

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2022

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 23 JUNE 2022 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor Mr C Jones OBE – Chairperson

MJ Williams

G Thomas

Mr P Clarke

G Walter

Apologies for Absence

Mrs J Kiely and Mr J Baker

Officers:

Mark Galvin

Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

Kelly Watson

Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services

Michael Pitman

Democratic Services Officer - Committees

98. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr G Walter declared a prejudicial interest in Item 8 of the agenda as the subject of the referral was a close personal friend.

99. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 23/06/2022 be approved as a true and accurate record.

100. ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES - CODE OF CONDUCT DECISION

This item was adjourned as the committee were inquorate

101. AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

This item was adjourned as the committee were inquorate

102. URGENT ITEMS

None

103. 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 item of business, as the 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 item in private with the public being excluded from the meeting, as it would involve the disclosure to them of exempt information as stated above.

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

The Chief Officer Legal & Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy presented a report which advised the Committee of a referral by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to the Standards Committee under section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000.

She advised that the Ombudsman received a complaint that County Borough Member Sean Aspey (the Member) had breached the Code of Conduct. It was alleged that the

Member used his position inappropriately in relation to fundraising efforts to oppose plans by the Ministry of Justice to consider using a Porthcawl hotel to house Wales' Residential Women's Centre. She highlighted the sections of the Code of Conduct that the Member was under investigation for, these were listed at 4.2 of the report.

The Chief Officer Legal & Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy explained that under the procedure adopted by the Standards Committee, the report and appendices were to be considered by the Committee and a determination made as at section 4.3 of the report:

- a) further investigation is required, in which case the Committee will instruct the Monitoring Officer accordingly before proceeding with their consideration; or
- b) that there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct and in such circumstances the Committee must notify any person who is the subject of the investigation, any person who made the allegation which gave rise to the investigation and the Ombudsman accordingly; or
- c) that any person who is the subject of the investigation should be given an opportunity to make representations, either orally or in writing in respect of the findings of the investigation and any allegation that he or she has failed, or may have failed, to comply with the relevant Authority's Code of Conduct.

She advised that the Ombudsman report was very thorough and believed that all information required was available to the Committee to make a determination.

The Committee discussed the report and provided their views on the content presented. A Member agreed with the Ombudsman decision as there appeared to be intent by The Member's actions. The Member also asked for money to be donated into his own personal bank account. A Member concurred with this opinion and believed that The Member may have been blindsided by the financial element and proving there was no ill intent all while not addressing the letter being misleading as well as asking for donations under his personal bank account.

Following further deliberation, the Committee believed that in the interest of fairness and completeness, Cllr Aspey should have his say on these allegations before any further decisions were made or any sanctions placed on him.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered the report and determined that Option C of the recommendations was appropriate.

The meeting closed at Time Not Specified