

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

24 February 2021

Present: Mr John Daniels (Chair)
Mr P Davies, Councillor R Owens, Councillor P Morgan, Dr R Plummer, Ms W Taylor and Mrs V Tomlinson.

(Virtual Meeting: 10.00am – 10.25am)

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Election of Deputy Chair

It was **RESOLVED** that Mrs V Tomlinson be appointed Deputy Chair for the duration of her term of office i.e. until 22 September 2024.

3. Disclosures of interest

There were no disclosures of interest.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 were presented for confirmation and authentication.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2020 be confirmed and authenticated.

5. Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer 2020/21

The report began by outlining the terms of reference of the Committee, and it was noted at the meeting that there was a typographical error in paragraph (d) which should have referred to Section 71 (2) (b). The report went on to advise that the Authority had continued to hold its meetings virtually during the last year, as allowed by the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Meetings) (Wales) Regulations 2020. These Regulations would cease to have effect on 30 April 2021, however the Monitoring Officer was able to confirm that meetings could continue to be held virtually as this provision had been included in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 which had received Royal assent on 20 January 2021.

The report went on to outline the training that had been provided by the Monitoring Officer over the course of the year and also referred to a number of complaints that he had investigated. Two of the complainants had not been satisfied with the response and had escalated their complaints to the Ombudsman who had found no evidence of breaches of the Code of Conduct or flaws in the way the meetings had been conducted and therefore no further action had been necessary.



It was noted that there had been no referrals from the Ombudsman to instigate an investigation by the Standards Committee of a possible breach of the Code of Conduct, no Member to Member complaints had been received and no applications for dispensations had been made by Members of the Authority. Training for the Committee on dealing with applications for dispensation would be provided following the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer noted that it was possible that the Code of Conduct would be reviewed in the coming year, following a review in England, and if so further training would be provided.

The report concluded by highlighting the Ombudsman's Annual Report and quarterly casebooks for Members' information and interest. It was noted that most complaints relating to breaches of the Code of Conduct concerned Town and Community Councils and in particular the behaviour of their councillors. Pleasingly in the 2019/20 period of the report there had been no complaints relating to Members of National Park Authorities.

One Member pointed out that he attended a lot of Community Council meetings, and he felt that in general they did an excellent job, particularly as they didn't have any professional support.

Thanking the officer for a useful report, another Member asked whether Members had anything to learn from the complaints that had been made and the Monitoring Officer replied that as the complaints had been dismissed, the learning was limited, however he agreed to consider the best way to share any relevant points and ensure these were included in future induction programmes.

NOTED.

