

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2023.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: R. Hendicott (Chair); L. Tinsley (Vice-Chair); R. Alexander, P. Hallett and G. Watkins (Independent Members); Councillors R.M. Birch and C.P. Franks.

### 850 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

### 851 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment to minute 661 that the words “as this had been a matter for criminal proceedings” in the fourth paragraph of the minute be deleted as this was not an accurate reflection of the discussion.

### 852 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor Franks declared an interest in the dispensation applications relating to Councillor D. Evans as he was a close associate of the applicant and withdrew from the room when the applications were being considered.

### 853 APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION (MO/HLDS) –

The Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 permitted Members to apply to the Standards Committee to speak, and if appropriate, to vote on issues which due to prejudicial interests, they might not otherwise be able to speak or vote on or remain in the room.

Prior to consideration of the applications the Chair took the opportunity to advise Committee of one of the outcomes of discussions that had been held with himself as the Chair of Standards, the Monitoring Officer, Group Leaders and Independent Members of the Vale Council having regard to the Group Leader duty under section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It had been agreed that going forward all addresses of Vale of Glamorgan Council Members

and Town and Community Councillors be redacted on correspondence that would be available in the public domain such as applications for dispensation and registers of Members interests forms having regard to confidentiality and Members' safety in line with legislation.

Following careful consideration of the dispensation applications it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T dispensations as set out in the schedule below be granted up to the date of the next Local Government Elections:

<b>Member Requesting Dispensation</b>	<b>Paragraph(s) of the Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 Under Which Dispensation is Granted and as applied for</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Dinas Powys Community Councillor D. Evans	(d), (f) and (h)	To <b>speak and vote</b> on general issues and <b>speak only</b> in relation to Finance and Property issues relating to Southra Park at Dinas Powys Community Council meetings
Dinas Powys Community Councillor D. Evans	(d), (f) and (h)	To <b>speak and vote</b> on general issues and <b>speak only</b> in relation to Finance and Property issues relating to Seel Park at Dinas Powys Community Council meetings
Dinas Powys Community Councillor D. Evans	(d), (f) and (h)	To <b>speak and vote</b> on general issues and <b>speak only</b> in relation to Finance and Property issues relating to the management of allotments at Dinas Powys Community Council meetings
Vale of Glamorgan Council Councillor W.A. Hennessy	(d) and (f)	To <b>speak and vote</b> at Council meetings on general matters, but to <b>speak only</b> if the issue is prejudicial, on issues

		relating to telecare services being a recipient of a telecare service from the Council
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Reason for decisions

To comply with the regulations and obligations for the grant of dispensations to speak and vote.

854 OBSERVATIONS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS (MO/HLDS) –

One of the roles of the Standards Committee was to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives of the Council.

To assist this process, Independent Members of the Standards Committee agreed to undertake observations of Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings. The feedback reports in respect of observations undertaken being presented to the Monitoring Officer and verbal generic updates of the reports being presented to the Standards Committee by Independent Members following the undertaking of the visits. It was accepted that any observations would be shared with the Clerk / Chair of a TCC undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and / or Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.

Mrs. Tinsley commenced by reporting on an observation visit of Llangan Community Council on 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 advising that there had been tensions at the meeting with one of the participants and although the matters had been handled well by the Chair in her view it had been a challenging meeting and as the meeting had been quite contentious she would undertake a further observation visit of the Community Council over the coming months.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 Mrs. Tinsley observed St. Athan Community Council and although there had been a number of items on the agenda this had been a good-natured meeting and Mrs. Tinsley had been warmly welcomed.

Following a visit to Wenvoe Community Council on 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 Mrs. Tinsley stated that this had been a very busy meeting. It was an in-person meeting and name cards were provided for all present. All recommendations were moved and seconded with efficiency and it had been a good meeting. No members of the public were present but that was apparently normal.

Mr. Alexander advised that he had attended St. Georges and St. Brides Super Ely Community Council on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 it had been a virtual meeting and he had been greeted warmly by the Chair. The meeting had been courteously managed by the Chair and he considered it to have been a well run process.

On 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 he had attended St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council, this again had been a remote meeting and the Zoom platform used provided for name identifiers on screen. A considerable number of members of the public were involved in the meeting and the process of the meeting had progressed in line with the agenda in a logical fashion.

The Chair, following the presentations advised, that in his view, the observation visits were having a positive effect with Community Councils being appreciative of such visits. However he raised for consideration by the Committee that unannounced visits may be appropriate going forward; following discussion, it was accepted by the Committee that the TCCs should continue to be notified of the attendance of Independent Members in line with the current arrangements.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the report and the feedback received in respect of observation visits undertaken by Independent Members of the Standards Committee be noted.
- (2) T H A T Independent Members be advised of any outstanding Town and Community Councils that had not received an observation visit at year end and arrangements made for same to be completed.

Reason for decisions

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

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

The purpose of the report was to present to Members the Forward Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24. The Standards Committee had agreed to establish a Forward Work Programme for the Committee for each Municipal Year back in March 2018 and attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the suggested Forward Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2023/24 for Committee's consideration and approval.

The Monitoring Officer took the opportunity to remind Committee that following agreement by email the next meeting of the Standards Committee had recently been rescheduled from the original date of 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 to take place on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.

In referring to the training noted at paragraph 2.3 of the report, the Monitoring Officer advised that this related to the feedback that had been presented to the Committee in June 2022 which had advised of the Code of Conduct training that had been provided by the Monitoring Officer for Vale of Glamorgan Council

Members and the commissioned training from One Voice Wales for Town and Community Council Members.

Following a query from Mr. Alexander regarding the appointment of a Town and Community Council representative on the Standards Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer advised that arrangements were being made for applications to be considered prior to the Standards Committee meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.

Following consideration of the report it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the Forward Work Programme attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved, it being noted that the date of the next meeting was scheduled for 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.

#### Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

#### 856 UPDATES RE NATIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM, ALL WALES MONITORING OFFICERS' GROUP MEETINGS AND GROUP LEADER AND INDEPENDENT MEMBER MEETINGS (MO/HLDS) –

The report provided an update to Committee in respect of discussions at the National Standards Committee Forum on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2023, meetings of the All-Wales Monitoring Officers Group and meetings held with Group Leaders, and Independent Elected Members of the Council with the Chair of Standards and the Monitoring Officer.

During consideration of the report the Monitoring Officer drew attention to the discussions relating to the findings of the Richard Penn report on the Ethics and Standards Framework, advising that this report had been commissioned by Welsh Government with the next steps being for the consultation on the report findings to take place. The responsible officer in Welsh Government for the service area had attended the All-Wales Monitoring Officers meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2023 and advised that the consultation was imminent with the Monitoring Officer informing the Committee that she would contact Welsh Government officers to seek clarity as to when the consultation was likely to take place.

The Chair of the Standards Committee, having regard to the recent meetings held with Group Leaders and Independent Members of the Council, took the opportunity to advise that a number of aspects were discussed as outlined in the report as well as providing an opportunity for Members to raise any issues they wished to and for any matters regarding the Members' Code of Conduct to be raised. Discussions had also included a harmonisation approach across Wales in respect of a threshold for gifts and hospitality and around the redacting of addresses on the Council's website in light of personal safety issues for Members having regard to a number of incidents that had occurred in England regarding Members of Parliament.

Having regard to the report and updates provided at the meeting it was

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be accepted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

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

The report outlined that the Monitoring Officer would provide an update to 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 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales which were confidential in nature.

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 Part II of the report would be considered under Part II of the agenda.

Reason for decision

To apprise Members of the Committee.

858 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.

859 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 would 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 therefore provided the Committee with a verbal update in respect of recent confidential correspondence with the Ombudsman. There being no questions in relation to the information provided at the meeting, it was

RESOLVED – T H A T the confidential information provided by the Monitoring Officer at the meeting be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to correspondence received from the Ombudsman, noting that it was confidential at this stage.

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