

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on 12th March, 2020.

Present: Mr. R. Hendicott (Chairman); Mrs. L. Tinsley (Vice-Chairman); Mr. R. Alexander (Independent Member); Councillor M. Cuddy (Town and Community Councillor Representative); O. Griffiths and Ms. M. Wright (Vale of Glamorgan Council).

Also present: Councillor A.D. Hampton.

730 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor B.T. Gray [given paragraph 8.3(b) of the Council's Constitution required "at least half the Members present (including the Chairperson) are Independent Members"] and from Mrs. P. Hallett and Mr. G. Watkins (Independent Members).

731 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January, 2020 be approved as a correct record.

732 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor Ms. M. Wright declared an interest in respect of her application for dispensation at Agenda Item 4 and vacated the room prior to its consideration..

733 APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION AND USE OF THE MONITORING OFFICER'S DELEGATED POWERS (MO/HLDS) –

The Committee was informed that an application for dispensation had been received from Councillor Mrs. R. Nugent-Finn on 18th February, 2020 to speak, vote and remain in meetings when issues were raised (including budgets) in respect of Sully Primary School due to the fact that her son attended the school. Under the Monitoring Officer's delegated powers in consultation with the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer advised that the application had been approved on 26th February, 2020. The application being granted until the next Local Government Elections in accordance with paragraphs (d), (e), (f) and (i) of the Standards Committees Grant of Dispensations (Wales) Regulations 2001 to speak and vote at meetings.

The Monitoring Officer further advised Committee that an application for dispensation had been received that morning from Councillor Ms. M. Wright which detailed similar circumstances to Councillor Mrs. Nugent-Finn's in that Councillor Ms. Wright had a grandchild who attended Whitmore High School. The dispensation

was being sought to speak, vote and remain in meetings when issues were raised (including budgets) in respect of the School. As there had been no time to consult with the Chairman prior to the Committee the Chairman suggested that the application be considered at the meeting as an urgent item, it was subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the use of the Monitoring Officer's delegated powers in respect of the application for dispensation from Councillor Mrs. R. Nugent-Finn be noted and endorsed.

(2) T H A T dispensation be granted to Councillor Ms. M. Wright to speak, vote and remain in meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council as applied for until the next Local Government Elections in accordance with paragraphs (d), (e), (f) and (i) of the Standards Committees Grant of Dispensations (Wales) Regulations 2001. The application being granted until the next Local Government Elections.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) Having regard to the contents contained within the report and the applications received.

734 COLLABORATION WITH BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL REGARDING STANDARDS (MO / HLDS) –

At a previous Standards Committee meeting on 21st March, 2019, the Monitoring Officer had been requested to explore the potential for joint arrangements with a neighbouring Principal Authority should conflicts of interest arise or Independent Members have personal and prejudicial interests in a matter to the extent that the Standards Committee would be iniquorate. Members noted that Independent Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee undertook to abide by the Council's Members' Code of Conduct which was contained in the Council's Constitution. If an Independent Member had a "close personal association" with an individual that was the subject of a matter before the Committee, the Independent Member (as would a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor who sat on the Standards Committee) was required to declare such a personal interest and its nature. Given the nature of the business before the Committee such a personal interest may equate to a prejudicial interest, with the Member then needing to withdraw from the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer drew the Committee's attention to Appendix A to the report, which referred to a report to be presented to the Bridgend County Borough Council's Standards Committee on 26th March, 2020, where it was being recommended that the merits of a collaborative approach with the Vale of Glamorgan Council be considered by Bridgend County Borough Council.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted, and that the Standards Committee receive a further report following Bridgend County Borough Council's meeting on 26th March, 2020.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents contained therein.

735 LOCAL AUTHORITY'S REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY –
UPDATE FOLLOWING FULL COUNCIL ON 26TH FEBRUARY, 2020 (MO / HLDS) –

At its meeting on 23rd January, 2020, the Standards Committee recommended to Full Council that the Vale of Glamorgan Council's thresholds for registering gifts and hospital be amended to read that the following values for registration of any gift, hospitality, material benefit or advantage be:

- Gifts, material benefits or advantages - £50.00 or totalling £100.00 over a year from a single source;
- Hospitality - £25.00 or totalling £100.00 over a year from a single source.

The Standards Committee had made this recommendation in light of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in England's publication, "The Local Government Ethical Standards: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life" which had recommended that Local Authorities be required to establish a Register of Gifts and Hospitality, with Councillors required to record any gifts and hospitality received over a value of £50 or totalling £100 over a year from a single source.

The Standards Committee had also resolved on 23rd January, 2020 that all Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan be recommended to adopt the same in order that similar arrangements could be adopted within their respective Councils.

The recommendations of the Standards Committee had been endorsed by Full Council on 26th February, 2020, and the Democratic Services Officer advised that following the decision of Full Council, all Town and Community Councils had been advised of the Standards Committee's recommendation and the endorsement by Full Council of the amendment to the Council's policy for their consideration.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted.

Reason for decision

In noting that Full Council had agreed the Standards Committee's recommendation and that Town and Community Councils had been informed of the views of the Standards Committee.

736 STANDARDS COMMITTEE – FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21
(MO / HLDS) –

The Standards Committee had agreed to establish a Forward Work Programme for the Committee in March 2018 and attached at Appendix 1 to the report was a suggested Forward Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2020/21 for the Committee's consideration.

In referring to the proposed Forward Work Programme, the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that having regard to the Local Democratic and Boundary Commission Review of electoral arrangements for the Vale of Glamorgan Council scheduled to be reported to Standards Committee on 14th May, it was noted that the Commission's report was currently at the consultation stage with comments needing to be made by 13th May, 2020. Should an update not be available in time for the meeting on 14th May a further update would be presented to the 23rd July meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – T H A T the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21 as set out at Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents contained therein.

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

In line with the Committee's Forward Work Programme, it had been agreed that a standing item appear on the Committee's agenda in order that the Committee could be apprised of correspondence with the Ombudsman and any matters arising. Due to the confidential nature of such matters, the Monitoring Office would be providing an update to the Committee under Part II of the agenda.

It was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the report be noted having regard to the fact that the Monitoring Officer would provide an update in respect of the confidential matters under Part II of the agenda.

Reason for decision

In light of the confidential nature of the correspondence.

738 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.

739 CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (MO/HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 18C) –

Having regard to the confidential nature of the matter, the Monitoring Officer provided a verbal update to Standards Committee Members at the meeting in respect of correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

During consideration of the report, reference was made to the forthcoming Standards Committee hearing that was scheduled to be held in April 2020. It was subsequently suggested that the number of Standards Committee Members to be in attendance be considered. The Chairman was of the view that the Panel should comprise of no more than five Members consisting of three Independent Members, a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor and the Town and Community Councillor representative who had also been present at the last meeting of the Committee when the report of the Ombudsman had been considered. Following a discussion, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the information provided by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services be noted and that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Mr. G. Watkins, Councillor O. Griffiths and Councillor M. Cuddy comprise the members of the Standards Committee to hear the matter of the Investigation report of the Public Services Ombudsman as presented to the last meeting of the Committee.

Reason for decision

To apprise Members and confirm the compilation of Members to sit at the pending Standards Committee hearing.