

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Civic Centre, Neath)

Members Present:

15th March, 2013

Chairman: Mr.G.T.Pullen

Vice Chairman: Mrs.J.E.Howells

Independent Member: Mrs.B.Richards

NPTCBC Members: Councillors S.Jones and A.L.Thomas

**Community
Committee Member:** Councillor M.Evans

Officers in Attendance: D.Michael and Mrs.T.Davies

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the meeting of the 29th January 2013, be confirmed as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:-

Members present should include Community Committee Member, Councillor Mrs.S.Davies and the reference to Independent Member, C.L.James should read C.L.Jones.

Report of the Head of Legal Services

2. STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS

Members received an overview of the circulated report, which contained a letter from the Welsh Government on the Local Government Ethical Framework. Members were required to make decisions in relation to the letter.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) that the issue of a protocol from the local resolution of Member against Member complaints be the subject of a future report, and that the Monitoring Officer obtain precedents from other Local Authorities;
 - (b) that the indemnity in respect of the cost of defending a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct be subject to a ceiling of £20,000, as detailed and agreed at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Board on 7th March 2013, be noted;
 - (c) that the proposed changes in the Code of Conduct, as proposed by the Welsh Government and detailed in the circulated report, be noted;
 - (d) that the standing register of Members' interests maintained under existing legislation be made available on the Council's website.

3. **URGENT ITEM**

Because of the need to deal now with the matter contained in Minute No. 4 below, the Chairman agreed that this could be raised at today's meeting as an urgent item pursuant to Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reason:

Due to the time element.

Urgent Report of the Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer

4. **GRANT OF DISPENSATIONS UNDER SECTION 81(4) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**

Members received an overview of the urgent tabled report, concerning requests of dispensations regarding the Strategic Schools Improvement Programme and proposed changes to school transport arrangements. Members noted that following the production of the report, an extra dispensation request had been received from Councillor H.N.James, to speak only on the subject of school transport, as he is a school governor. Members discussed the nature of Councillor M.L. James' interest and felt this should be looked at separately to the Members who were school governors and Members with school age children and grand children, as he is a Taxi Proprietor. It was felt by the Committee that Councillor A.J.Taylor (who had requested a dispensation to speak and vote) should be granted the same dispensation as other Members with school age children.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) that the list of Member dispensations, as given as Appendix 1 hereto, be approved in the circumstances set out in Regulation 2(d) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001, and that the Members listed in that Appendix be granted dispensation to speak at meetings of the Council and its Committees, in respect of the matters given in the circulated urgent report, subject to the terms and conditions set out in the report. These dispensations to run to the Standards Committee meeting which follows the Annual Meeting of Council 2013;
 - (b) that given the nature of his interest, Councillor M.L.James not be granted dispensation to speak or vote at meetings of the Council and its Committees, in respect of the matters given in the circulated report.

Private Report of the Head of Legal Services/Monitoring Officer

5. **REFERRAL FROM THE OMBUDSMAN**

The private circulated report contained details of an investigation by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in relation to a complaint of the breach of the Code of Conduct by a Neath Port Talbot County Borough Councillor. The report also set out the adopted procedures in respect of Code of Conduct Hearings.

The Committee discussed the circulated private report in depth.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) that there was evidence of a breach of the Code;
 - (b) that the Monitoring Officer explore whether an issue of fact could be agreed between the Ombudsman and the Councillor concerned;
 - (c) the complaint be brought before a special meeting of the Standards Committee, the date to be determined by the Monitoring Officer.

CHAIRMAN

APPENDIX 1

**Schedule of Application
for Dispensations**

Name	Nature of Interest	Issue	Speak or Vote
Cllr. Sandra Miller	Governor – Grandchildren of school age	School Improvement/ School Transport	Speak only
Cllr. John Miller	Governor – Grandchildren of school age	School Improvement/ School Transport	Speak only
Cllr. Sheila Penry	Governor – Grandchildren of school age	School Improvement/ School Transport	Speak only
Cllr. Arthur Davies	School Governor	School Improvement/ School Transport	Speak only
Cllr. John Rogers	Grandchildren of school/college age	School Transport	Speak only
Cllr. Anthony J. Taylor	Children of school age	School Improvement	Speak only
Cllr. Alan Carter	School Governor	School Improvement/ School Transport	Speak only
Cllr. Eirion Richards	School Governor	School Improvement/ School Transport	Speak only

