



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT DYFFRYN HOUSE, YSTRAD MYNACH ON MONDAY, 21ST JANUARY 2008 AT 5.00 PM

PRESENT:

M.G. Warrender - Chairman
K.C. Mock - Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

N. Dix and A.J. Pritchard

Community Councillor C. Roberts together with Mrs. J. Roberts as an observer, L.C. Davies, D.R.G. Parry and Mrs. E.J. Rowlands.

Together with:

Monitoring Officer (D. Perkins), Deputy Monitoring Officer (Mrs. G. Williams) and Members Services Manager (J.A. Fairfax).

APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from Councillor L.R. Rees.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman declared an interest (as a complainant) in sub paragraph 2(d) of agenda item 4, Complaints to the Ombudsman, and took no part in the discussion thereon.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th August 2007 (minute nos 1-6, page nos 1-3) were approved and signed as a correct record.

3. GRANTS OF DISPENSATION

No applications had been received.

4. COMPLAINTS TO THE OMBUDSMAN

As indicated in minute no. 1 above the Chairman declared an interest (as a complainant) in sub-paragraph 2(d) of the report of the Monitoring Officer and took no part in the discussion on that particular item.

Details of complaints made to the Ombudsman which had been rejected as not accepted for formal investigation or that he was satisfied with the action taken and of those that remained at the enquiry stage or were awaiting determination were noted. Three additional cases were referred to.

5. REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

Consideration was given to two reports on cases of maladministration found against the Council. Both of these had been issued under Section 21 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 where the Ombudsman considered that public reports were not required and the matters had been satisfactorily resolved.

6. REPORT 1 – AGENDA ITEM 5(a)

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the Ombudsman's Report and actions taken be noted and a representative of the Directorate of Social Services be requested to attend the next meeting to explain what safeguards have been introduced to ensure that the problems experienced in this matter should not be repeated;
- (ii) the report be brought to the attention of the Leader of Council and the Cabinet Member for Social Services and the latter be invited to attend the meeting referred to above.

7. REPORT 2 – AGENDA ITEM 5(b)

RESOLVED that the Ombudsman's Report and actions taken be noted and be brought to the attention of the Leader of Council.

8. FUTURE MEETINGS

Consideration was given to the report of the Monitoring Officer and it was noted that the first of the dates included in the schedule could cause difficulty in one of the Members attending. Notwithstanding this, it was noted that a further "ad hoc" meeting would need to be convened to consider an outstanding report from the Ombudsman.

RESOLVED that a meeting of the Committee be convened during February on a date to be determined by the Chairman and further consideration be given to the schedule of future meetings at that time.

9. FUTURE ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

It was reported that the Monitoring Officer was currently in discussion on establishing a policy for dealing with vexatious complaints and it was agreed that a draft report on this would be submitted to a future meeting.

10. CONSTITUTION

It was noted that officers were preparing an executive summary of the constitution to include a set of frequently asked questions and that this would be made available as part of the induction process following the elections in May. Copies would be sent to Members of this Committee.

11. CODE OF CONDUCT – TRAINING ISSUES

It was reported that all County Borough Members and a large number of Community Councillors had undertaken training on the current code and further training would take place following the elections in May and when the new code is eventually introduced.

12. DISPENSATIONS

It was noted that a standard application form was being developed and would be presented to the Committee in due course.

13. GWENT STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer reported that he had recently attended a meeting of the All Wales Legal Officers Group and that his colleagues had indicated that it would be appropriate to convene a further meeting of the Gwent Standards Committee when the new Code of Conduct had been published.

14. SCRUTINY TRAINING

It was noted that the Council's Scrutiny Coordinator held regularly training courses and it was agreed that the dates of these would be circulated to the Committee.

15. CORRESPONDENCE

The Chairman referred to a letter he had received with a newspaper cutting relating to the activities of a Councillor.

RESOLVED that this be noted.

16. "CLOSED MINDS"

It was agreed that a report on this subject should be made to a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm