

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - THURSDAY, 7 MARCH 2019

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1 - CIVIC OFFICES ANGEL STREET BRIDGEND CF31 4WB ON THURSDAY, 7 MARCH 2019 AT 10:00

Present

Councillor Mr C Jones OBE – Chairperson

MC Clarke

DRW Lewis

Mr J Baker

Apologies for Absence

Mr P Clarke and Mrs J Kiely

Officers:

Andrew Rees

Democratic Services Manager

Kelly Watson

Head of Legal & Regulatory Services

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

46. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of 10 October 2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

47. WLGA SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

The Monitoring Officer presented the guidance produced by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on the use of social media by Councillors.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the WLGA recognises that social media plays an increasingly important role in politics and has prepared a guide for Elected Members in relation to its use. She stated that the purpose of the guidance is to enable Members to benefit from the use of social media whilst minimising the associated risks such as reputational damage and breaching the code of conduct. Guidance has also been produced to advise Members on how to manage or report online abuse or harassment.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the WLGA guidance.

48. OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER

The Monitoring Officer presented the Committee with the Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2017/18, which details the performance of the authority against an average for local authorities in Wales and with the wider public sector report, which contains statistical information about complaints considered in the year.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman in relation to this Council had decreased during this period by 10% from 44 to 40, with there being no public interest reports against the Council and only 1 case taken forward for investigation. Complaints regarding Children's Social Services had halved from 12 to 6 in the past year, however complaints against Environment and Environment Health had increased from 3 to 9.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

49. OMBUDSMAN CASEBOOK AND CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOK

The Monitoring Officer reported on a summary of cases which had been undertaken by the Ombudsman's Office for July to October 2018. The Code of Conduct Casebook is published on a quarterly basis and contains the summaries of all reports issued as well as a selection of summaries relating to quick fixes and voluntary settlements. The Code of Conduct Casebook contains the summaries of those cases for which the hearings by the Standards Committee of Adjudication Panel for Wales have been concluded and where the outcome of the hearing is known for the period October to December 2018.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the Ombudsman attends quarterly meetings with the All Wales Monitoring Officer's Group and also attends a number of public facing events to promote the work of the Ombudsman's office.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the report.

50. URGENT ITEMS

None

51. 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/or 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 the circumstances relating to the items, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, because the information would be prejudicial to the applicants so mentioned.

52. APPROVAL OF EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the 10/10/2018 be approved as a true and accurate record.

The meeting closed at 10:55