

Report from visit to Vale of Glamorgan CC Standards Committee

January 23rd 2020

Myself and our Chairman, Cliff Jones, attended the above meeting as observers as requested.

We were greeted and introduced by the Chair Mr R Hendicott and were seated in the public gallery, the acoustics were poor but we managed to follow proceedings.

Items covered on the agenda (apart from standard items) are set out as below:-

1. Applications for Dispensation and use of Monitoring Officers Delegated powers.

There were six applications for dispensation from councillors, who had either grandchildren or children attending VOG schools, and where they wished to speak and vote on school related matters within their own individual councils. These were all granted subject to usual conditions.

The Monitoring Officer was granted delegated powers to deal with such matters, and report each to future meetings.

2. Observations from Independent Members from attending town and community council meetings. VOG Council has introduced regular visits (3 or so per year in total) to observe proceedings, as part of the Council Standards Committee role to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors.

Three reports were heard, where members had followed an approved aide memoir. Some concerns were raised and noted, no actions were considered or decided.

3. Monitoring Officer meetings with Town and Community Council Clerks
4. The Monitoring Officer holds six monthly meetings with Town and Community Council Clerks as part of the Council Standards

Committee role to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors.

The meetings “provide opportunities for discussion of matters of mutual concern, to have regard to the principles of standards in public life and to provide networking opportunities.”

The MO’s written report was reviewed and accepted.

5. Local Authority Register of Gifts and Hospitality

In January 2019 a report by The Committee on Standards in Public Life had made recommendations in respect of Councils registers and associated policy. This review and recommendations had been adopted in draft and the Standards Committee was asked to recommend the draft to full council. This was agreed.

6. The Committee went on to consider a report relating to a complaint against Councillor A in respect of B Community Council. At the point the meeting went into private session and we did not observe.

Overall, attending the meeting was very helpful; I have made some recommendations for our committee to consider:-

- A. Consider current procedure in respect of Dispensations; how is this done now? Is any action required?
- B. Independent members to carry out observations of town and community council meetings – perhaps in line with current VOG policy.
- C. Consider the VOG MO’s six monthly meetings with town and community council clerks; is this different to the current town and community council forum? Can this process add value and support BCBC Standards Committee remit?
- D. Consider the Register of Gifts and Hospitality policy, should this be reviewed say every 12 months as good practice?

Cllr Graham Walter

23rd January 2020