



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK ON MONDAY, 25TH JANUARY 2010 AT 1.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

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

Councillors:

J. B. Criddle and L.R. Rees

Messrs L.C. Davies, D.R.G. Parry and Mrs E.J. Rowlands

Together with:

Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer (Mr D. Perkins), Deputy Monitoring Officer (Mrs G. Williams), Public Sector Housing Manager (Mr G. North), Corporate Support Officer (Mrs S. Richards), Committee Services Officer (Mrs R. Thomas)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Community Councillor I. Racz and Scrutiny and Members' Services Manager (J. Jones)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the meeting.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2009 (minute nos. 1-9, on page nos. 1-3), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. COMPLAINTS TO THE OMBUDSMAN

The Chairman thanked officers for chronologically listing the complaints and adding the date of receipt. This was found to be informative and helpful.

Members discussed the number of complaints received and were advised of current trends both in relation to maladministration complaints and complaints alleging breaches of the member code of conduct.

The report on complaints made to the Ombudsman which had been rejected by him as not accepted for formal investigation or that he was satisfied with the action taken, those complaints which remained at the enquiry stage or were awaiting determination and those complaints which were not upheld or upheld in part, were noted.

4. REPORT FROM PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

The Committee considered the report from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding a maladministration complaint made against Caerphilly County Borough Council.

Members acknowledged that an objective and thorough investigation had taken place and sought clarification from officers on a number of points, whilst raising concerns in relation to the timescales involved. Members were asked to note that no money had been recovered from the complainant and the outstanding monies (£91) had been written off.

The Standards Committee noted the Ombudsman's report and agreed no further action was necessary.

5. VERBAL UPDATE ON STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman updated members on the work carried out to date on the committee's annual report.

Members agreed to establish a sub-committee to finalise the report and would present the final document to the group before full Council. It was hoped this could be achieved before the end of the financial year.

OTHER BUSINESS

6. CODE OF CONDUCT – CONSULTATION ON DRAFT GUIDANCE

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had received a copy of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales draft guidance on the Code of Conduct, as part of their consultation exercise.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed the document had been discussed at a recent meeting with the Ombudsman, where concerns had been raised as to its contents. The Chairman echoed these concerns.

It was agreed that copies of the document would be distributed to members of the committee to enable them to respond to the consultation. Members were advised any responses are to be submitted by Friday, 12th February 2010.

7. BREACH OF CONFIDENTIALITY

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee of a recent breach of confidentiality within CCBC following the circulation of exempt papers to a member of the public, who in turn released the paper to the local media.

Letters had been sent to all members to advise them of the seriousness of the incident, and many Councillors had responded that they were upset that this had happened. The responsible person was yet to be established.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

A future meeting of the Committee was requested prior to Council's next meeting on 9th March 2010, on a date to be agreed by the Chairman.

The meeting closed at 2.12 p.m.

CHAIRMAN