



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Standards Committee held on Monday, 29 January 2024 at 10.00 am.

Standards Committee Members in attendance:-

Independent Members in attendance

Mr D. Bowen (Chair)

Mr J. Thomas

Mrs H. John

County Borough Councillors in attendance:-

Councillor G Hopkins

Community Councillor

Mr C.A.Thomas

Officers in attendance:-

Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services

22 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, there were no declarations made pertaining to the agenda.

23 APOLOGY

An apology for absence was received from County Borough Councillor A Ellis.

The Committee expressed their best wishes to Councillor Ellis, following recent surgery.

24 MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the 13th November 2023 as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

25 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS - 30th AUGUST 2023 - 22nd JANUARY 2024

The Monitoring Officer provided the Standards Committee with a summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the 'Ombudsman') for the period 30th August 2023 – 22nd January 2024.

As part of the report, a summary of the results of three investigations completed by the Ombudsman in relation to alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct at Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council were also provided. Members

were informed that based on the circumstances of each complaint and Ombudsman findings it was determined not to be in the public interest for any further action to be taken in relation to the complaints.

Members sought clarification in respect of one of the complaints, to which the Monitoring Officer responded.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- i. To consider the contents of the report and provide any comments/feedback on the complaints received by the Ombudsman during the period 30th August 2023 – 22nd January 2024.

26 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - RECENT INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES - 'OUR FINDINGS'

The Monitoring Officer provided Members with the summary of investigation outcomes concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct as published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) on the 'our findings' section of her website for the period 1st August 2023 – 22nd January 2024.

Members were reminded of the actions available to the PSOW following such breaches, before the Monitoring Officer provided detail of the investigation outcomes as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

RESOLVED:

- I. To note and consider the contents of the summary of investigation outcomes concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct, originally published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on the 'our findings' section of her website and attached as Appendix 1 to the report (for the period 1st August 2023 – 22nd January 2024).

27 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S MEMBER - OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

The Monitoring Officer presented his report which sought to review the Council's Member-Officer Relations Protocol, as annexed at Appendix 1 to the report and consider whether any amendments should be made to that protocol.

Members were reminded that at its November Committee meeting, Members reviewed the existing Member-Officer Relations Protocol and requested the Monitoring Officer to draft a revised protocol with potential amendments for review and consideration. Members were also provided with a suite of examples of other Member-Officer Relations Protocols from other local authorities.

The Monitoring Officer referred the Committee to Appendix 1A and 1B, which provided a proposed revised Member-Officer Relations Protocol for Members consideration. Members were advised of the intention to present the revised protocol to the Council's Democratic Services Committee for comment, before it being presented back to Standards Committee to endorse to full Council.

Members commented on the sharing of good practice and that once the protocol was adopted by Full Council, the opportunity to share the protocol across the

County Boroughs Town and Community Councils.

Committee **RESOLVED**:

- i. To review the amended version of the Council's existing Member - Officer Relations Protocol, attached at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. To provide comments or proposed changes to the amended version of the Council's existing Member-Officer Relations Protocol; and
- iii. To refer the revised Member-Officer Relations Protocol to the Council's Democratic Services Committee for review and comment and agree to receive any feedback from that Committee at the next Standards Committee meeting in April 2024.

28 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK (RICHARD PENN REPORT)

For information, the Monitoring Officer provided details of the summary of responses to the consultation on the recommendations of the Independent Review of the Ethical Standards Framework (Richard Penn report).

A Member commented on the general resource pressures by different organisations and referenced such pressure in respect of the Ombudsman. The Monitoring Officer referenced the use of the Local Resolution Protocol to reduce the escalation of complaints to the Ombudsman in the first instance and spoke of the importance of the standards committee and its role in helping to reduce the number of complaints taken to the Ombudsman.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the information contained within.

This meeting closed at 10.35 am

**D . Bowen
CHAIR.**