

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Thursday, 28th April 2016 at 10 a.m.

PRESENT

Independent Members

Mr. M. Jehu, MBE, Mrs. A. Jones and Mr. G. Smith

County Borough Councillors

C. Davies and G. Stacey

Community Councillor

R. Butler

County Borough Councillors in Attendance

P. Wasley and L.G. Walker

Officers in Attendance

Mr. P.J. Lucas – Monitoring Officer

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

25 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

On opening the meeting, the Chairman informed the Standards Committee that four members of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Standards Committee were in attendance today to observe proceedings. The individuals concerned were Mr. Jeff Morgan, Mr. Michael McCarthy, Mr. Peter Young and Ms. Helen Thomas and the Chairman welcomed them to the meeting.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

27 MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve as an accurate record, the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 29th January 2016.

28 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Pursuant to Minute No.23(4) (Standards Committee, 29th January 2016), the Chairman informed the Committee that he was in the process of arranging dates to meet with individual Leaders of the various Political Groups within the

Council prior to the Annual General Meeting on 25th May 2016 to outline the intention of the Standards Committee to monitor Members' attendances at meetings in the future and recommend to the Council's Annual General Meeting, changes to the manner of recording Member attendances. Members noted that the Chairman alone would meet with the Leaders and the Monitoring Officer would not be present at these meetings.

With regard to Members' attendances at future training sessions, the Chairman suggested that Standards Committee Members sit in on some sessions to observe the training being provided. It was the wish of the Standards Committee to act in a pro active way in moving forward in this area of work.

REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

29 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION – COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCILLOR P. WASLEY

In his report, the Monitoring Officer outlined an application for dispensation received from County Borough Councillor P. Wasley to enable him to make representations (both orally and in writing) in relation to business in which he had previously declared a personal and prejudicial interest, i.e. planning matters relating to the development of land adjacent to The Meadows, Tonyrefail.

The Committee was asked to decide whether or not to grant a dispensation to Councillor Wasley.

In considering the matter, the Chairman invited County Borough Councillor P. Wasley to address the Committee on his application. Having received his comments, a discussion ensued and it was **RESOLVED** not to grant a dispensation to Councillor P. Wasley.

(**Note:** Mr. M. Jehu, Mrs. A. Jones, Mr. G. Smith, County Borough Councillor G. Stacey and Community Councillor R. Butler wished to have recorded that they voted against granting a dispensation to Councillor Wasley.

Note: County Borough Councillor C. Davies wished to have recorded that he voted in favour granting a dispensation to Councillor Wasley).

30 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL FRAMEWORK

In his report, the Monitoring Officer advised the Committee of recent changes made by Welsh Government in relation to the local government ethical framework and a discussion ensued.

In moving forward, the Chairman proposed that future training sessions be held jointly with members of the Standards Committee in Merthyr and requested that this be looked at for the future.

Following a discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

31 REVISED MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Monitoring Officer outlined in his report the recent changes to the Model Code of Conduct for Local Authority Members and sought the Committee's comments with regards to a revised Council Members Code of Conduct prior to its consideration by full Council at its AGM on 25th May 2016.

The Committee was informed that as a result of the revisions to the Code, the relevant legislation required the Council to adopt a Code of Conduct in place of its existing Code (adopted in May 2008) or revise its existing Code by 26th July 2016 and not 1st October 2016 as stated in the report.

Following consideration of the report, it was **RESOLVED** –

- (1) To note the recent changes to the 'Local Authorities Model Code of Conduct' for local government members as highlighted in the report.
- (2) As a consequence of the changes to the Model Code of Conduct, to recommend to full Council the adoption of the revised Members' Code of Conduct, as annexed at Appendix 1 to the report, with effect from 26th May 2016.
- (3) To request the Monitoring Officer to ensure that the revisions to the Model Code of Conduct are brought to the attention of all Community and Town Council Clerks within the County Borough and pointed out that it is for each individual Council to resolve to adopts its own revised Code.

32 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS – 1ST APRIL 2015 – 31ST MARCH 2016

The Monitoring Officer, in his report, provided the Committee with a summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the period 1st April 2015 – 31st March 2016. He also provided a copy of the current procedures adopted by the Ombudsman with regard to how his office investigates Code of Conduct complaints.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that since compiling his report, the Ombudsman had decided that the five complaints listed in his report which relate to the same complaint dated 30th March 2016 were now being considered as complaints about maladministration by the Council and not about Councillors.

Following consideration of the matter, it was **RESOLVED** to note the information.

33 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOKS & FACT SHEETS

In his report, the Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with Code of Conduct Casebooks (Issues 5, 6 & 7) and Fact Sheets produced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and following consideration thereof, it was **RESOLVED** to note the information.

34 OTHER BUSINESS

- (1) The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the outgoing Chairman of the Adjudication Panel for Wales had invited him to attend one of the training and induction sessions for new Adjudication Panel Members to give a flavour of his experiences in his role as Monitoring Officer especially in relation to conducting hearings under the Local Protocol. The Chairman and Committee welcomed the news and requested a report back from the Monitoring Officer in due course.
- (2) At the invitation of the Chairman, the Chairman of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Standards Committee thanked everyone for the opportunity for him and his Members to observe the proceedings at today's meeting. In return, he invited the Standards Committee members to attend the next meeting of his Committee being held at the Civic Centre, Merthyr Tydfil on 15th July 2016 at 2 p.m. to observe proceedings there. He also supported any joint training opportunities as mentioned earlier in the meeting.

**M.JEHU
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting terminated at 11.30 a.m.