

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the special meeting of the Standards Committee held at The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 3rd December 2013 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Independent Members

Mr.G.Smith (Chairman)

Mr.M.Jehu

Mrs.A.Jones

County Borough Councillors

C.Davies

G.Stacey

Community Councillor

R.Butler

Officers in Attendance

Mr.P.J.Lucas – Monitoring Officer

Mr.A.Wilkins – Corporate & Democratic Solicitor

Mrs.Z.Maisey – Principal Officer, Committee Services

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests in matters pertaining to the agenda.

REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

23 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION – COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCILLOR P.JARMAN

In his report, the Monitoring Officer outlined a request received from County Borough Councillor P.Jarman, as Leader of an Opposition Group within the Council, for a dispensation to speak and vote at meetings of the Council and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on matters relating to all services affected by the Budget process.

Following consideration of the request, it was **RESOLVED** to grant County Borough Councillor P.Jarman, in her capacity as Leader of an Opposition Group, a dispensation to speak and vote at meetings of the Council and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on matters relating to all services affected by the Budget process for a period leading up to and including the formal approval of the Budget for 2014/2015 by the Council.

24 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

With reference to Minute No.18(1) (Standards Committee, 18 October 2013), the Monitoring Officer provided feedback on the provision of training for elected Members on "Declaration of Interests at Meetings".

The Committee was informed that training sessions had been held on 7th and 21st November 2013 at which a case study was used to illustrate several scenarios Members might encounter and what the correct procedure would be in relation to making an appropriate declaration and completing the relevant form. Copies of the case studies were presented to the Committee for information.

The Committee was also informed that approximately one-third of elected Members had received training to date.

The original intention, as agreed by the Standards Committee, was to introduce the revised form from 1st December 2013, however, it was now suggested that a further training session be held in January 2014 on the basis that all elected Members who had not yet attended a session should attend. The Monitoring Officer would also submit a report to the Council at its meeting scheduled for 15 January 2014 providing feedback from the training and details of the final version of the Declaration of Interest Form to be used and introduced from 1st February 2014.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** –

- (1) To defer the introduction of the new Form until 1st February 2014 to enable the Monitoring Officer to undertake a further training session and report to the January 2014 meeting of the Council on future requirements.
- (2) That having received comments/feedback from elected Members at the training sessions, the Monitoring Officer and the Chairman of the Standards Committee be authorised to revise the Form accordingly.
- (3) That the case study used at the training sessions be circulated to all Members of the Council together with copies of the revised Form completed to cover each scenario set out in the case study.
- (4) That training materials be made available on the Council's website to assist and provide guidance to Members in completing Declaration of Interest Forms.
- (5) That feedback be provided to the Standards Committee at its next meeting to be held on 24 January 2014.

25 REFERRAL FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

With the permission of the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer advised the Committee of a complaint made against a County Borough Councillor that had been referred to him by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Ombudsman was minded not to investigate the complaint but referred the matter to the Monitoring Officer to decide whether local investigation of the complaint was appropriate. The Monitoring Officer had to respond within ten working days.

Following receipt of the referral, the Monitoring Officer consulted the Chairman of the Standards Committee on the matter and the view was taken that the case did not warrant any local investigation and the Ombudsman was informed accordingly. The Ombudsman then responded to say he had decided not to investigate the complaint.

A discussion ensued on how such referrals should be dealt with procedurally in the future and the Monitoring Officer stated that he would seek the views of other Monitoring Officers in Wales and report back to the next meeting of the Standards Committee with the outcome.

**G.SMITH
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting terminated at 4.50 p.m.