



STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN PARK ON THURSDAY, 16TH JUNE 2011 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

L.C. Davies - Chairman
D.R.G. Parry - Vice-Chairman

Councillors J.B. Criddle and L.R. Rees

Mrs. M. Evans and Professor S.M. Griffiths

Together with:

G. Williams (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and D. Phillips (Partnership Support Officer)

Also in attendance for agenda item number 4:

J. Morgans (Customer Services Manager), L. Curtis-Jones (Service Manager) and M. Day (Information and Development Manager)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from D. Perkins (Head of Legal and Governance), Mrs. D. Holdroyd and Community Councillor P. Blight.

1. RESIGNATION - COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR RACZ

It was noted that Community Councillor I. Racz had resigned from the Committee and a new member would be appointed at the Community Council Liaison Sub-Committee in September.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES - 29TH MARCH 2011

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th March 2011 (minute no 1-7, on pages 1-2), be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Standards Committee - Annual Report (minute no. 5)

The Chairman reported that he is currently preparing an Annual Report, which will be circulated to members shortly.

Councillor G.D. Simmonds - (minute no. 7)

It was noted that Councillor Simmonds had returned as an elected member following his suspension.

Standards Committee Conference - Llandrindod Wells - 5th October 2011 (minute no. 6)

Members were urged by the Chairman to attend the next Standards Committee Conference and in view of the travelling distance consideration would be given to paying their travelling expenses.

5. REPORT ON STANDARDS CONFERENCE

The Chairman reported that he had attended the All Wales Conference for Standards and Monitoring Committee Members at Cardiff on 14th October 2010 and a report on this was attached to the agenda. He referred to the informative workshop he had attended and considered that this committee was generally developing in the right direction.

It was suggested however that consideration be given to holding a training workshop for members to discuss ways of developing the role of the Standards Committee and the Deputy Monitoring Officer indicated that she would include this on a future agenda.

It was also suggested that members could come along and observe the meetings of Full Council.

6. UPDATE ON DISPENSATIONS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that a dispensation had been granted to several members of the Caerphilly Town Council in connection with a report before the Town Council relating to the future ownership of the Twyn Community Centre. She went on to explain that there was a procedural error in relation to the dispensation. However this item was not discussed and therefore no decision made. The Clerk of the Town Council has confirmed a similar request may be made in the future.

7. EXEMPT MATTER - REPORT FROM PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Members considered the public interest test certificate from the Proper Officer and concluded that on balance the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information and it was:-

RESOLVED that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting because of the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as identified in paragraph 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8. REPORT FROM PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Consideration was given to the report of the Monitoring Officer with that of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding a maladministration complaint made against Caerphilly County Borough Council.

A detailed discussion took place on the report, which had been issued under Section 16 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005. Members noted that the Ombudsman had upheld the complaint and made several recommendations. Furthermore due to the sensitivity of the circumstances the Ombudsman had given a clear direction under 17(9) of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 that the report should not be published.

A detailed discussion took place and J. Morgans (Customer Services Manager) and L. Curtis-Jones (Service Manager) from the Social Services Directorate were present to explain the case, respond to questions and to outline the actions taken by the Authority to address the recommendations included in the report.

Concern was expressed by officers about the length of time taken to investigate the complaint and they also expressed their reservations about the findings set out in report. It was felt that it was in the best interests for all concerned to accept the findings and move forward.

The recommendations from the Ombudsman were discussed and officers gave an explanation and update on each one.

The Chairman thanked the officers for attending.

RESOLVED that the Ombudsman report including his recommendations be accepted.

The meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.

CHAIRMAN