



MINUTES

AUDIT AND STANDARDS Committee

Date:	Thursday, 20 April 2023
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Ellie Gaunt (Chairman) Councillor Ed Nash (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Delma Collins, Peter Collins, Paul Hayhurst, Will Harris, Michael Sayward.
Other Councillors Present:	Councillors Karen Buckley, Sue Fazackerley MBE, Shirley Green, David O'Rourke, Matthew Lee and Tim Armit
Independent Persons Present:	Mr P Clements
Officers Present:	Alan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Sharon Wadsworth
Other Attendees:	Mark Towers – Investigation Officer

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. No interests were declared on this occasion.

2. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council Procedure Rule 23(c):

Councillor Michael Sayward for Councillor John Singleton JP

3. Exclusion of the Public

Members of the committee were invited to consider passing a resolution excluding the public from the meeting for the consideration of item 4 below in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972. This was on the grounds that the business to be discussed was exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 (Information relating to an individual and Information which was likely to reveal the identity of the individual) of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Following a brief debate it was RESOLVED to exclude the public

4. Allegations of Misconduct

Ms Manning advised members that a formal investigation had been instigated to establish the facts following a complaint made against Councillor Tim Armit following conferral with Mr. Clements, Independent Person. The investigation had been conducted by Mr Mark Towers, Monitoring Officer at Blackpool Council.

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The report of Mr Towers regarding Councillor Armit outlined the allegation, background, evidence gathered, and other considerations. Mr Towers attended to introduce his report and assisted members of the committee by addressing questions and points of clarification. The views of the Independent Person were also provided.

A detailed submission from Councillor Armit had been circulated to members for review prior to the meeting. Councillor Armit addressed the committee and took members through his submission which focused on freedom of speech and human rights, and his own recollection of events.

It was RESOLVED:

1. To uphold the complaint that Councillor Armit had failed to comply with the code of conduct and brought his office and the council into disrepute by repeatedly making inconsistent, speculative and deliberately misleading and inaccurate comments about the catering facility in question, together with its proprietors, causing incorrect conclusions to be drawn.
2. To recommend that Councillor Armit undergo approved training on social media for councillors and recommend to Councillor Armit's group leader that he should not, in the new municipal year or afterwards, be nominated for a position carrying a special responsibility allowance until he has undergone such training.
3. That Councillor Armit should apologise to the complainant for the distress that has been caused to her and her family.

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