

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor Mr C Jones OBE – Chairperson

Mr P Clarke
P Davies

MC Clarke

Mrs J Kiely

Mr J Baker

Apologies for Absence

Mrs J Kiely

Officers:

Mark Galvin	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees
Andrew Rees	Democratic Services Manager
Laura Griffiths	Principal Solicitor
Kelly Watson	Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P Davies declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7 as he was a colleague/friend of two of the applicants. Councillor Davies left the meeting whilst this item was being considered.

62. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee dated 12 December 2019, be approved as a true and accurate record.

63. OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2019-2020

The Monitoring Officer presented a report, the purpose of which, was to present the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2019-2020 to the Committee.

She explained that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) reports annually on the number of complaints against public bodies received by its office.

The Authority's Complaints Officer was the Contact Officer for the PSOW, whilst the Monitoring Officer was responsible for liaising with the PSOW regarding Member Code of Conduct complaints.

Appendix A to the report provided the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2019-2020.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2019-2020 was 34 compared with 33 in 2018-19. The figure for 2019-20 represented 0.23 complaints received per 1000 residents, with none of the complaints against the Authority proceeding to investigation. The PSOW intervened in just 1 of these cases.

Children's Services attracted the largest number of complaints at 15, followed by Adult Services with 4. By its nature Children's Services attracts a higher number of complaints than other service areas, and a number of the complaints received related to the

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decisions made by Children's Social Services under safeguarding legislation, which was a volatile service area.

The Monitoring Officer added, that 7 Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority's Councillors were received by the Ombudsman's Office in this period and all were closed after initial consideration. 3 Code of Conduct complaints were received against Town and Community Councils in Bridgend, 2 of which required no further action, with the other being closed after initial consideration.

The Chairperson noted that the number of complaints made in Bridgend seemed low and it was pleasing to note this.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the Ombudsman's Annual Letter attached at Appendix A to the report.

64. URGENT ITEMS

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee of a current investigation being undertaken by the PSOW. This matter was linked to other reports that had been considered by the Cabinet and had generated press and social media interest.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Committee would be updated as appropriate when the PSOW had concluded the investigation.

65. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as they contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 and Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the following items in private, with the public excluded from the meeting, as it was considered that in all circumstances relating to the items, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, because the information contained in both reports, was of a personal and/or confidential nature and would be prejudicial to the persons listed in these items, if the information so mentioned that related to them, was disclosed.

66. SHORTLISTING OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POSITION OF TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

67. REFERRAL BY OMBUDSMAN OF INVESTIGATION UNDER S69 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

The meeting closed at 10:50