



MINUTES OF MEETING

STANDARDS MEETING

FRIDAY, 15TH NOVEMBER, 2019

PRESENT: J Morgan (**In the Chair**)
I Cathrew (**Vice Chair**)

Councillors:
G Richards and C Tovey

Independent Members:
D McCarthy and M Veale

Community Council Representative:
(none)

Officers:
S Jones (Senior Solicitor)
G McPherson (Solicitor)
K Reddy (Democratic Services Officer)

ITEM NO.	AGENDA MATTER	DECISION
486	Apologies for absence	Apologies for absence received from Councillor Julian Amos, Anne Morgan (Independent Member) and Helen Thomas (Bedlinog Community Council Representative).
487	Declarations of Interest	No declarations of interest were made.
488	The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' Annual Letter 2018/19	Simon Jones and Gavin McPherson referred to the Ombudsman Annual Letter for 2018/19 which provides a summary of the work of the Ombudsman and details of the data in respect of referrals made to that service, and advised that this year's figures are supportive for Merthyr Tydfil.

		<p>Discussion ensued on the number of matters that were resolved in that year together with the level of complaints in neighbouring Authorities. The process of the Ombudsman liaising with this Authority on complaints and also the complaints sent directly to the Ombudsman were also discussed in detail.</p> <p>Simon Jones gave members an overview of the workshop held by the Ombudsman, which highlighted the powers that have been put in place to improve access to the Ombudsman.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members note the information contained within the Ombudsman's Annual Letter. • An information report be scheduled to a future Full Council meeting to report on the outcomes in the Ombudsman's Annual Letter.
489	Whistleblowing	<p>Simon Jones referred members to the Whistleblowing report and confirmed that there are currently no live whistleblowing complaints.</p> <p>In ensuring that staff are reminded of the process he advised the Committee that Carys Kennedy will be arranging with the Authority's Corporate Communications Department to send an e-mail and questionnaire to all staff and that a programme of awareness raising will need to be agreed by the Authority's Corporate Management Team</p> <p>Following discussion it was RESOLVED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members receive a copy of the questionnaire and correspondence sent out to all staff, for their information. • A publicity exercise and review of the Whistleblowing Policy be considered on an annual basis, if required. • Clarification on whether new members of staff are made aware of the Whistleblowing Policy. • Carys Kennedy to report back to a future Committee following Corporate Management Team's consideration and agreement of an awareness raising plan.
490	Preparation for a Standards Hearing	<p>Simon Jones referred to a complaint which could not be resolved internally and, as such, has been referred to this Standards Committee for determination on whether there is a breach of conduct.</p> <p>He then took members through the brief details of the complaint and the procedure of how this Committee will</p>

		<p>deal with the complaint via a Standards Hearing. With the consent of the Chair, it was agreed that this Hearing will be considered under Stage 3 of the Authority's Local Dispute Policy.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was further RESOLVED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Standards Hearing be held on Friday, 24th January 2020 at 10.00 am. • Statements from the Complainant, Complainee and Witness to be collated and formed part of the Standards Hearing Agenda for the 24th January 2020.
491	Date of next meeting	<p>In addition to the Standards Hearing on the 24th January 2020, it was agreed that, as part of the work programme, the date of the next scheduled meeting will be Friday, 27th March 2020 at 2.00 pm at the Civic Centre.</p>
492	Any other item deemed urgent by the Chair	<p>The Chair confirmed that the Annual Report on the work of the Standards Committee was ratified by the Full Council meeting on the 11th September 2019 (Minute Number 316). It was agreed that Karen Reddy will e-mail a copy to members for their information.</p> <p>Karen Reddy to e-mail all Councillors to remind them of the process of applying for a dispensation to the Standards Committee.</p>