

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT HYBRID MEETING - ZOOM - COUNTY HALL ON WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2023

PRESENT: Mr S Hays (Chair)

Independent Members: Mrs C Moore, Mr R Stafford-Tolley and Mr N Steward
County Councillors: B Byanham, WD Powell and L Rijnenberg

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mr J Goolden (Independent Member). The Committee noted that Councillor L Rijnenberg would arrive late, as she was on other Council business.

2. MINUTES

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 as a correct record. Subject to the following amendments the Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 27 January 2023 and 26 June 2023 as correct records: I McIntosh and L Rijnenberg should be deleted from the list of Independent Members, as they are correctly shown in the list of County Councillors.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were received.

4. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND MONITORING OFFICER

The Committee received the report of the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer (copy filed with signed minutes).

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

No update was required.

B. Members attendance

The Committee noted that the Chair and Vice Chair had considered and were satisfied with the response from the one member, who previously had not provided a response regarding their attendance level for the period May 2022 – May 2023. The Committee noted that the member's attendance since May 2023 had been 100%.

County Councillor L Rijnenberg joined the meeting.

C. Referral of Councillors to the Ombudsman Wales

C1. County Councillor Referrals

The Committee thanked officers for providing the information regarding referrals to the Ombudsman Wales in a different format. The current

position regarding matters with the Ombudsman is detailed below. It was noted that the date when the Ombudsman Wales had made its decision in respect of 02/CC/20 should read 17/02/22. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that in respect of 04/CC/21 the report should state that the APW had imposed an 18 month disqualification to former County Councillor Karen Laurie-Parry. The table below contains these corrections.

The abbreviations used in the headings are as follows:

MO – Monitoring Officer

OW – Ombudsman Wales

Stds – Standards Community Sub-Committee

APW - Adjudication Panel for Wales

| Ref | Date OW notified MO of complaint | Date OW advised investigating or not investigating | Date OW's decision | Date considered by Stds | Date considered by APW |
|------------|---|---|------------------------------|---|---|
| 02/CC/20 | 14/09/20 | 19/11/20 investigating | 17/02/22 referred to Stds | 15/07/22, 27/01/23 and 26/06/23 former Councillor T Van-Rees censured | N/A |
| 04/CC/21 | | 21/07/21 investigating | 22/02/23 Referred to APW | | Former Councillor Karen Laurie-Parry Hearing 06/07/23 – imposed 18 month disqualification |
| 03/CC/22 | | 17/04/23 investigating | | | |
| 05/CC/22 | | 28/06/22 investigating | | | |
| 01/CC/23 | | 18/07/23 not investigating | | | |

D. Dispensations

D1. Applications - County Councillors

No applications for dispensation have been received from County Councillors.

E. Appointments to the Standards Community Sub-Committee

The Committee noted the one nomination for the vacancy for the Radnorshire area.

| RESOLVED that: | Reason for decision |
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| <p>1. Town Councillor Stephen Deeks-D’Silva, be appointed to the Standards Community Sub-Committee to represent the Town and Community Councils in Radnorshire.</p> <p>2. the term of office of the Town and Community Councillor 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 a Councillor or resign whichever shall first occur.</p> | <p>To constitute the Standards Community Sub-Committee.</p> |

F. Ombudsman Wales – Our Findings

The Committee noted the Ombudsman Wales - Our Findings. The Committee noted that at a recent meeting of all Welsh Monitoring Officers, the Ombudsman’s office was asked to consider re-instating the “ Casebook”, which was considered to be more helpful.

G. Adjudication Panel for Wales

The Committee noted the two cases highlighted. The Deputy Monitoring Officer highlighted that in respect of the Councillor from Ceredigion Ombudsman Wales had requested the APW to temporarily suspend a Member during its investigation stage of safeguarding allegations. In respect of the former Powys Councillor K Laurie-Parry a significant suspension of 18 months had been imposed by the APW.

H. National Forum for Standards Committees

The Committee received the minutes of the Forum meeting held on 30 June 2023, which the Chair had attended.

I. 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 Committee noted the Welsh Government guidance. The Committee noted that the Monitoring Officers in Wales are working together to revise the standard form used last year by group leaders to report compliance with the new duties.

J. Meeting dates

Meetings in 2024 would take place on the following dates at 2pm:
7 February
12 June

30 October

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| 5. | OBSERVING COUNTY COUNCIL MEETINGS BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS |
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The Committee received the reports on Independent Members observations of the Council meetings on 20 July and 5 October 2023. The Vice Chair advised that this was a useful experience. She advised that she had observed the meeting online but considered that being in the meeting room may give you a better feel of the meeting and issues discussed.

In response to a comment the Committee agreed that the observation reports would be formally shared with the Chair of Council and other committees.

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| 6. | OVERSEEING THE COUNCIL'S RULES AND PROTOCOLS ON ACCOUNTABILITY OF MEMBERS |
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The Committee considered the report on the rules and protocols on the accountability of members, namely Section 21 - Protocol on member/officer relations and Section 25 - Local Resolution Process, of the Constitution. The Committee noted that no complaints had been dealt with under the Local Resolution Process during the period May 2022 – September 2023 inclusive.

| RESOLVED: | Reason for decision |
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| That the report be noted. | To ensure the Committee undertakes a biennial review of the Council's rules and protocols on accountability of members as part of its work programme. |

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| 7. | WORK PROGRAMME |
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The Committee noted the revised Work programme. The Chair had suggested that Observing County Council meetings by Standards Committee members and the Guidance / briefing notes for Group Leaders on emerging topics should become standard items on all agendas, as they were shown in the Work programme for each meeting.

Mr S Hays (Chair)