

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2025.

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

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

Present: R. Hendicott (Chair and Independent Member); G. Watkins (Vice-Chair and Independent Member); Councillors R.M. Birch, J.E. Charles, and C.P. Franks; R. Alexander, J. Evans, and G. Olphert (Independent Members); and Councillor P. Summers (Town and Community Council Representative).

Also present (observing): Councillor E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health, Llantwit First Independents Group Leader).

### 454 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”.

The Chair also welcomed Ms. Janet Evans to the Committee following their recent appointment as an Independent Member of the Committee.

### 455 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### 456 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

Councillor C.P. Franks declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 4 – Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings. The Councillor declared that they were a twin-hatted Member, in that they were also a Member of Dinas Powys Community Council and was present at the observation of 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2025. Councillor Franks remained in the meeting throughout the item.

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

As part of the Committee's Forward Work Programme, and in line with its statutory responsibilities, Independent Members of the Standards Committee undertake observations of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings. This initiative supports the Committee's aim of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by observing how meetings were conducted in practice and offering constructive, impartial feedback.

The Chair advised that, since the 25<sup>th</sup> September Committee Meeting, four further observations had taken place as follows:

<b>Independent Member</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
G. Olphert	Dinas Powys Community Council	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
R. Alexander	Wenvoe Community Council	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
G. Olphert	Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council	28 <sup>th</sup> October 2025
G. Watkins	Penllyn Community Council	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2025

with Appendix 1 of the report setting out progress to date in relation to arranging future observations.

The Chair also advised that a verbal update on a fifth observation would also be provided, as deferred from the previous Committee meeting:

<b>Independent Member</b>	<b>Council</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
R. Alexander	St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council	12 <sup>th</sup> August 2025

The relevant Independent Members went on to advise of their findings/comments in turn, in relation to the five TCC observations that had been undertaken to date. Feedback in the main was very positive. After which, the Committee discussed the following points:

A fractious atmosphere and obvious disharmony at the St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council observation, which threatened to disrupt processes at several points but was avoided due to the efforts of the Chair.	Mr. Alexander suggested that a second observation of the Council be arranged to assess whether general interaction had improved and to allow for a more focused observation to take place.
Acoustics of meetings rooms when held in-person can make hearing	Audio quality can be a common issue and therefore, to support with

<p>proceedings difficult and similarly, intermittent audio quality when attending remotely can affect the ability to hear fully.</p>	<p>undertaking observations, it was suggested that Independent Members attending in person, where possible, would be the most beneficial option.</p> <p>Even the larger Town Councils who were arguably better equipped would also struggle with technical difficulties, so it was a barrier being tackled by all TCCs.</p>
<p>Agenda item stating 'closed session' but at that point in proceedings no efforts were made to move to Part II arrangements.</p>	<p>Often TCCs would have a closed session agenda item on the agenda front sheet as standard, but it was not always called upon depending on the topics under consideration at that particular meeting.</p> <p>It would be beneficial for Clerks to bear this in mind and make it clear to all participants if/when proceedings have moved to confidential session, or not, to align with the agenda produced.</p>

In conclusion, the Monitoring Officer reassured the Committee that good practice following observation visits was shared and discussed at the six-monthly meetings with Clerks, which also afforded the opportunity to raise any generic issues of concern and to offer advice and guidance. Feedback was also provided to Chairs of TCCs on a 1-2-1 basis by the Monitoring Officer following observations where necessary.

As such, since the last Committee meeting, the Monitoring Officer had liaised with both Llantwit Major and Penarth Town Councils to discuss sharing of good practice and advice in respect of matters relating to good governance. Arrangements would be made to liaise with St Athan Community Council.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the reports and the feedback received in respect of observation visits undertaken by Independent Members of the Standards Committee be noted.

(2) T H A T where matters following observation visits are highlighted by Independent Members as issues requiring further attention or further visits and / or requests are made by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services for visits to be undertaken, these be arranged as and when required.

(3) T H A T a second observation be arranged for St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council in the current Municipal year.

(4) T H A T Independent Members attend observation meetings in person as standard, and where practical to do so, depending on the arrangements put in place by the respective Council for the meeting in question.

#### Reasons for decisions

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

(2) To maintain a watching brief having regard to the role of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

(3) As requested by the Monitoring Officer, on the advice provided by Mr. Alexander following an initial observation undertaken on 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2025.

(4) To support the observation process.

#### 458 MONITORING OFFICER MEETINGS WITH CLERKS OF TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS (MO/HLDS) –

The Monitoring Officer (MO) had previously informed the Standards Committee of the intention to hold six monthly meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (TCCs) to provide a formal opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern, to provide open discussion and networking opportunities. The last Monitoring Officer and Town and Community Council Meeting was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2025 and the agenda for the meeting was set out at Appendix 1 to the report for the Committee's information. Several Clerks were in attendance at the meeting and had benefitted from the discussions held.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the meeting was held to support improved communication, governance practice and understanding of ethical standards across the sector. The meeting focused on strengthening early intervention in member conduct issues, improving complaint handling at the local level, and supporting Clerks in their advisory role. Further details were provided to the Committee within Section 2 and Appendix 2 of the report.

Following the Monitoring Officer's presentation of the report, the Chair also advised that they were in attendance at the Clerks Meeting and confirmed, via the Democratic Services Officer, that 16 out of 26 Councils were represented at the meeting.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Summers as to the resources made available to TCCs following the meeting, whether present or not, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that a variety of resources had already been shared with all TCC Clerks for future reference.

RESOLVED – T H A T the report in respect of the Monitoring Officer's meeting with Clerks held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2025 be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to discussions held at the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of Town and Community Councils meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2025.

459 ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES – ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25 (MO/HLDS) –

The report provided Standards Committee with an update in respect of the work of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and covered the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

Members' attention was drawn to Case Summaries at Section 3 of the document which detailed the case referrals and their outcomes.

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report, April 2024 to March 2025, be noted.

Reason for decision

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

460 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2024/25 (MO/HLDS) –

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2024/2025 provided details relating to the functions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman).

Standards Committee Members were requested to consider the references detailed in the Ombudsman's Report in respect of complaints of Members of Local Authorities who had breached their Authority's Members' Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the Annual Report of the Ombudsman had been produced in a different format to previous reports and that the relevant sections for the Committee's consideration could be found on:

- Key Statistics: pages 12 and 13.
- Code of Conduct Complaints: pages 32 – 41.

Following the Monitoring Officer's presentation of the report, Mr. Alexander commended the easy read version of the report that the PSOW had made available and that, in relation to the full report, the use of infographics throughout had made the report much more accessible than previous publications.

RESOLVED – T H A T the aspects within the Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, referring to Code of Conduct matters within the remit of the Standards Committee, be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussion held at the meeting.

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

The Monitoring Officer advised that the report before the Committee was a standard item on the Committee's forward work programme and set out the communications that they had received from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). A Part II version of the report had also been provided to the Committee and therefore, the Monitoring Officer would provide an update to the Standards Committee at the meeting under Part II of the agenda in relation to recent correspondence and matters arising.

RESOLVED – T H A T the content of the report alongside the verbal overview provided by the Monitoring Officer be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report subject to matters arising under the Part II report later on the agenda

462 MATTER WHICH THE CHAIR HAD DECIDED WAS URGENT –

RESOLVED – T H A T the following matter which the Chair had decided was urgent for the reason given beneath the minute heading be considered.

463 STANDARDS COMMITTEE QUORACY – GOVERNANCE REVIEW, CLARIFICATION AND RATIFICATION OF DECISIONS (MO/HLDS) –  
**(Urgent by reason of completing the governance assurance process as soon as possible to ensure transparency and appropriate public reporting.)**

The Chair advised that a governance review had identified that the Standards Committee's earlier interpretation of quorum composition under the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 required clarification. It had since been confirmed that, whilst the Town and Community Council (TCC) Representative was a Co-opted Member of the Committee, they could not be counted as an Independent Member for quorum purposes.

During 2024, attendance by Independent Members was on occasion affected by personal circumstances and technical issues, and several meetings proceeded on the good faith assumption that the presence of the TCC Representative satisfied the

Independent Member element of the quorum. The correct interpretation was clarified in November 2024, and all subsequent meetings, which were held remotely, had been convened in accordance with that Clarification.

The Monitoring Officer added that to provide full reassurance, a comprehensive review of all Standards Committee meetings held during 2024/25 and 2025/26 municipal years (to date) was undertaken in October 2025. The review confirmed that only three pre-November 2024 meetings were inquorate under the clarified interpretation. All affected decisions were taken in good faith based on the Committee's previous understanding of the quorum requirements but now required formal confirmation to ensure full procedural validity.

The report therefore sought the Committee's approval to ratify and confirm the dispensations granted at two of the affected meetings in respect of two Members. In relation to one previous item considered by the Committee during 2024, the Monitoring Officer was in consultation with the parties involved to address the procedural matter identified during the governance review. Those discussions were ongoing to determine the most appropriate and proportionate resolution, and a further report would be presented to the Committee in early 2026 once said discussions had concluded.

Following the presentation of the report, Councillor Summers, in their capacity as the current TCC Representative, noted that the regulations advised that the TCC Representative could not be considered as either an 'Independent' or 'Elected' Member of the Committee and therefore, the position could be interpreted as not being politically independent however, this was certainly the case in relation to themselves. Therefore, regardless of the quoracy point, the TCC Representative should remain politically independent and quoracy for the Committee should be steered by the Monitoring Officer and their advisors accordingly.

Councillor Franks subsequently moved that the recommendations as presented within the report be agreed.

RESOLVED –

- (1) T H A T the position regarding quoracy at three meetings held on the 29<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 which, under the clarified interpretation of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 were not quorate, be noted.
- (2) T H A T the dispensations granted at the 29<sup>th</sup> July and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 Committee meetings be confirmed.
- (3) T H A T in relation to one previous matter considered on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2024, the Committee noted that the Monitoring Officer was in communication with the relevant parties to address the procedural matter identified through the governance review, and that a further report would be presented to the Standards Committee in early 2026, once said discussions had concluded.

Reasons for decisions

(1&2) To advise the Standards Committee of the position regarding decisions taken at meetings subsequently determined to be inquorate under the correct interpretation of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and to seek the Committee's formal confirmation of those decisions, at a properly constituted meeting, to ensure that the relevant decisions are properly ratified and have full legal effect.

(3) To ensure that the outstanding procedural matter identified during the governance review is addressed appropriately and transparently, following consultation with the relevant parties and that the Committee be updated through a further report before determining any further action.

## 464 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.

## 465 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.

RESOLVED – T H A T the confidential update on correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ('the Ombudsman'), as provided verbally by the Monitoring Officer, be noted.

Reason for decision

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