



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT DYFFRYN HOUSE, DYFFRYN BUSINESS PARK,
YSTRAD MYNACH, ON WEDNESDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY 2008 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

N. Dix and A.J. Pritchard
R. Woodyatt (for item 4)

Community Councillor C. Roberts
L.C. Davies, D.R.G. Parry and Mrs. E.J. Rowlands

Together with:

Monitoring Officer (D. Perkins), Deputy Monitoring Officer (Mrs. G. Williams), Assistant Director Resourcing and Performance (A. Williams), Housing Strategy and Resources Manager (C. Francis), Section Head, Valuation and Property Information (T. Broadhurst) and Members Services Manager.

APOLOGIES

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2008 (minute nos. 1-16, page nos. 1-3) were approved and signed as a correct record subject to it being noted that in the list of those present it should have read Mrs. J. Rao not Mrs. J. Roberts as indicated.

3. CORRESPONDENCE (MINUTE NO. 15)

The Chairman reported that an apology had been made for certain comments raised at the last meeting and that this had been accepted.

4. GRANTS OF DISPENSATION

No applications had been received.

5. REPORT OF THE OMBUDSMAN (MINUTE NO. 6)

The Committee was reminded of the report considered at the last meeting and that the Cabinet Member for Social Services and a representative of the Directorate of Social Services had been invited to attend this meeting to explain what safeguards had been introduced to ensure that the problems experienced in this case should not be repeated.

The Assistant Director reported that since the receipt of the report a letter apologising for the shortcomings identified and a payment of compensation as recommended had been sent to the complainant. He then gave a brief history of this case and whilst accepting the failings that had been identified by the Ombudsman in his report outlined the measures that had been taken since. These had included the introduction and continuation of a comprehensive staff training programme dealing with Data Protections, issue, the deployment of staff to specifically deal with these issues and the scanning of files for ease of access. All procedures had been strengthened and to exemplify this a copy of an S.A.R. Procedure Chart was circulated. It was also reported that for consistency and continuity in all cases an Exemption Panel had been established to determine what information could be divulged and that this had been identified as an example of Best Practice throughout Wales and had been adopted by other authorities.

RESOLVED that the Assistant Director and Cabinet Member be thanked for their comprehensive explanation and for ensuring that sound and robust processes were now in place which would prevent similar problems arising in the future.

6. CASE OF MALADMINISTRATION FOUND AGAINST THE COUNCIL – “MR. R”

Consideration was given to the report of the Monitoring Officer with a report from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales issued under Section 16 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 which is the form of report which is required to be formally considered by the Council.

In accordance with the relevant legislation, the report would be made available for public inspection and would be published on the Council’s website and in an appropriate newspaper.

The Monitoring Officer outlined the history of this case and the actions that had been taken and a detailed discussion ensued. The Housing Strategy and Resources Manager and Section Head – Valuation and Property Information were present to answer detailed questions.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND to Council that:-

- (i) the Ombudsman’s Report be accepted subject to it being noted that in various paragraphs of the report it should be made clear that references are being made about Council Officers and not Members none of whom had been involved in this matter;
- (ii) the Council apologies to “Mr. R” for the failings identified in the report;
- (iii) the Council pays the sum of £1,700 to the parties detailed in the report and apportioned in the manner set out therein.

7. FUTURE MEETINGS

RESOLVED that the next meeting be held on 14th July 2008.

The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.

CHAIRMAN