

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor Powell – Chairperson

Robert Hancock
Davies

Mrs B Heller
Kiely

RD Jenkins
Jones

DRW Lewis

Officers:

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111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

113. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

That the minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee of 17 September 2015 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to the amendment of the Chairpersons title from Councillor to Ms.

114. WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT - CONDUCT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEMBERS

The Monitoring Officer provided a report to the Committee to advise them of two draft statutory instruments to be made under Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the conduct of Local Government Members in Wales and related matters:

- The Local Government (Standards Committees, Investigations, Dispensations and referral) (Wales) Regulations 2016; and
- The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government' included a commitment to review the process for making an allegation that a local government member may have breached the member Code of Conduct, to ensure that it remained fit for purpose. The draft Statutory Instruments gave effect to this and related matters.

The Monitoring Officer advised Committee that the Welsh Government issued a Consultation at the end of November 2015 on the drafting of the Statutory Instruments and in order to facilitate completion of the legislative process before the Elections in May 2016, the consultation period was limited to six weeks and closed on 10 January 2016.

The Monitoring Officer stated that the key proposals which were pertinent to the work of the Standards Committee were:

- The Obligation to report potential breaches
- Constituency Interests
- Term of Office
- Joint Standards Committee
- Publication of misconduct Reports – Exemption
- Referral of misconduct cases
- Period of suspension
- Appeals to the Adjudication Panel for Wales
- Referral of Dispensation Applications
- Criteria for Granting Dispensations – Disability

Members welcomed the changes and were pleased that they had been reviewed as they felt it would remove many of the difficulties often presented to the Committee and Members of the Council

RESOLVED: That Committee noted the report

115. OMBUDSMAN'S CASEBOOK

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to Committee that provided a summary of cases that had been undertaken by the Ombudsman's Office from July 2015 to September 2015

Members stated that it was pleasing to see that Bridgend only appeared once in the casebook which gave them reassurance of a well-managed Authority.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report

116. STANDARDS CONFERENCE WALES 2015

The Monitoring Officer provided an update to the Committee from the Standards Conference Wales 2015 that took place on 19 October 2015 and was hosted by Cardiff City Council.

A member informed the Committee that the Conference was topical and well prepared with excellent workshops. She added it was interesting to meet members of other Standards Committees to share in their best practice.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report

117. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to the Committee and sought their views on the election of a Vice Chair. He advised Members that aside from the current Chair, there were two Independent Members who were serving their first term of office and were eligible to act as Vice Chair. He further advised that the current Chair was due to retire in February 2016 and therefore it was recommended that the Committee appoint a Vice Chair to ensure the proper operation of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That Mr Clifford Jones was elected as Vice Chair of the Standards Committee

118. URGENT ITEMS

None

119. 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 the minutes/report contains exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A 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 provisions of the Act referred to above, to consider the under-mentioned items in private with the public being excluded from the meeting, as it would involve the disclosure to them of exempt information as stated above.

120. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

121. SHORTLISTING OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POSITION OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER ON THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm