

Standards Committee

12 February 2025

Present (in Person):

Mr J Daniels, Mr J Hogg and Dr R Plummer.

Present (Remotely):

Councillor M James joined the meeting for item 3, election of the Deputy Chair.

Officers in Attendance

Michael Kent (Monitoring Officer), Tegryn Jones (Chief Executive), Caroline Llewellyn (Minutes)

(Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12.30pm – 13.15pm)

1. Personal Matters

The Chair welcomed John Hogg to his first meeting of the Committee and also noted that Mrs Wendy Taylor had resigned from the Committee and he thanked her for her contribution. Reference was also made to the sad passing of Councillor Peter Morgan, a former Member of the Committee, who had died during the last year and thanks were given for all he had contributed.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Davies and Councillor Dr S Hancock MBE.

3. Election of Deputy Chair

On the proposal of Dr Plummer, seconded by Councillor James, Mr John Hogg was elected as the Deputy Chair.

4. Disclosures of interest

Dr R Plummer made a general personal declaration as an NRW Board Member.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2024 were presented for confirmation and signature.

On the proposal of Dr Plummer, seconded by Mr Daniels it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2024 be confirmed and signed.



6. Action Log

It was noted that the training had been very useful and officers were asked to ensure that it was provided to new Members of the Committee as they were appointed.

5. Verbal update on the meeting of the Standards Committees' Chairs' Forum held on the 27 January 2025

The Chair thanked Dr Plummer for attending the meeting on his behalf. She reported that presentations had been made on the Ethical Framework review and Standards Committee annual reporting arrangements, the McCulloch report (Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)) and the consultation on whether the PSOW should consider reverting to the previous practice of notifying the accused Member of the complaint once it was received, adjudication panel hearings and the experience of others on Standards Committee Hearings, and finally the National Standards Conference. There had also been a discussion regarding the remuneration of co-opted Members. She noted that it had been an interesting meeting and that the minutes of the meeting would be circulated in due course.

6. Annual Report of the Monitoring Officer 2024/25

The Chair welcomed the Monitoring Officer who presented his annual report which featured information regarding the terms of reference for the Committee, Code of Conduct Training, Complaints, Trends, Local Resolution Protocol (LRP), Dispensations, the Unacceptable Actions by Complainants Policy, the Annual Report of the Ombudsman and the consultation by the Ombudsman into the Operation of the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer advised that Code of Conduct training would be provided to the Authority Members in the coming months.

With regard to the Judicial Review referred to in his report under the heading of complaints, the Monitoring Officer reported that leave to proceed had been granted on two of the five grounds, it was likely that the Authority would continue to oppose the action. He also noted that the Authority had submitted a response to the Ombudsman's consultation directly to Welsh Government.

There was some discussion regarding the nature of the complaints made to the Ombudsman and whether there were any lessons to be learned from these. Officers advised that the cases were all different, however some had related to planning applications where the applicants had been unhappy with the decision reached and questioned whether these were in fact complaints that should have been investigated. Noting that in the training that morning it had been suggested that the Ombudsman was dealing with increasing numbers of complaints, Members suggested that



some of these could be referred back to Standards Committees for them to deal with at a local level in order to ease the burden.

On the proposal of Dr Plummer, seconded by Councillor James it was **RESOLVED** that;

- i) the report be noted;
- ii) the report be agreed as the basis for the Standards Committee's Annual Report to be submitted to the National Park Authority in accordance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

