



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Standards Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Friday, 4 December 2020 at 10.00 am

Present:

Councillor(s)

M B Lewis

Councillor(s)

L G Thomas

Councillor(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Jill Burgess
Philip Crayford

Co-opted Member(s)

Michaela Jones
Mike Lewis

Co-opted Member(s)

Margaret Williams

Officer(s)

Tracey Meredith
Huw Evans
Allison Lowe

Chief Legal Officer / Monitoring Officer
Head of Democratic Services
Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J A Hale

Independent Member(s): Gareth Evans

1 Election of Chair for the Municipal Year 2020-2021.

Resolved that Jill Burgess be elected Chair for the Municipal Year 2020-2021.

Jill Burgess, Chair Presided

2 Election of Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2020-2021.

Resolved that Mike Lewis (Co-Opted Member) be elected Vice Chair for the Municipal Year 2020-2021.

3 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea and following advice from the Monitoring Officer, no interests were declared.

4 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Special Standards Committee held on 31 July 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

5 Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Letter for 2019/2020.

The Monitoring Officer presented a "For Information" report to update the Standards Committee on the Annual Report of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales 2019/20.

In particular, she outlined the statistics in paragraph 2 and stated that Appendix B – the Annual letter 2019/20 addressed to the Leader had been forwarded to Cabinet for their attention.

Resolved that the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Letter for 2019/2020 be noted.

6 Standards Committee Annual Report 2019-2020.

The Monitoring Officer presented the Standards Committee Annual Report 2019-2020 which outlines the work undertaken by the Standards Committee during 2019-2020.

The report would be presented to Council by the Chair of Standards Committee in January 2021.

Resolved that the report proceed to Council in January 2021.

7 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.

The Monitoring Officer presented a "For Information" report to update the Standards Committee on legislation relating to Standards Committee as part of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill.

The relevant information for the Standards Committee was outlined in paragraph 2 of the report.

She stated that our Standards Committee already undertook annual meetings with political Group Leaders, Chairs of Committees and the Chief Executive, as well as it producing an Annual Report. Therefore, it was felt that Swansea was in a strong position in order to meet the requirements of the Bill.

Discussions would commence in early 2021 in order to amend the questions for Group Leaders to ensure that the responses received would be appropriate for the format of future Annual Reporting, as outlined by Welsh Government.

The Monitoring Officer would forward the Guidance from Welsh Government as soon as it was received.

Resolved that the report be noted.

8 Meetings with Political Group Leaders, Chairs of Committee & Chief Executive.

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to outline the themes / issues raised during the Meetings with Political Group Leaders, Chairs of Committee and Chief Executive.

Resolved that the report be noted.

9 Code of Conduct Casebook.

The Monitoring Officer presented a "For Information" report to update the Standards Committee on the Ombudsman's Code of Conduct Casebook.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only one Code of Conduct Casebook had been published since the last meeting.

In reference to the first case outlined in the Casebook i.e. "It is an offence under s106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for a member to vote on setting the rate of council tax when they are themselves in arrears", the Monitoring Officer assured the Committee that processes were in place in Swansea to ensure that Councillors did not breach the Code of Conduct in respect of this rule.

Resolved that the report be noted.

10 Breach of Code of Conduct - Complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

The Monitoring Officer presented a "For Information" report to update the Committee on decisions by the PSOW in relation to allegations that Local Authority and Community and Town Councillors had breached the Code of Conduct.

Resolved that the update be noted.

11 Workplan 2020-2021.

The Monitoring Officer stated that in addition to revising the questions for Group Leaders, Chairs of Committees and Chief Executive, the Standards Committee would need to consider a report updating the Procedure for Hearings for the Standards Committee should any cases be referred to them by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Both of these items would need to be considered by the Standards Committee early in 2021.

Resolved that the Work Plan for 2020-2021 include:

- 1) Revision of questions for Group Leaders, Chairs of Committees and Chief Executive;
- 2) Standards Committee – Procedure for Hearings.

The meeting ended at 10.41 am

Chair