



## **RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee meeting held on Tuesday, 18 September 2018 at 10.00 am at the Council Chamber, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park. Clydach Vale, Tonypany, CF40 2XX.

### **Present:**

#### **Independent Members:**

Mr M Jehu (Chairman)

Mr D. Bowen

Mr J. Thomas

#### **County Borough Councillors - Standards Committee Members in attendance:-**

Councillor M Forey    Councillor E Webster

#### **Community Councillor:**

Mr R. Butler

#### **Officers in attendance**

Mr A Wilkins, Head of Legal - Corporate & Democratic Services

Mr C Jones, Director, Legal & Democratic Services

Mr C Hanagan, Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services

## **8 WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and for the benefit of new members in attendance introductions around the table were made. In accordance with the Welsh Standards, the Chairman took the opportunity to enquire whether Members of the Committee wished to conduct future meetings through the medium of Welsh, to which Members confirmed that they were happy to conduct meetings through the medium of English.

## **9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

## **10 MINUTES**

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2017 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

## 11 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

In his report, the Monitoring Officer provided a summary of complaints made against Council Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

Members discussed the report before them, and queried whether further detail could be provided in future in respect of the level of details relating to the complaints, to assist Members with their deliberations. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that some further details could potentially be provided within the report however added that this was dependant on the level of information provided by the Ombudsman in respect of the complaint and the necessity to ensure the anonymity of the Complainant and Member(s) concerned was maintained.

Members also discussed the potential for 'persistent offenders' and common themes such as 'bullying' to be highlighted within the report, which are not currently evident to Members given the existing content of the report due to complaints being anonymised. The Deputy Monitoring Officer reassured Members that there was no current pattern or trend of such behaviour within the summary of complaints in the report and also advised of the Ombudsman's approach to issuing 'warnings' to Members about future conduct where their behaviour may have merited such a warning despite no formal action being taken in respect of a specific complaint.

Following consideration of the above it was **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

## 12 LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS - ONE VOICE WALES

The Monitoring Officer referred Members to his report which sought the Committee's endorsement in respect of 'One Voice Wales' Local Resolution Procedure for Community and Town Councils.

Members were advised that the Ombudsman's guidance on the Code of Conduct for Community and Town Councils encourages the use of local resolution for low level complaints. The Monitoring Officer referred Members to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed the One Voice Wales Local Resolution protocol, which it was suggested be taken forward for adoption by the Community and Town Councils.

Members commented on the benefits of a local resolution protocol for both Community and Town Councils, although Members did acknowledge that some Community and Town Councils would not be members of One Voice Wales. In this regard they considered it advisable that those Councils should seek to adopt a similar set of local resolution procedures, if they had not done so already.

The Director of Communications & Interim Head of Democratic Services referred to the Community Liaison Committee that was scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> September, and advised Members that the matter would be taken forward for that Committee's consideration.

Following discussions Members **RESOLVED** to endorse, in principle, the One Voice Wales Local Resolution Procedure subject to the comments and feedback

of the Town and Community Councils at the meeting of the Community Liaison Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

### **13 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOKS**

In his report, the Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with Code of Conduct Casebooks (Issues 15 -1 7) produced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and following consideration thereof, it was **RESOLVED**:

1. To note the information contained within the report
2. That future Code of Conduct Casebook issues are provided electronically to Members through a hyper link within the report.

### **14 STANDARDS CONFERENCE**

The Chairman addressed the Committee with an update on the Ninth Standards Conference held in Aberystwyth on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The Chair thanked the Members and Officers who attended the event and advised of the content of the conference including the workshops. It was acknowledged by those who attended that the acoustics during the Plenary sessions was poor which detracted from the presentations made and that this feedback had been given at the end of the conference. The Chair thanked Ceredigion and Powys Councils for organising the event and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth for hosting. The Conference focused on the need for Standards Committees to incorporate the good practices of other Standards Committees across Wales and also touched upon the issues coming forward in respect of Social Media. Members also commented on sessions which were held discussing the practical aspects of holding a Standards Hearing. The Chairman advised that social media would be discussed further as a Committee under the Work Programme agenda item.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the content of the update

### **15 STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman spoke of the good practice in setting a work programme for the Committee going forward over the next twelve months and commented upon potential items that could be taken forward. The Chair spoke of the need for flexibility within the programme and the themes and development opportunities that could be taken forward, along with standard items.

A query was raised in respect of the Vacant independent (reserve) position on the Committee membership and the Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that the vacancy was to be re-advertised over the next coming weeks and confirmed the details for advertising of the vacancy. Members commented that as good practice and for continuity the same Appointments Panel should be used and the Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that this is what Council has agreed.

Following discussions by the Committee it was **RESOLVED** that a draft work programme be presented at the next meeting of the Committee for Members consideration containing the following themes:

- Working in Partnership - Joint Training Opportunities and sharing of good practice

- Local Resolution Protocol – Town & Community Councils
- Social Media
- Training and Development needs / Paperless Committee Approach
- Update on Members Attendance

**16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chairman confirmed that the date of the next Standards Committee meeting was scheduled for the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, where the Committee would sit to consider a hearing under the local resolution protocol. The Chairman advised that he had taken the opportunity to invite Merthyr Tydfil's Council Standards Committee Members to observe the meeting.

**This meeting closed at 11.20 am**

**M Jehu  
Chairman.**