



City and County of Swansea

## Minutes of the **Standards Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Lilian Hopkin Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Friday, 17 January 2025 at 10.00 am

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

**Councillor(s)**

O G James

**Councillor(s)**

M B Lewis

**Co-opted Member(s)**

Michaela Jones

Janet Pardue-Wood

**Co-opted Member(s)**

Mark Rees

Margaret Williams

**Officer(s)**

Huw Evans

Allison Lowe

Adrian Jeremiah

Head of Democratic Services

Democratic Services Officer

Lead Lawyer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): L G Thomas

Independent Member(s): Mark Parkinson

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

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

**16 Minutes.**

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 11 October 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**17 Review of Standards Committee Hearings Procedure.**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report to further review the Standards Committee Hearings Procedure.

The further amendments suggested at the last meeting were outlined in Appendix 1.

**Resolved** that the Standards Committee Hearings Procedure be approved subject to further minor amendments.

**18 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Consultation - Not informing an Accused Member of a complaint until after it has been assessed.**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which sought a response from the Standards Committee in relation to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' consultation on its practice of not informing an Accused member of a complaint until after it has been assessed.

The Committee discussed the options which resulted in the following comments:

- The Councillors on the Standards Committee agreed that the PSOW should continue its current practice of notifying the Accused Member of a complaint once it has been closed at the assessment stage of its process or when notifying an Accused Member of a decision to start an investigation.

This was due to the undue stress / pressure put on a Councillor whilst waiting for the PSOW to determine whether to investigate a complaint.

- The Co-opted members on the Standards Committee considered that the PSOW should revert to its previous practice of notifying the Accused Member of a complaint once it had been received.

This was due to the fact that:

- an official process had been commenced, therefore the person complained about should be informed.
- for transparency.
- a complainant could inform other members of the community and a Councillor complained about could be informed of a complaint against them via a third party.

**Resolved** that the Head of Democratic Services respond to the consultation outlining the views of the Standards Committee as outlined above.

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

The Head of Democratic Services 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.

**20 Announcement of Chair. (Verbal)**

The Chair reminded the Committee that the term of office for Independent Member Margaret Williams would cease on 31 March 2025 and this would be her penultimate meeting.

The Chair announced that, for personal reasons, he would also be standing down as Independent Member and Chair of the Standards Committee at the end of the current municipal year. He therefore asked the Head of Democratic Services to

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outline the process to appoint two new Statutory Co-opted Independent Members to the Standards Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services outlined the process as follows:

- a) Advert be placed in 2 newspapers at the end of January / beginning of February 2025.
- b) Standards Committee Vacancy Panel would then shortlist & interview suitable candidates.
- c) Report to Council in April or May 2025 to approve any appointment.

The meeting ended at 10.37 am

**Chair**