

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMUNITY SUB-COMMITTEE,  
HELD AT COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS ON WEDNESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> JULY 2013**

**PRESENT:** Mrs H. Rhydderch-Roberts (Chair)  
Mrs J. Evans, Mrs M. Harris, Mrs S. Jarman, Mr R. Miller, Community Councillors Ms C. Evans, H. Pattrick and D. Pugh and County Councillor G. Williams.

**Observers:** County Councillor P. Medicott.

**Officers in Attendance:** C. Pinney (Solicitor to the Council), W. Richards (Scrutiny Manager and Interim Head of Democratic Services), Ms S. Tamboo (Solicitor – Corporate) and Mrs E Patterson (Scrutiny Officer).

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>STCS9 - 2013</b>
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No apologies for absence were received.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>	<b>STCS10 - 2013</b>
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013 as a correct record subject.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	<b>STCS11 – 2013</b>
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No declarations of interest were received.

<b>3.</b>	<b>REPORT OF THE SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL</b>	<b>STCS12 - 2013</b>
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The Sub-Committee received the report of the Solicitor to the Council. (Copy filed with signed minutes)

**A. Referral of Councillors to the Public Services Ombudsman.**

**A1. Town and Community Councillor Referrals.**

The Sub-Committee were advised that complaint 18/12/TCC had been referred by the Ombudsman to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for determination. This was an unusual case as the person to which the complaint relates is no longer a Councillor.

The Sub-Committee noted that the following complaints remain under investigation by the Ombudsman:

01/13/TCC – under investigation

The Ombudsman has decided that no formal action should be taken in respect of 02/13/TCC but that the Councillor was reminded of their obligations under the Code and urged to seek advice from their Chair or the Monitoring Officer should any clarification be required.

Since the last meeting a further complaint 03/13/TCC has been received and the Ombudsman has decided that this will not be investigated.

**B. Dispensations.**

No applications for dispensation were received.

**C Other Standards Issues**

**C1.1 Social Networking**

The WLGA provided training for Members on blogging and social networking on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2013. This clashed with the Standards Conference which meant that Members of the Standards were unable to attend.

**C1.2 Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill**

The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill was approved on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and will be enacted on receipt of Royal Assent.

It includes the following provisions:

- Requiring an online Register of Members' interests
- Enabling Joint Standards Committees
- Enabling a Standards Committee to refer a report or recommendation by its Monitoring Officer to another Standards Committee

A further report would be brought to the Standards Committee regarding the provisions relating to Town and Community Councils.

The merits of Joint Standards Committees were briefly discussed with the following comments made:

- Travel costs would increase
- Local democracy would decrease
- Benefits of more Councillors from a different authority being able to sit on a hearing regarding a Member of one authority.
- Joint working could be undertaken with Ceredigion as Powys' natural partner under the collaboration footprint. It could also be undertaken with Brecon Beacons National Park.

Local Resolution Panels have been introduced in some authorities using different models. Swansea and Torfaen Councils made presentations to the Standards Conference on their experience of Local Resolution Panels. The Lawyers in Local Government Group

A further report would be brought to the Standards Committee once the Explanatory Notes to the Bill had been published.

Indemnity Cap

The Ombudsman is keen for Local Authorities to set a voluntary cap on Indemnity Costs of £20,000. The Solicitor to the Council advised that the Lawyers in Local Government Group are looking at this and the Committee will be advised of any recommendations made by the Group.

### **C1.3 Standards and Standards Community Sub-Committee**

It was confirmed that the current custom and practice of inviting Members of the Standards Committee who are not Members of the Standards Community Sub-Committee to sit as Observers at the meeting of the Standards Community Sub-Committee (and vice versa) should continue on the grounds that many of the issues on the agenda for both committees were the same and a single discussion including all Members would be effective use of time. In addition there were advantages of all Members taking part in a debate for example on dispensations for County Councillors and Town and Community Councillors to ensure consistency of decision making. It was confirmed that although joint discussions were beneficial any decision making would be the sole responsibility of the Committee to which the matter related and that those eligible to vote would be confirmed at the appropriate time.

It was further confirmed that if either the Standards Committee or Standards Community Sub-Committee had a confidential item to consider then only the Members of the particular committee would consider that item.

### **C1.4 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – Annual Report 2012-13**

The Annual Report has been published on-line at [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk).

### **D. Meeting Dates.**

The following dates for the Sub-Committee were confirmed:

4<sup>th</sup> September, 2013

4<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

All meetings to commence at 10.00am with the option of training available afterwards.

**Mrs H Rhydderch-Roberts  
Chair**