

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOMS 2/3, CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON TUESDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2016 AT 2.00 PM**

Present

Councillor Mr C Jones OBE – Chairperson

Town Councillor A Davies Mr J Baker	Town Councillor RJ Hancock OBE Mr P Clarke	RD Jenkins	DRW Lewis
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Apologies for Absence

Mrs J Kiely

Officers:

Andrew Jolley	Corporate Director Operational & Partnership Services
Laura Griffiths	Senior Lawyer
Kate Amos	Trainee Solicitor
Nick Dennison	Trainee Solicitor
Andrew Rees	Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees

147. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Declarations were made:

Town Councillor RJ Hancock declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 – Request for Dispensations as he is a member of the Labour Party and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Town Councillor A Davies declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 – Request for Dispensations as she is a member of the Labour Party and a former Member of Bridgend County Borough Council and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Mr Cliff Jones declared a personal interest in agenda item 4 – Request for Dispensations as he is a member of the Labour Party but is no longer an active member of the party and has ceased attending Labour Party meetings.

Councillor RD Jenkins declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 – Request for Dispensations as he is a member of the Labour Party and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor DRW Lewis declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 – Request for Dispensations as he is a member of the Labour Party and as a member of the Development Control Committee has applied for a dispensation and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

148. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of 13 May 2016 were approved as a true and accurate record.

149. REQUEST FOR DISPENSATIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported on applications received from Members of the Development Control Committee for dispensation to speak and vote in connection with a planning application for the site and premises formerly known as the Ogmore Constituency Labour Party Social Club.

An Independent Member of the Committee was uncomfortable in relation to the declaration of interests and considered that this could leave the Authority open to challenge and therefore withdrew from the meeting.

The Committee became inquorate for this item of business and could not consider the applications for dispensation.

150. OMBUDSMAN CASEBOOKS

The Monitoring Officer provided Members with a summary of cases that had been undertaken by the Ombudsman's Office, which is published on a quarterly basis. He stated that the Casebook contains summaries of all reports issued during the quarter, as well as a selection of summaries relating to quick fixes and voluntary settlements. The Casebook also includes the summaries of Code of Conduct cases for which the hearings by the Standards Committee or Adjudication Panel for Wales have been concluded and the outcome of the hearing is known.

The Committee noted that a number of cases in the Casebook related to delays by public bodies in dealing with complaints which could be attributed to reduced staff numbers in local government and Health Boards and that this should be conveyed in writing to the Ombudsman.

Concern was expressed by one of the Independent Members of the Committee at the composition of the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Committee noted the report;

(2) That the Committee noted the concerns of the Ombudsman in relation to delay in dealing with complaints made to public sector organisations. The Committee was concerned that in the current and ongoing financial climate organisations were not giving the appropriate priority to the processing and consideration of corporate complaints, both in the individual complaint but also as a method of information gathering on service delivery quality.

(3) That the Committee was concerned that, accepting that many organisations were seeking alternative models of delivery to ensure the maintenance and improvement of services to the public, the prioritisation of services would inevitably lead to some service delivery reductions. In such circumstances there is a need for organisation to consult and inform the public of proposed changes and to ensure resilience of corporate complaint handling to both ensure service delivery but also provide information for future budget allocation decisions.

(4) That the Committee requested that the Ombudsman consider making a similar statement in the next edition of the casebook.

151. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

152. 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 minutes contain 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.

153. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of 13 May 2016 were approved as a true and accurate record.

The meeting closed at 2.34 pm