



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Standards Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Friday, 20 January 2023 at 10.00 am

**Present:** Mike Lewis (Chair) Presided

**Councillor(s)**

M B Lewis

**Councillor(s)**

L G Thomas

**Community / Town Council Representative:** Carlo Rabaiotti

**Co-opted Member(s)**

Michaela Jones

Janet Pardue-Wood

**Co-opted Member(s)**

Mark Rees

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): O G James

Independent Member(s): N/A

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**27 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, the following interests were declared:

Councillor L G Thomas declared a personal and prejudicial interest in minute 34 “Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Appeal” and left the meeting prior to the item being discussed.

**28 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 5 October, 7 October and 25 November 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**29 Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Letter.**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to consider the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) letter regarding minor changes to the Code of Complaints Guidance and process. The main points being:

- a. A standalone decision notice outlining the complaint and decision would be shared with Monitoring Officers so they could share with Standards Committees (when appropriate);
- b. A new approach had been trialled in relation to how accused members and Monitoring Officers were notified of a complaint;
- c. The PSOW intended to engage with Chairs via a National Forum for Standards Committees.

**Resolved** that the Standards Committee notes the letter dated 10 November attached at Appendix A outlining the minor changes to the procedure.

### **30 Update on Community / Town Council Training Plans. (Verbal)**

The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee of the new duty under s 67 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which provides that Community Councils must make and publish a training plan setting out its proposals in relation to the provision of training for its community councillors and staff no later than 6 months after the date the duty came into force ie 5 November 2022.

She stated that 19 of the 24 Town / Community Councils had responded to her request for a copy of their training plans. The remaining Councils would be contacted to chase up their responses and a report outlining the details would be presented to a future Standards Committee for consideration.

### **31 Breach of Code of Conduct - Complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). (For Information)**

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

### **32 Workplan 2022-2023.**

The Monitoring Officer presented the Work Plan for 2022-2023.

**Resolved** that:

- 1) A special meeting be arranged in February 2023 to meet with Group Leaders in relation to their new duty;
- 2) Review of Gifts & Hospitality (standardisation of process) be added to the Work Plan.

### **33 Exclusion of the Public.**

The Committee was requested to exclude the public from the meeting during the consideration of the item(s) of business identified in the recommendation to the report on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the exemption paragraph of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, relevant to the item(s) of business set out in the report.

The Committee considered the Public Interest Test in deciding whether to exclude the public from the meeting for the item(s) of business where the Public Interest Test was relevant as set out in the report.

**Resolved** that the public be excluded for the following items of business.

**(Closed Session)**

**34 Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy Appeal.**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to consider whether to allow personal attendance on an appeal under the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy.

**Resolved** that the request for a personal attendance on an appeal under the Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Policy be refused.

The meeting ended at 10.40 am

**Chair**