MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON WEDNESDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2017

PRESENT
Mrs H Rhydderch-Roberts (Chair)

Independent Members: Mrs C Jackson, Mrs J Evans, Mr S Hays and Mrs S Jarman,

County Councillors S McNicholas, K M Roberts-Jones and K S Silk

1.	MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 28th June 2017 subject to the following amendments:

On page 4 three lines from the bottom amend to: 'The Committee~~d~~ also questioned if Councillor Price~~d~~ failed…'

On page 5 under case 8/15/CC amend to: 'Code of Conduct had occurred and ~~imposing~~ *imposed…'*

On page 5 under case 9/15/CC amend to: 'Code of Conduct had occurred and ~~imposing~~ *imposed…'*

Members queried if Councillor K Roberts-Jones and Councillor M Williams had received an apology from Councillor G Price.

Councillor K Roberts-Jones advised that she had not received an apology from Councillor Price.

Councillor Roberts-Jones declared an interest in this matter and left the room

The Chair advised that she had that morning spoken to Councillor M Williams who confirmed he had received no letter, phone call, text, email or verbal apology.

Independent Member H Rhydderch-Roberts declared an interest in this matter and left the room.

Independent Member C Jackson (Vice-Chair) took the Chair for this item.

Members expressed their concern that the APW had taken into account Councillor Price's intention to send letters of apology to Councillors Roberts-Jones and Williams and this had been used in mitigation by the APW and had led to a reduction in sanction from a five month suspension to a three month suspension. When the matter was returned to the Standards Committee they had followed the recommendation from the APW and Councillor Price was suspended for 3 months.

Members were of the view that Councillor Price had shown a lack of respect to the Councillors who were expecting an apology, the APW and themselves by

advising that he intended to send a letter of apology which he did not subsequently send. His inaction may have brought the office of Councillor and the County Council into disrepute.

Members acknowledged that there was a lack of clarity regarding the timescale for sending an apology but that it was to be sent 'by the end of the process'. Councillor Price's suspension has now concluded and therefore the process has now ended. Members felt that sufficient time had elapsed in which an apology should have been made.

Members were of the view that both the APW and the Ombudsman should be advised of Councillor Price's failure to fulfil his offer to apologise to Councillor Roberts-Jones and Williams. Cllr Price will be informed that letters have been sent to the APW and the Ombudsman.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor S Lewis.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

Minutes
Councillor K Roberts-Jones declared an interest in relation to case 6/15/CC as she was the Member who reported this matter to the Ombudsman.

Independent Member H Rhydderch-Roberts declared an interest in relation to case 6/15/CC as she ~~was~~ had not sat on the Hearing for this case due to a personal connection.

Report of the Solicitor to the Council
Councillor K Silk declared an interest in relation to B1 of the Report of the Solicitor to the Council as she was one of the eight Councillors who had been reported to the Ombudsman.

4. REPORT OF THE SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL

The Committee received the report of the Solicitor to the Council (copy filed with signed minutes).

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

A1 Code of Conduct Training

Code of Conduct training had been offered to the four County Councillors and one Independent Member who have yet to receive this training. This training would be offered to the newly appointed Town and Community Council representatives on the Standards Community Sub-Committee.

B County Councillor referrals

The current position regarding existing matters with the Ombudsman is as follows:

04/CC/2016 Ombudsman not investigating
02/CC/2017 Ombudsman originally decided not to investigate – complainant submitted a request for a review of that decision and the Ombudsman has now decided to investigate.
04/CC/2017 Relating to eight Councillors – Ombudsman not investigating

C Dispensations

C1 Applications – County Councillors

No applications for dispensations had been received.

D Ombudsman's Casebook

The Ombudsman had published Code of Conduct Casebooks for the following periods:

- April 2017 – June 2017

A copy of this Casebook was attached at **Appendix A.**

E Annual Letter from the Ombudsman

The Annual Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales was received and noted.

The Solicitor to the Council advised that complaint handling was been taken seriously by himself and the Chief Executive. Previously there had been three systems for recording complaints and the authority are now moving to one system with new software which will help monitoring of complaints. This alone would not improve complaint handling and staff were instructed to give complaints due priority.

F Appointment of Independent Member

The process for appointing an Independent Member had commenced. The post had been advertised in the Brecon and Radnor and the County Times and had also been placed on the front page of the Powys County Council website. To date there have been 35 expressions of interest and 11 applications. The closing date for submitting applications is the 6th

October 2017. Shortlisting will take place on the 23rd October 2017 with Interviews taking place on the 8th November 2017.

The Interview Panel will comprise of the following members:

Mrs S Thompson – High Sheriff
Mrs H Rhydderch-Roberts – Chair of Standards Committee
Mrs J Evans – Independent Member Standards Committee
Councillor S Lewis – County Councillor Member Standards Committee
Community Councillor Hugh Pattrick – Community Councillor Member Standards Committee.

The appointment will be made at the meeting of Powys County Council on the 25th January 2018. The first meeting of the Standards Committee thereafter will be the 7th February 2018.

G. Appointment of Town and Community Council Representatives to the Standards Community Sub-Committee.

RECOMMENDED :	
1. That the Standards Community Sub-Committee comprise the undermentioned 9 Members :- **(i) All 5 Independent (Lay) Members of the main Standards Committee.** **(ii) County Councillor K Roberts-Jones.** **(iii) Town Councillor Hugh Pattrick (Ystradfellte Town Council) – elected by the Town and Community Councils in Brecknockshire.** **(iv) Community Councillor Joy Shearer (Tregynon Community Council) – elected by the Town and Community Councils in Montgomeryshire.** **(v) Town Councillor Margaret Morris (Glasbury Community Council) – elected by the Town and Community Councils in Radnorshire.** **2. That the terms of office of the 5 Independent (Lay) Members be for the remainder of their terms of office as Independent Members on the main Standards Committee.** **3. That the terms of office of the County Councillor and Town and**	**To constitute the Standards Community Sub-Committee.**

Community Councillors be for the maximum term permitted by the existing regulations or by any amending regulations (currently a maximum of five years) or until they cease to be Councillors or resign whichever shall first occur.	

H. Meeting Dates

To note dates of future meetings as follows:

Wednesday 7th February 2018
Wednesday 27th June 2018
Wednesday 3rd October 2018

Mrs H Rhydderch-Roberts (Chair)