

CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM 3 - CIVIC CENTRE ON FRIDAY, 10
OCTOBER 2014 AT 9.30 AM**

PRESENT: A Novis (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

Councillor(s)

P Downing
C E Lloyd

L G Thomas

Independent Members:-

J Burgess
J Gomes

M Howells
C Walton

Officers:-

T Meredith - Deputy Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Procurement
H Evans - Head of Democratic Services
S Heys - Principal Lawyer
J Tinker - Democratic Services Coordinator

24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J C Bayliss.

25 **DISCLOSURES OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.**

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

26 **MINUTES.**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 29 August 2014 be accepted as a correct record.

27 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES (FOR INFORMATION).**

**Minute 21 - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Annual Report 2013/14**

The Deputy Head of Legal, Democratic Services & Procurement stated that the Ombudsman had agreed to attend the next meeting of the Standards Committee to be held on 21 November 2014. The Committee discussed matters they would like to raise with the Ombudsman. The following issues were considered to be appropriate :-

- Indemnity Cap and 'Equality of Arms'
- Calvert Case
- The number of complaints
- Merger of Standards Committee with the Community/ Town Council Standards Sub Committee
- Declaration of Interests at meetings
- Future Plans

RESOLVED that these suggested areas of discussion be sent to Standards Members with a view to identifying further areas of discussion and that advance notification be given to the Ombudsman.

28 **MEETING WITH THE CHAIR OF THE SCRUTINY PROGRAMME COMMITTEE.**

The Chair stated that the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee, Councillor A M Day had been invited to the meeting in order to give his views regarding the role of the Standards Committee and how the work undertaken by this Committee could ensure high standards of behaviour. The Chair explained that the role of the Standards Committee was both proactive and reactive. The Chair indicated that views would be sought regarding the following:-

- How you see the role of the Standards Committee?
- Your understanding of this role
- How could you help promote standards and good governance?
- How do you see the future role of the Standards Committee?
- Your views in respect of the Swansea Pledge
- Your views regarding the possible merger of the Standards Committee with the Community/ Town Council Standards Sub – Committee
- Do you think that incorporating the Community Council would/ could bring benefits?

The Chair indicated that the views of the Chief Executive, Political Group Leaders and the Chairs of Regulatory Committees had been received.

Councillor Mike Day gave a summary of the role of the Scrutiny Committee which also included an overview role and how the work of this Committee was divided into 4 key areas:-

- Holding the Executive to account
- Checking on decisions taken to Cabinet
- Using Performance Panels to look at major services
- Using Task and Finish Groups to look at specific areas

Councillor Day saw the role of The Standards Committee as providing a culture for good governance and that part of this role could be by overseeing that the Scrutiny Committee provided this. He suggested that an Annual Event take place to ensure that Scrutiny Committee fulfilled this role. He indicated that standards and good governance were promoted by ensuring that Chairs and Conveners were given appropriate training and that this was non political. Councillor Day explained that all recommendations to Cabinet followed specific guidelines in that Cabinet Members have to respond to recommendations within 3 months whether they totally, partially or disagree with recommendations. It was pointed out that the Scrutiny Programme had Independent Members as well as Councillors that also signed up to the Code of Conduct.

Councillor Day stated that Code of Conduct refresher training would be helpful and if examples of actual cases were given. He stated that in respect of the local dispute process he had no knowledge of this. Councillor Day explained that he hadn't signed the Swansea Pledge as he felt that all these areas were addressed by the code of conduct and in the pledge where it refers to 'Protecting the interests of the Council' he queried who determined this? He considered that the possible merger of the Standards Committee with the Community/ Town Council Standards Sub Committee was sensible and that this would ensure consistency.

Councillor Day also wished to raise the negative response of a Local Service Board in respect of Scrutiny and also the role of the new Cabinet Advisory Boards and his concern that there could be an overlap of work by these Boards and Scrutiny and whether the Chairs of these Cabinet Advisory Committees are distant enough from the Executive to participate in the Scrutiny process. He suggested that there could be an opportunity in future to link Standards Committee with Scrutiny providing that the roles were clearly defined and he suggested that the Standards Committee could ensure that the correct Scrutiny procedures are undertaken.

Councillor Day was thanked for his useful and informative contribution.

29 **STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14.**

The Head of Democratic Services presented a report which set out the work of the Standards Committee and Community/ Town Councils Standards Sub – Committee between June 2013 to May 2014. The views of the Committee were sought before this report was submitted to Council on 4 November 2014.

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2013/2014 be approved.

30 **CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOK (FOR INFORMATION).**

The Code of Conduct Casebook Issue 2 for May 2014 was submitted for information.

RESOLVED that this report be noted.

The meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.

CHAIR