Mrs Grant as an employee of H&EJ Grant Ltd and wife of a Director of the company had both a personal and prejudicial interest as defined in Sections 7 and 9(1) of the Parish Council's Model Code of Conduct in planning application 42/2005/031. This interest should have been declared and Mrs Grant should have left the meeting.

The Sub-Committee reached the following decision after considering the written evidence and the submission of the parties.

- (a) that former Parish Councillor Mrs Cherry Grant be censured
- (b) that further training on ethics and probity be provided to Trull Parish Council and its clerk
- (c) that censure would take effect from the date of the decision.

The Sub-Committee's reasons for deciding to impose censure were that Mrs Grant had clearly not declared a personal and prejudicial interest and had not left the meeting whilst the matter in which she had an interest was being discussed. In reaching its decision the Committee were mindful that the meeting of the Parish Council fell well below the usual standard of this Parish. Mrs Grant acknowledged her interest but was given incorrect advice at the meeting, Mrs Grant declared appropriate interests and left the room when the planning application was considered at a subsequent meeting of the Parish Council.

As a result of this decision the Standards Committee made the following recommendation in relation to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by the Members and co-opted Members of the Parish Council.

That further training in ethics and probity be provided for Trull Parish Council and its Clerk.

(The meeting ended at 2.55 pm)

