

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

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

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

Present: Councillors R.M. Birch and C.P. Franks and R. Alexander, R. Hendicott and L. Tinsley (Independent Members) and P. Summers (Town and Community Council Representative)

Also present: Councillors L. Burnett (Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources), G.D.D. Carroll, Dr. I.J. Johnson, and E. Williams.

### 84 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the 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.”

The Chair also welcomed Councillor Eddie Williams to the meeting as the recently appointed Group Leader for the Llantwit First Independents Group.

### 85 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR –

RESOLVED – T H A T R. Hendicott be appointed Chair for the 2024/25 Municipal year.

### 86 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR –

RESOLVED – T H A T L. Tinsley be appointed Vice-Chair for the 2024/25 Municipal year.

### 87 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillor J.E. Charles and G. Watkins (Independent Member).

## 88 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be approved as a correct record.

## 89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor C.P. Franks declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 6 – Applications for Dispensation. The nature of the interest was that Councillor Franks had submitted an application for dispensation, as contained within the report for consideration by the Committee, and therefore withdrew from the meeting for the item.

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

The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the purpose of which was to consider applications for dispensation as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Franks declared a prejudicial interest on the item and subsequently withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the item.

RESOLVED – T H A T the 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>
Councillor C.E.A. Champion	(d), (e) and (f)	To speak and vote when matters relating to the review of Council employment, employee terms and conditions, in view of a family member being employed by the Authority are to be discussed at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings.
Councillor J. Lynch-Wilson	(d) and (f)	To speak, vote and remain in meetings when

		matters relating to Community Centres are to be discussed at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings.
Councillor I.R. Buckley	(d), (e) and (f)	To speak and vote when matters relating to the review of Council employment, employee terms and conditions, in view of a family member (daughter) being employed by the Authority are to be discussed at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings.
Community Councillor J. Cowpe	(f)	To speak only on matters related to Dinas Powys Music Festival and Dinas Powys Library Activity Centre (DiPLAC) when they are to be discussed at Dinas Powys Community Council meetings.
Councillor C.P. Franks	(d), (f), (h) and (i)	To speak only on matters relating to Seel Park, Dinas Powys when they are to be discussed at both Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings and Dinas Powys Community Council meetings.
Councillor S. Campbell	(d), (e), (f) and (i)	To speak, vote and remain in meetings where issues are raised at meetings of the Council (including budgets) in respect of South Point Primary and Ysgol St Baruc.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the applications submitted and discussions held at the meeting.

91 STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING WITH GROUP LEADERS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR PRINCIPAL COUNCILS IN WALES. SUPPORTING PROVISIONS WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000, THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021 ISSUED JUNE 2023 (MO/HLDS) –

The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with an update following the publication of Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance.

Having regard to the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Welsh Government provided Interim Guidance on the provisions and duties of the aspects relating to the Standards Committee in May 2022.

In June 2023 Welsh Government published updated Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The above Guidance covered a number of aspects however the matters specific to the remit of the Standards Committee could be found at sections 4.0, 5.0, 6.0 and 7.0 of Part 2 of the Guidance.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic advised that the Guidance advised that at the beginning of each council year Political leaders should meet with the Standards Committee to agree the following:

- How Group Leaders and the Standards Committee would work together to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour (with a pre-agreed pro-forma completion process on an annual basis),
- Frequency of meetings between Group Leaders and the Standards Committee throughout the year (pre-agreed every six months; next being December 2024),
- The threshold which the Standards Committee would use to establish whether it was content that Political Group Leaders had complied with the duties of the 2021 Act (as set out in the Standards Committee Annual Report), and
- The mechanism for Political Group Leaders to provide reports to the Standards Committee about the actions they had taken to comply with the duties within the 2021 Act (via the amended pro-forma contained at Appendix A of the report).

Therefore, as the first meeting of the new municipal year, all four Group Leaders were invited and were present at the meeting to make comment under Part II of the meeting and had kindly completed the necessary pro-formas that were also contained within the Part II agenda papers.

With the Committee's agreement, the Chair subsequently moved the meeting into Part II.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the proposals set out in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.8 of the report, in relation to meetings with Political Group Leaders, be agreed.
- (2) T H A T the amended Group Leader proforma, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be noted.

Reasons for decision

- (1) Having regard to the content of the report and discussions at the meeting.
- (2) Having regard to the amendments reflected in the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales published in June 2023.

92 DRAFT STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (MO/HLDS) –

The report was presented by the Chair of the Committee who advised that the draft would be updated further following the outcomes of other agenda items considered at the same meeting. The purpose of the report was to present a draft Annual Report for consideration by the Standards Committee for future reference to Full Council.

Under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Standards Committee, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, must make an Annual Report to the Authority in respect of that year. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was the draft Standards Committee Annual Report for consideration and approval.

With no comments or queries raised by the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the Committee was content to amend the draft to reflect the Committee's satisfaction, following assessment, that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders had been met.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the draft Annual Report attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved and forwarded to Full Council.
- (2) T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Chair of the Standards Committee to include the additional comments made at the meeting in order to finalise the Annual Report before submission to Full Council.

(3) T H A T a copy of the finalised report, following presentation to Full Council, be forwarded to each Vale of Glamorgan Town and Community Council Clerk and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Reasons for decision

(1) In compliance with the requirements of Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

(2) In order to insert additional comments into the Annual Report as discussed at the meeting.

(3) For information.

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

In line with the Committee's Forward Work Programme, it had previously been agreed that a standing item would appear on the Committee's agenda so that Committee could be apprised of correspondence with the Ombudsman and any matters arising.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic Services advised that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted having regard to the fact that any update on 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.

94 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve 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.

95 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.

96 GROUP LEADER PROFORMAS FOR CONSIDERATION BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE (MO/HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

All four Political Group Leaders were invited and were present at the meeting to make comment on the duties placed upon them in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The mechanism being that Political Group Leaders provide reports to the Standards Committee, on an annual basis, using a pre-agreed code of conduct compliance pro-forma, about the actions they had taken to comply with the aforementioned duties.

All four Political Group Leaders had submitted completed pro-forma in advance of the meeting and were provided with the opportunity to address the Committee in turn.

Once each of the Group Leaders had addressed the Committee, and Standards Committee Members posed their related questions, all Political Group Leaders were asked to vacate the meeting so that the Standards Committee could deliberate in private based on the threshold criteria on the role of a Political Group Leader in the Vale of Glamorgan Council, as set out in Appendix B of the Part I report.

Having regard to Standards Committee discussion in private deliberation, it was subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report be amended to reflect the Committee's satisfaction, following assessment, that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders have been met.

Reason for decision

Having regard to discussions held at the meeting with political Group Leaders on the completion of the Group Leader code of conduct compliance pro-formas, the Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leader Threshold Criteria, and the proposals set out in paragraphs 2.3 to 2.8 of the Part I report.