

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 21st March, 2019.

Present: Mr. R. Hendicott (Vice-Chairman); Mrs. L. Tinsley and Mr. G. Watkins (Independent Members); Councillor M. Cuddy (Town and Community Councillor Representative) and Councillors L. Burnett, R. Crowley and B.T. Gray (Vale of Glamorgan Council).

861 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN –

AGREED – T H A T Mr. R. Hendicott be appointed Chairman of the Standards Committee for the current Municipal year.

862 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN –

AGREED – T H A T Mrs. L. Tinsley be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee for the current Municipal year.

863 APOLOGIES –

These were received from Mr. R. Alexander and Mrs. P. Hallett (independent Members).

864 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 24th January, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

865 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations were received.

866 FEEDBACK REPORT FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS OF COUNCIL / CABINET / COMMITTEE MEETINGS (MD / HLDS) –

The Standards Committee had resolved that Independent Members of the Standards Committee provide the Committee with updates of observations made at Vale of Glamorgan Council Meetings in respect of one of their roles in providing and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-Opted Members and Church and Parent Governors.

Independent Members of the Standards Committee were requested to report back to Standards Committee on their findings having attended various meetings, however,

since the last meeting no Independent Member had attended and therefore no verbal report was presented. However, following discussions it was

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted and the two recently appointed Independent Members be requested to attend at least two Council meetings in 2019/20 and report their findings to the Standards Committee.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the decision of the Standards Committee for Independent Members to attend meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council to observe.

867 OBSERVATIONS BY INDEPENDENT STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS AT TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS (MO / HLDS) –

In March 2018, Independent Members of the Standards Committee had agreed to undertake observations at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings. Members at that time also considered that in the future observations should be undertaken of Town and Community Council meetings. The report therefore provided a calendar of meetings for forthcoming Town and Community Council meetings for Independent Members' consideration.

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that it was her intention to hold meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils on a six monthly basis to discuss Monitoring Officer matters and would take the opportunity to feedback to Clerks any generic findings following the Independent Member observations. Feedback on any specific Council raised by the Independent Members would be provided following each visit.

It was noted that the role of the Standards Committee was to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives and that the undertaking of observations at Town and Community Council meetings would support this function.

A copy of the calendar of meetings for forthcoming Town and Community Councils was attached as an appendix to the report and the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer tabled the dates of future meetings of Pendoylan Community Council which had not been received prior to despatch of the agenda.

Independent Members were therefore requested to consider the calendar and advise the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer of their intentions to attend at least two Town and Community Council meetings during the year.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T Independent Members of the Standards Committee consider the calendar of meetings of Town and Community Councils and advise the Principal

Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer of the meetings they would wish to observe.

(2) T H A T the two recently appointed Independent Members attend meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council in the first instance with a view to attending meetings of Town and Community Councils in 2020/21.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) Having regard to the role of the Standards Committee.

868 STANDARDS COMMITTEE – FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (MO / HLDS) –

The Monitoring Officer, in presenting the report, advised that the Standards Committee had agreed to establish a Forward Work Programme for the Committee in March 2018 and attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the suggested Forward Work Programme for the Municipal year 2019/20 for the Committee's consideration.

The Monitoring Officer drew Members' attention to the timetable, referring to a report on 11th July, 2019 to explore joint Standards Committee options with a neighbouring Authority. A report would be prepared for Committee's consideration in September 2019 in respect of a potential South and East Wales Standards Forum, which had been raised by one of the Independent Members at their training session.

The Monitoring Officer also advised the Standards Committee that the Annual Report of the Ombudsman and Adjudication Panel for Wales would also be submitted during the year and would be added to the work programme when available.

Councillor Gray, although advising that it was not a matter for the Standards Committee, took the opportunity to refer to the Corporate Standards Template stating that at various Committees he had noted that the report owner and responsible officer details appeared to be different and sought clarity on the recording of the report owner and responsible officer required. The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer agreed to provide all Members with details of the guidance that had been issued to officers for their information and to advise officers accordingly of the need to ensure consistency.

Having considered the report, it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme at Appendix 1 to the report be approved for the Municipal year 2019/20.

(2) T H A T the Ombudsman's and the Adjudication Panel for Wales' Annual Report added to the work programme be presented to the Standards Committee when available.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) To agree a Forward Work Programme.

869 CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (MO / HLDS) –

The report outlined that the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services would provide an update for Members of the Committee at the meeting under Part II of the agenda in relation to recent correspondence and matters arising in line with the procedures of the Ombudsman which were confidential in nature.

The item was a standing item on the agenda in order that the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services could apprise Members as appropriate.

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted having regard to the fact that an update on the correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and any matters arising under the Part II report would be considered under the Part II report on the agenda.

Reason for decision

To apprise Members of the Committee.

870 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

RESOLVED – T H A T under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

871 CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (MO / HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

As outlined at Part I of the agenda, it had been agreed by the Standards Committee that a standing item appear on the Committee's agenda in order that the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services be able to apprise Standards Committee Members of correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman) on any matters arising, the items being confidential in nature in line with the Ombudsman's procedure.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services proceeded to apprise the Committee verbally of recent correspondence that had been received and also referred to a press release that had been provided prior to the Christmas break in relation to a Member of the Vale of Glamorgan Council who had been charged and

had been before the Magistrate's Court in Cardiff on 15th January, 2019. A further hearing had been held on 14th March 2019, the Member had pleaded not guilty to 15 counts of indecent assault and a trial had been set for 8th July, 2019 to take place over an estimated six day period.

RESOLVED – T H A T the information provided by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the correspondence received from the Ombudsman, noting that this was confidential at this stage and having regard to a press release that had been made prior to the Christmas break as outlined above.