

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2016 AT 2.00 PM

Present

Councillor Powell – Chairperson

Independent Members

Mr C Jones
Mrs J Keily
Mrs B Heller

Town/ Community Councillors

Mrs A Davies

County Borough Council Members

Councillor DRW Lewis

Officers:

Andrew Jolley	Assistant Chief Executive Legal & Regulatory Services and Monitoring Officer
Laura Griffiths	Senior Lawyer
Sarah Daniel	Democratic Services Officer - Committees

122. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members

Councillor R Jenkins
Councillor R J Hancock

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

124. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee of 26 January 2016 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting

125. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) BILL

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to the Standards Committee and asked that they considered Part 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Bill, published by Welsh Government which related to the Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer explained to Members that Part 4 of the draft Bill proposed statutory duties upon the Members relating to the performance of their functions. Members would be placed under a statutory obligation to attend all relevant meetings, hold ward surgeries at least 4 times in every relevant 12 month period, answer all correspondence sent to his/her official address within 14 days of receipt, complete all compulsory training courses and make an annual report. He advised that a training session to support Members understanding of the new proposals and assist them in determining the Authority's response to the consultation had been scheduled and all

Members were invited. He further extended the invite to all Members of the Standards Committee to attend should they wish.

A Member referred to Section 84 and asked if a holding response to correspondence they had received within the 14 days would suffice. The Monitoring Officer advised that for queries that required further investigation a holding response would be acceptable.

A Member asked how the Authority would monitor if a Member had complied and responded to correspondence within the timescales suggested. The Monitoring Officer advised that it was anticipated that individual Members would manage their own communications and there would not be a need for them to be monitored, however if Members were found to not comply, the Monitoring Officer could investigate to identify if that particular Member was in breach of their duty. The Chairperson stated that she felt this issue was more about educating new Members of the Authority to ensure they were aware of the correct procedures when dealing with correspondence from their constituents.

A Member queried section 82 and asked if the attendance at relevant meetings included that of Community Council meetings, PACT meetings and School Governor meetings as those would regularly clash with other Council meetings. The Monitoring Officer advised that Members would not be in breach of their duty if the Member had good reason for not attending a meeting and as such, attending another Council meeting was good enough reason.

Members agreed that the draft bill was formalising procedures that were already in place and that very few Members, if any would be affected by the changes.

RESOLVED: The Committee noted the report

126. OMBUDSMAN'S CASEBOOK

The Monitoring Officer provided Members with a summary of cases that had been undertaken by the Ombudsman's Office for the period October 2015 – December 2015

The Chairperson was pleased to see that Bridgend Council did not appear in the casebook but expressed concern at the long length of time it took from the date of an initial complaint to a resolution which could be very costly if the staff concerned were suspended on full pay. The Monitoring Officer stated that a number of internal investigations have to take place internally before a matter is referred to the Standards Committee and Ombudsman.

RESOLVED: The Committee noted the report

127. URGENT ITEMS

None

128. 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.

129. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

The meeting closed at 2.31 pm