

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday, 10th January, 2017 at 2.30 p.m. at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale.

PRESENT

Independent Members Mr.M.Jehu (Chairman)
 Mrs.A.Jones

County Borough Councillors C.Davies and G.Stacey

Other Members in Attendance

County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies (Complainant)
County Borough Councillor A.Morgan (Respondent)

Witness

Mr.F.Ingram (for the Complainant)

Officers in Attendance

Mr.C.B.Jones – Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Community Councillor R.Butler.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

RESOLVED – to note that there were no declarations of interest made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

**COMPLAINT BY MEMBER UNDER THE LOCAL PROTOCOL –
STANDARD OF CONDUCT EXPECTED BY MEMBERS**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined how the meeting would be conducted which would be in accordance with adopted procedures as outlined in paragraph 3.9 of the report.

The Monitoring Officer outlined the procedure and the nature of the complaint brought under the Local Protocol by County Borough Councillor G.Davies against County Borough Councillor A.Morgan. This related to the contents of a letter written by Councillor Morgan to the Secretary of the Treherbert Labour Party concerning the repositioning of bus stops and bridge proposals in

Tynewydd. The basis of Councillor Davies' complaint was set out in his letter which was attached to the report at Appendix 2. He alleged the following parts of the Protocol had been breached by Councillor Morgan:-

Paragraph 2.1 – Public Behaviour

Members shall:

- (a) Show respect to each other
- (b) Not make personal abusive comments about each other; and
- (e) Not publish or spread any false information about each other

Attached to the report at Appendix 3 was Councillor Morgan's response to the complaint.

Following the comments made by the Monitoring Officer, the Chairman then invited County Borough Councillor G.R.Davies to address the Committee.

Councillor G.Davies stated that elected Members should not be disrespectful especially when making comments based upon reports from third parties. He felt compelled to lodge a complaint against Councillor Morgan as he had relied on information from third parties following a Public Meeting held on the 21st July, 2016 at Tynewydd in respect of the repositioning of bus stops.

He reported that a stage 1 complaint was made to the former Monitoring Officer, Mr.P.J.Lucas in August, 2016, who determined that the allegation fell within the protocol.

Councillor Davies stated that in his view, Councillor Morgan was not justified in making comments in his letter to the Treherbert Labour Party that a political element had been introduced into the public meeting.

At the public meeting, Councillor Davies made those in attendance aware that Councillor Morgan had emailed him stating that the bridge would be repaired.

Councillor Davies was then asked questions by Committee Members. He commented that he believed that mention of his name in the letter from Councillor Morgan to the Secretary of the TLP dated 10th August (appended to the report at pages 15 and 16) associated him with claims of political motivation.

He also assumed that Councillor Morgan gave permission for publication to the Secretary of the TLP to publish his letter.

Councillor Davies was asked were any political issues raised at the public meeting, to which he replied that some people had commented generally about for example, a perceived lack of investment in the area compared to the amount being invested in Pontypridd.

Councillor Davies's witness, Mr.F.Ingram was then invited to address the Committee.

In his address, Mr.Ingram indicated that he had no political allegiances.

Following the questions asked by Members to the witness, the Chairman invited Councillor A.Morgan to address the Committee as respondent to Councillor Davies's complaint.

Councillor Morgan informed the Committee that the reason he didn't offer an apology to Councillor Davies was because when he had been made aware of the stage 1 complaint by the former Monitoring Officer, Mr.P.J.Lucas, it was only then that he had sight of a copy of the TLP newsletter. Up to that point Councillor Morgan was not aware of it and he referred the Committee to the footer on the newsletter identifying that it was *Promoted by Paul Russell, Secretary, Treherbert Branch Labour Party and printed by Rhondda Labour Party, both at Oxford House, Dunraven Street, Tonypanydy.*

Councillor Morgan indicated that he has no involvement at a branch level and that there were 53 electoral wards and therefore could not and does not sanction every document that goes out. He state that he is a member of the Cynon Valley Labour Party not Rhondda and that he wasn't aware that the newsletter had been published. However, he didn't feel that there was anything disparaging in the document against Councillor Davies and therefore Councillor Davies should take the matter up with the those who printed it.

He explained that the letter that was compiled following feedback from the Officers who attended the public meeting because he is the Cabinet Member responsible for those areas.

Councillor Morgan indicated that the meeting held in July was attended by both Labour and Plaid Cymru supporters so by its very nature could have been deemed as political in the area, and the comment made in the letter dated 10th August was not directed at any one individual.

Councillor Morgan concluded by saying that he could not be expected to apologise for a publication that he had no involvement in whatsoever.

Councillor Morgan was then asked questions by the Standards Committee Members during which he reiterated that he was not aware of the contents of the leaflet of the Treherbet Labour Party until it was included within the documentation as part of the complaint and that it looked as if the social media coverage was through Facebook to which he was not a subscriber.

The Chair of the Standards Committee stated that the crux of the complaint against Councillor Morgan was the contents of the letter dated 10th August, 2016 and Councillor Davies view that he had been wronged therein.

At this point in the proceedings, the Chairman invited Councillor Davies to address the Committee with any closing remarks.

Councillor Morgan was then invited to address the Committee with his closing remarks.

The Committee then met in private, to deliberate on the representations put to them by all concerned.

Following their deliberations, all concerned were invited back into the meeting and the Chairman made the following statement on behalf of the Standards Committee Members which outlined their decision in this matter:-

“The Committee has now deliberated and considered the verbal and written evidence put before us. In relation to Councillor Davies’s allegations in relation to Paragraph 2.1 – Public Behaviour of the Local Protocol on:

- (a) *Show respect to each other –*
The Committee has found no evidence to substantiate the allegation.

- (b) *Not make personal abusive comments about each other*
The Committee has found no evidence to substantiate the allegation

- (e) *Not publish or spread any false information about each other*
The Committee has found no evidence to substantiate the allegation

In conclusion, there is no basis to the allegations on the evidence provided”.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and in closed the meeting.

**M.JEHU
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 4.39 p.m.