

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE, HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON WEDNESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> APRIL 2013.**

**PRESENT:** Mrs H. Rhydderch-Roberts (Chair)

Mrs J. Evans, Mrs M. Harris, Mrs S. Jarman, Mr R. Miller, County Councillors Mrs M, Mackenzie, P. Medlicott, Mrs K. Roberts-Jones and G. Williams.

**Officers in Attendance:** C. Meredith (Strategic Director – Law and Governance Ms S. Tamboo (Solicitor – Corporate) and Mrs E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer).

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>S7 – 2013</b>
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There were no apologies for absence.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>S8 – 2013</b>
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2013 as a correct record.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>S9 – 2013</b>
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County Councillor Mrs K. Roberts-Jones declared a personal and prejudicial interest referred to in Item S10 – 2013 (Section B1.2) as the complainant in the case.

County Councillor G. Williams declared a personal and prejudicial interest referred to in Item S10 – 2013 (Section B1.2) as a friend of the Member subject to the complaint.

County Councillor G. Williams declared a personal and prejudicial interest referred to in Item S10 – 2013 (Section F) as a Member of the same party.

<b>4.</b>	<b>REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – LAW AND GOVERNANCE</b>	<b>S10 – 2013</b>
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The Committee received the report of the Strategic Director – Law and Governance. (Copy filed with signed minutes)

**A. General Standards Issues for County Councillors and Co-opted Members**

**A1. Code of Conduct Training**

A training session on the Code of Conduct had been arranged to follow on from the meeting of the Standards Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013.

One Co-opted Member was unable to attend and a one-to-one session would be arranged when she was next in County Hall.

**A2. Member Development**

An update on Member Development would be provided at the next meeting.

## **B. Referral of Councillors to Public Services Ombudsman**

### **B1. County Councillor Referrals**

**B1.1** The Ombudsman was still investigating complaint Ref 5/12/CC.

Since the last meeting the Ombudsman had advised that the following complaints have been made:

1/13/CC – deciding whether or not to investigate

2/13/CC – decided not to investigate

3/13/CC – decided not to investigate

**B1.2** The Standards Committee have arranged a hearing to determine Ref 2/12/CC which will be held on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013.

## **C Other Standards Issues**

### **C1.1 Social Networking**

The WLGA will be providing training for Members in due course on blogging and social networking. Members of the Standards Committee will be invited to attend this development session.

## **D Dispensations**

### **D1.1 Applications - County Councillors**

No applications for dispensation have been received.

### **D1.2 Blanket dispensations**

At the last meeting the Standards Sub-Committee decided to grant a blanket dispensation to town and community councillors who had membership (often not through appointment by their councils) of 'voluntary Organisations' such as non-profit making clubs, associations, societies, groups and organisations such as football, cricket, tennis clubs, allotment associations, history or drama groups, local festivals etc in respect of prejudicial interests which arose from their role as a trustee or member of voluntary organisation where they had not been elected, appointed or nominated to that position of trustee by their Council.

The Standards Committee considered that this blanket dispensation should be extended to County Councillors who are Members of such Voluntary Organisations where they had been appointed other than by the County Council.

<b>RESOLVED</b>	<b>REASON FOR DECION</b>
<b>1. That a blanket dispensation be granted to all County Councillors who are elected, appointed or nominated</b>	<b>1 To place all councillors who are trustees of registered charities or members (of whatever level) of</b>

**otherwise than by the County Council as :**

**(a) trustees of registered charities (including where they are directors of limited companies running the charities); and**

**(b) members (at whatever level) of Voluntary Organisations**

**to participate, speak and vote in connection with council business relating to the charity of which the councillor is a trustee or the Voluntary Organisation of which the councillor is a member (at whatever level) including**

**(i) regulatory matters concerning the registered charity of which the councillor is a trustee or the Voluntary Organisation of which the councillor is a member; and**

**(ii) the grant, loan or other form of financial assistance of more than £500 to the registered charity of which the councillor is a trustee or the Voluntary Organisation of which the councillor is a member**

**but subject to the following:-**

**(1) that the registered charity or Voluntary Organisation must be non-profit making and the Councillor (or a close personal associate) must not be in receipt of any financial reward or remuneration from the registered charity or Voluntary Organisation**

**(2) that this blanket dispensation only relates to a prejudicial interest arising from the Councillor's role as a trustee of the registered charity or member or as a member of the Voluntary Organisation and does not confer a dispensation in respect of any other type of prejudicial interest such as a pecuniary prejudicial interest.**

**Voluntary Organisations (howsoever elected, appointed or nominated) on an equal footing with regard to prejudicial interests so as to facilitate the democratic process and assist council business; the Standards Committee being of the view that to do so will not damage public confidence in the conduct of the council's business and therefore the Standards Committee is satisfied that the grounds in Paragraph (d) of Regulation 2 of the Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 are met.**

<p><b>(3) that this blanket dispensation shall continue in force until the next ordinary council elections in 2017 unless before those elections the Standards Committee revokes, amends or alters this dispensation</b></p>	
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**E. Late payment of expenses**

Applications for late payment of expenses were considered from three Members:

Councillor Graham Brown – a claim for mileage submitted on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013 for December 2012.

Councillor John Evans – a claim for broadband expenses submitted on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2013 for May to August 2013.

Councillor Myfanwy Alexander – a claim for mileage submitted on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2013.

The Committee decided to approve these applications (which were the first ones made by these Members) but indicated that they would be unlikely to look favourably on further applications unless there were exceptional circumstances and requested that Members put in place appropriate systems to ensure claims were submitted within time.

<b>RESOLVED</b>	<b>REASON FOR DECISION</b>
<p><b>i) that the payment of the late claim submitted by Cllr G. Brown for December 2012 be approved; and ii) that the payment of the late claim submitted by Councillor J. Evans for broadband from 7 May – 4 September 2013 be approved. iii) that the payment of the late claim submitted by Cllr M. Alexander for travel in January 2013 be approved.</b></p>	<p><b>To reimburse expenses incurred by these Members.</b></p>

**F Member Attendance**

Cllr R. George attended to discuss his attendance for the period December 2011 to May 2012. It was acknowledged that this related to attendance some time ago now but this was the first date that the Committee and Cllr George had been able to agree due to his commitments as an Assembly Member. The Committee noted that Cllr George had attended 65% of meetings in the period May 2012 – March 2013.

Cllr George thanked the Committee for inviting him to attend and explained that his attendance since re-election as both Assembly Member and County

Councillor had not been an issue. He was able to make the meetings of Powys County Council set in the diary although meetings of the County Council called at short notice did pose a problem. When this happened and the date clashed with another commitment he advised that he took a decision regarding which to attend depending on the subject for discussion. At times that would mean attending County Council business and rearranging Assembly business. Cllr George did acknowledge a problem with attending some of the Shire meetings which are always held on a Wednesday when he is in Cardiff on Assembly business unless it is a date when the Assembly is not sitting. On occasion however Shire meetings are cancelled when he could attend.

Cllr George explained that there were benefits of being a County Councillor and Assembly Member with close links between both roles which his constituents and the Council benefitted from.

Cllr George questioned the inclusion of the shire attendance figures when calculating attendance as excluding the shire attendance figures would raise his attendance figures to 80-90%.

The Standards Committee noted the issues raised by Cllr George and also noted that his attendance had risen to above 65% since the period which had triggered the request to meet with him. The Committee hoped that Cllr George would maintain his improved attendance.

#### **G. Independent Remuneration Panel**

The Independent Remuneration Panel has published its Annual Report setting out the range and maximum level of allowances payable for the financial year 2013/14.

Whilst the report makes no recommendations to changing the care allowance from a monthly to annual amount it does allow the following:

*‘that relevant authorities may decide on the maximum number of days for which co-opted members may be paid in any one year. In addition, payments cannot cover time spent on preparation but can include authorised training events, conferences and pre-meetings with officers’*

The Democratic Services Committee will be meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2013 to make a recommendation to Council which will be considered on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

The Independent Remuneration Panel is visiting Powys on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 and the Chair of Standards and all Co-opted Members were invited to meet with the Panel on that date.

#### **H. Meeting Dates**

The following dates for the Standards Committee were confirmed:

3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2013

4<sup>th</sup> September, 2013

4<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

All meetings to commence at 10.00am with the option of training available afterwards.

**Mrs H Rhydderch-Roberts  
Chair**