

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held
at County Hall, The Rhadyr, Usk, NP15 1GA on Monday, 20th June, 2016 at 10.30 am**

PRESENT: Mrs. P. Reeves (Chair)

County Councillors: D. Edwards

INDEPENDENT REPRESENTATIVES:

Mr. T. Auld, Mr. M. Sutton and Mr G. Preece

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

Mrs. I. Cameron

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Robert Tranter
Nicola Perry

Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors D. Evans and P. Jordan

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2016 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Adjudication Panel for Wales Report

We received a report in order to advise members of the Standards Committee of a recent decision of the Adjudication Panel for Wales in respect of Councillor Paul Cawley of Magor with Undy Community Council.

Members were asked to note the contents of the report and the attached decision report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales found at appendix 1 to the report.

During discussion we noted the following points:

It was useful to see how the Adjudication Panel operates, and important for the panel to hear such cases to ensure public confidence. The decision report was considered a good case study, and useful exercise for future training requirements

We noted that the Adjudication Panel could suspend for a period of up to twelve months, and also disqualify a member for up to five years.

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We were assured that Councillor Cawley had received training, even though there had been a clear breach of the Code of Conduct, and a lack of understanding of the fundamental nature of the Code.

The Adjudication Panel had emphasised that Councillor Cawley had declared an interest in the private part of the meeting, rather than a declaration in the public meeting, again demonstrating a misunderstanding of the Code. We noted that it is Members personal responsibility to follow the Code of Conduct.

It was recommended that attention of County Councillors and Community Councillors be drawn to the decision made by the Adjudication Panel, being that after hearing representations from Cllr Cawley and the Ombudsman, the Case Tribunal decided to suspend Cllr Cawley from acting as a member of the Magor with Undy Community Council for a period of 3 months. Cllr Cawley did not appeal the decision.

4. Code of Conduct Guidance

The Monitoring Officer presented two reports in order to advise members of the Standards Committee of the latest draft guidance produced by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ("the Ombudsman") to help elected members in their understanding of the Code of Conduct for Members.

Members were recommended to note the contents of the draft guidance.

The guidance has been produced to take account of the recent amendments to the Code of Conduct that were reported to the last meeting of Standards Committee and adopted by the council on 12th May 2016. Members received two versions of the guidance, one for county councils and the other for town and community councils.

The guidance documents were considered useful and very readable, using helpful examples to explain definitions and terms in the Code.

We were advised that both copies could be accessed via the intranet. A copy would be emailed to 43 elected members, and Town and Community clerks would also be made aware of the guidance.

It was agreed that the issue of the guidance is timely with the run up to the next election, ensuring members are fully aware of the Code of Conduct.

5. To note the time and date of the next meeting as Monday 19th September 2016 at 9.30

We agreed the date and time of the next meeting as Monday 19th September 2016 at 9.30am.

The meeting ended at 11.20 am