

**Meeting of the standards panel  
Tuesday 10 September 2013; Room 22a, Brockington**

**Complaints**

- 13001: Cllr Glenda Vaughan-Powell (complainant Cllr Phil Edwards)**
- 13002: Cllr Phil Edwards & Cllr Adrian Bridges (complainant Cllr Glenda Vaughan-Powell)**
- 13016: Cllr Glenda Vaughan-Powell (complainant Cllr Adrian Bridges)**
- 13017: Cllr Glenda Vaughan-Powell (complainant Mrs Elizabeth Kelso)**

**Present:**

**The standards panel:**

Rob Cook, Appointed Independent Person (chairman)  
Councillor Chris Chappell (Herefordshire Council representative)  
Nicky Carless (Town & Parish Council representative)

**Legal advisor:**

John Jones, Monitoring Officer

**Clerk:**

Hazel Lavelle, Democratic Services Support Officer

**Complainants:**

Councillor Phil Edwards  
Councillor Adrian Bridges  
Mrs Elizabeth Kelso

**Person accompanying Mrs E Kelso:**

Councillor Andy Myatt, chairman of Belmont Rural Parish Council

**Observers:**

David Williams (Appointed Independent Person)  
John Sharman (Appointed Independent Person)

**Proceedings**

1. The chairman introduced all those present and explained that Councillor Glenda Vaughan-Powell had said that she would not be attending. Cllr Vaughan-Powell had been advised that the meeting would proceed in her absence.
2. All other parties were present at the start of the meeting. The monitoring officer referred the chairman to an additional written statement submitted by Cllr Edwards and advised him that the panel would need to judge whether that material was relevant to the complaints. The monitoring officer also advised that the panel should consider whether it would be possible to make a decision on these complaints in the absence of Councillor Vaughan-Powell.
3. The chairman outlined the role of the panel and the provisions of the Localism Act 2011. He asked Cllrs Edwards and Bridges and Mrs Kelso to confirm that they were content to address the panel together, rather than individually, and they confirmed that they were.
4. The chairman referred to a written apology received from Cllr Vaughan-Powell. Mrs Kelso said that the apology related only to complaint 13001, and Cllr Edwards said that he would not accept the apology. He felt that it was an attempt by Cllr Vaughan-Powell to gain credit for herself.

### **Complaint 13001: Cllr Phil Edwards's complaint against Cllr Glenda Vaughan-Powell**

5. Cllr Edwards said that there was a history of Cllr Vaughan-Powell's inappropriate behaviour towards him dating back several years, which he had referred to the various monitoring officers at the time. He stated that he had agreed to proposals put forward to try to resolve the problem informally, but that Cllr Vaughan-Powell had refused to participate.
6. Cllr Edwards summarised his complaint, saying that:
  - Cllr Vaughan-Powell had publicly claimed credit for improvements made to the Belmont Haywood Country Park when she had actually opposed the improvements. He felt that he had a public duty to expose these untruths;
  - Confidential information had been leaked relating to the development of the Newton Farm Oval area, which had jeopardised the project. Cllr Edwards alleged that Cllr Vaughan-Powell had leaked this information;
  - Cllr Vaughan-Powell had published a newsletter in which she had stated that the other ward members for Belmont [*ie: Cllrs Edwards and Bridges*], had told residents that she was no longer their councillor when, in fact, the minutes of the parish council meeting had made it clear that Cllr Vaughan-Powell continued to be a ward councillor following her resignation from the parish council. Cllr Edwards felt that this was intended to deceive residents.
7. In relation to the alleged leaking of confidential information, the complainant conceded that no evidence could be produced to support the allegation. In relation to the other two points, parish council minutes would show that Cllr Vaughan-Powell had actively opposed the improvements to the country park and that she had resigned from the parish council due to ill-health, as stated on the parish council website. The monitoring officer asked Cllr Edwards whether he felt that Cllr Vaughan-Powell's claims made on her website could have conferred on her any advantage within the meaning of paragraph VI.11(f) of the Code of Conduct.
8. When asked what outcome he would like from this complaint, Cllr Edwards replied that he felt that Cllr Vaughan-Powell needed help, and hoped that she would receive it.

### **Complaint 13016**

9. Councillor Bridges stated that Cllr Vaughan-Powell had published details on the 'Belmont Voice' website of improvements made to a play area, and claiming credit for achieving the improvements. Cllr Bridges had posted a response on the website asking Cllr Vaughan-Powell why she had failed to inform the parish council of her activities in relation to the play area. In response, Cllr Vaughan-Powell had stated that the parish council had been approached by residents but had failed to respond to requests for improvements to be made and referred to in injury to a child resulting from the poor condition of the play area. Cllr Bridges stated that there was no evidence of any such injury occurring, and that the parish council minutes would show that the parish council had been actively pursuing improvements to the play area over a considerable time. The minutes of parish council meetings were published on the parish council website and would have been available to Cllr Vaughan-Powell. The parish clerk, Mrs Kelso, provided copies of the minutes of meetings to support Cllr Bridges's statement. Cllr Bridges felt that Cllr Vaughan-Powell's published statements on the website brought into question his reputation [*paragraph V.10 of the Code of Conduct*] and that she had failed to treat him with respect and courtesy [*paragraph VI.11(a) of the Code of Conduct*].
10. When asked what outcome he would like from this complaint, Cllr Bridges stated that he wished to see a public apology, published on the Belmont Voice website, acknowledging that previous statements and claims had been untrue, and training for Cllr Vaughan-Powell in the appropriate way to publish information, including checking facts before publishing.

### Complaint 13017

11. Mrs Kelso's complaint also related to the publication on the Belmont Voice website of statements that the parish council had failed to respond to requests from residents to improve the play area and that a child had been injured as a result of that failure. Mrs Kelso felt that this had been a deliberate attempt to bring the parish council into disrepute based on resentment following Cllr Vaughan-Powell's failure to be re-elected to the parish council. Mrs Kelso wished to see a public apology acknowledging that the statements about the parish council had been untrue.

### Complaint 13002

12. The chairman decided that Cllr Vaughan-Powell's complaint against Cllrs Edwards and Bridges could not be considered in her absence. Cllr Bridges stated that he would wish to see evidence to support Cllr Vaughan-Powell's allegations that Cllrs Edwards and Bridges were conducting a vendetta against her.

### Conclusion

13. The panel decided that it would be appropriate to give Cllr Vaughan-Powell the opportunity to attend a panel meeting to address the complaints made against her, and to explain her complaint against Cllr Edwards and Bridges. The chairman decided, therefore, that the panel meeting would be adjourned to enable Cllr Vaughan-Powell to attend. Should Cllr Vaughan-Powell decide not to attend the adjourned panel meeting, that meeting would proceed in her absence and a decision on all the complaints would be made.



Rob Cook  
Independent Person  
Chairman of the standards panel  
[Date]

18<sup>th</sup> Sept 2013

