

# MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 10th June, 2024 at 10.00 am

**PRESENT:** County Councillors: Frances Taylor, Fay Bromfield,  
Catherine Fookes

Independent Members: R. Price, John, R Williams-Flew, P. Easy,  
M. Gibson

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Nicola Perry Senior Democracy Officer  
James Williams Chief Officer Law & Governance

### **APOLOGIES:**

Councillors A. Blackmore

#### **1. Election of Chair**

Peter Easy was elected as Chair of Standards Committee for the year 2024/25.

#### **2. Election of Vice Chair**

Rhian Williams Flew was elected as Vice Chair of Standards Committee for the year 2024/25.

#### **3. Declarations of Interest**

County Councillor Frances Taylor declared a prejudicial interest in relation to item 8 and agreed to leave the meeting for the duration of that item.

#### **4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were accepted as an accurate record.

*The Committee acknowledged the work of the previous Chair of the Standards Committee, Richard Stow, and his long service on the Committee.*

#### **5. Local Resolution Protocol**

Deferred.

#### **6. Planning Code of Practice**

The Chief Officer for Law and Governance, and Monitoring Officer presented the report to provide an update to Standards Committee in relation to the Planning Code of Practice.

It was explained that the Planning Code of Practice had been updated and approved by Planning Committee. Next steps, to go to Democratic Services Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024, be added to the Constitution, and be approved at Full Council in October 2024.

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**The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation that Standards Committee notes the position in relation to the Planning Code of Practice, attached at Appendix 1.**

## **7. Adoption of Procedure for dealing with referrals from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

The report was presented for the Standards Committee to adopt a procedure to deal with investigation reports referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

**The Committee resolved to accept the recommendation that the Standards Committee adopts the procedure for dealing with referrals from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, attached to the report as Appendix 1.**

## **8. PSOW Decision Notices**

The report was presented to provide the Standards Committee with the decision notices issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ("the Ombudsman") following complaints against elected members in respect of breaches of the Member Code of Conduct.

**The Committee resolved to note the contents of this report and the decision notices attached at Appendices 1-3.**

## **9. Referral from the PSOW**

The report was presented for the Standards Committee to consider a referral from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and to decide arrangements for it to be dealt with under its adopted procedure.

**The Committee resolved to establish a Panel to deal with the Ombudsman referral in accordance with its adopted procedure; and instruct the Monitoring Officer to make arrangements for the hearing of the complaint.**

**It was noted the Michael John must be a member of the panel. Marion Gibson, Ruth Price and Andrew Blakemore were happy to be selected for the panel.**

## **10. Verbal Update: PSOW Independent Review**

The Ombudsman had announced there would be an independent investigation following the suspension and resignation of a senior member of staff.

Dr Melissa McCulloch has been appointed to conduct the review. The terms of reference were shared with the Monitoring Officer Group and Senedd Finance Committee prior to being finalised.

The terms of reference were highlighted as:

1. To review the code of conduct, processes and delegations to ensure they are appropriate, fair and impartial and free from political bias.
2. To review the decisions taken by the former team leader and her team, between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022.
3. To review cases, where the former team leader was the case owner, which were investigated and closed without reference to a Standards Committee.

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4. To establish whether there is evidence that the team expressed personal views on political matters.
5. To make recommendations which Dr. McCulloch considers appropriate.

A final report will be shared with Standards Committee in due course.

#### **11. Next Meeting 16th September 2024**

Noted.

**The meeting ended at 11:00am**