

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 4 November 2014 at 2 p.m.

PRESENT

Independent Members

Mrs.A.Jones, Mr.M.Jehu and G. Smith (Chair)

County Borough Councillor C.Davies

Officers in Attendance

Mr.P.J.Lucas – Monitoring Officer

Mr.A.Wilkins –Head of Legal Democratic and Corporate

6 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor G.Stacey and Community Councillor R.Butler.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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

8 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 24 June 2014.

9 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Pursuant to Minute No.5 (Standards Committee, 24 June 2014) the Committee received Ms.D.Hughes, Head of Organisational Development (Human Resources), who provided an update on the development of 'RCT Source' and gave a demonstration of the current e-learning modules being developed for elected Members in relation to:

- The Code of Conduct
- How the Council Works
- Planning

Ms.Hughes explained the functions of 'RCT Source' and how users would access the e-learning modules to assist in their training and development needs. Their usage of the system would be monitored,

where appropriate, for record purposes. It was anticipated all elected Members could have access to the site by the end of 2014 and prior to that, they would have an understanding of how it functions and the e-learning modules that would be available to them.

Committee Members noted that it would be mandatory for some of the modules to be undertaken by elected Members such as The Code of Conduct, Planning and Licensing whilst others would be optional.

Committee Members also noted Community Councillors would also be able to access bespoke training modules available to them on the site.

Ms.Hughes was thanked for the up to date information and asked to give a further update on progress at the next meeting of the Standards Committee to be held in the New Year.

10 ORAL REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

(a) Mock Hearing in respect of an allegation made against a Councillor and referred to the Standards Committee for a decision by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Monitoring Officer referred to the “Mock Hearing” training undertaken by Members of the Standards Committee on 17 October 2014 and requested feedback on the event.

All Committee Members agreed that the training session had been very useful and informative and they praised the standard of training provided by Mr.Peter Keith-Lucas, Local Government Consultant for Bevan Brittan.

(b) Feedback from the LLG meeting in respect of the new Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Monitoring Officer reported that the new Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Nick Bennett, had attended a recent meeting with Monitoring Officers where he outlined his role and workload priorities for his Office.

At this point in the proceedings, the Monitoring Officer referred to his report summarising the Ombudsman’s Annual Report for 2013/14 in relation to Code of Conduct Complaints. During 2013/14, the number of complaints against both County Borough and Community Councillors had decreased compared to the previous year and the number of cases referred to either the Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales had also fallen significantly.

The Monitoring Officer stated that at the Committee's next meeting he would provide a breakdown of the subject matter of complaints made to the Ombudsman against Rhondda Cynon Taf Councillors.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the information contained in the Ombudsman's Annual Report 2013/14 in relation to Code of Conduct Complaints.

(c) Standards Conference 2015

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that next year's Standards Conference would be hosted by Cardiff Council and it was likely to take place during October 2015. Further details of the event would be provided to Standards Committee Members when available.

REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

11 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION – COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCILLOR P.JARMAN

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

Following consideration of the matter, 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 2015/2016 by the Council.

12 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES 2013/14 – CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

The Monitoring Officer's report in respect of the above-mentioned matter was considered earlier in the meeting and Minute No.10(b) refers.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Standards Committee would be held during February 2015.

**G.SMITH
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting terminated at 3 p.m.