

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: R. Hendicott (Chair and Independent Member); Councillor C.P. Franks; G. Olphert (Independent Member); and Councillor P. Summers (Town and Community Council Representative).

Also present: Councillor E. Williams (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health, Llantwit First Independents Group Leader).

### 326 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing.”

The Chair also advised of their intention to review the format of Standards Committee meetings going forward and welcomed any comments from Committee Members on the arrangements and methods used to hold meetings to date. No decisions had been taken on the matter to date and future meeting arrangements would be considered alongside the upcoming review of the Vale of Glamorgan Council Multi-Location Meetings Policy.

### 327 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from Councillors R.M. Birch\* and J.E. Charles\*; and G. Watkins (Vice-Chair and Independent Member) and R. Alexander (Independent Member).

\* The Members were available and willing to attend the meeting but kindly withdrew to ensure the meeting remained quorate and was able to proceed.

### 328 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2025 be approved as a correct record.

### 329 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

## 330 APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION (MO / HLDS) –

The purpose of the report was to consider applications for dispensation received from Councillors B. Loveluck-Edwards (x 2) and W.A. Hennessy (x 1) of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the dispensation applications included within the report were previously presented to Committee at its May 2025 meeting. For completeness, and to ensure clarity of decision making, the Monitoring Officer had requested that the applications be brought back before Committee for consideration.

Following careful consideration of the applications and having regard to the Monitoring Officer 's advice above it was

RESOLVED – T H A T the dispensations as set out in the schedule below be granted up to the date of the next Local Government Elections:

<b>Member Requesting Dispensation</b>	<b>Paragraph(s) of the Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 Under Which Dispensation is Granted and as applied for</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards	(d)	Dispensation to speak only, in meetings where issues are raised at meetings of the Council in respect of the Vale of Glamorgan Council 'Visit The Vale' Service.
Councillor B. Loveluck-Edwards	(d), (f) and (g)	To speak, vote and remain in Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings when general matters relating to the Vale of Glamorgan Coastlands Foodbank are raised, and to speak only when matters regarding financial remuneration for Mr Loveluck-Edwards are to be considered at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings in respect of the Vale of Glamorgan Coastlands Foodbank..

Councillor W.A. Hennessy	(d), (f) and (g)	Dispensation to speak, vote and remain in meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council meetings when matters relating to the organisation SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) are to be discussed.
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#### Reason for decision

Having regard to the applications submitted and discussions held at the meeting.

#### 331 OBSERVATIONS BY INDEPENDENT MEMBERS OF VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL AND TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS (MO / HLDS) –

The report advised that one of the roles of the Standards Committee was to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-Opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives of the Council. To this end, the Committee had agreed that observation visits to Town and Community Councils (TCCs) as well as Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings be undertaken by Independent Members, with such observations being reported back to the Standards Committee.

The Chair advised that, since the 17<sup>th</sup> July Committee Meeting, four observations had taken place as follows:

Member	Council	Meeting Date
Hendicott	Llantwit Major Town Council	24 <sup>th</sup> July, 2025
Alexander	St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council	12 <sup>th</sup> August, 2025
Hendicott	St. Athan Community Council	2 <sup>nd</sup> September, 2025
Hendicott	Penarth Town Council	11 <sup>th</sup> September, 2025

with Appendix 1 of the report setting out progress to date in relation to arranging observations.

In Mr. Alexander's absence, the Chair advised that Mr. Alexander's verbal update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chair went on to advise the Committee of his findings / comments in relation to the three TCC observations that he had undertaken. The Committee subsequently discussed the following points:

<p>Quality of sound at meetings held remotely - whether members of the public are able to hear proceedings adequately.</p>	<p>Councillor Summers noted that many of the smaller TCCs would struggle with meeting the technical requirements involved in holding remote meetings due to financial, and therefore infrastructure, constraints. They also advised that TCCs in the western area of the Vale of Glamorgan were working as a collective group to share expertise and resources, and therefore prior notice of an observation was beneficial to ensure that adequate arrangements could be made in advance.</p> <p>Councillor Franks echoed Councillor Summers' comments in relation to TCCs struggling with technical requirements and added that Councils would also be dealing with various degrees of digital literacy and comfort across its Council Members.</p>
<p>Reasoning behind Declarations of Interest provided – would a member of the public understand the context of declarations made and the reasons why Members of the Council withdraw from a meeting.</p>	<p>Councillor Franks noted that in the context of a smaller TCC meeting, most meeting attendees would already be aware of the nature of any interests related to local matters given that they would be local residents themselves. Therefore, the important requirement for the relevant Clerk would be ensuring that the individual who had declared had left the meeting room when required to do so.</p> <p>To which, the Chair added that it was important for a lay person/observer to also understand the reasoning who may not have local knowledge.</p>
<p>Post Meeting Discussion between the Standards Committee Independent Member and Council Chair and/or Clerk – is this helpful?</p>	<p>Councillor Summers advised that he had spoken with several TCC Representatives who had advised that the Independent Member Observations had been very useful to take part in. They also suggested that the post-meeting discussion would also be a good opportunity for the Council to discuss other contact opportunities with the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The post-meeting would allow the TCC to</p>

	<p>share how it felt its working relationship with the Vale of Glamorgan Council was going and to open up communications more generally with Vale of Glamorgan Elected Members and Officers that, in turn, would support work taking place via the Vale of Glamorgan Community Liaison Committee. Councillor Summers also noted the positive recognition by external authorities for the working relationships evident between the Vale Council and its TCCs.</p> <p>The Chair then added that they undertook post observation meetings as standard practice and encouraged all Independent Members to engage with the good practice where possible.</p> <p>Councillor Franks then noted that a short, 10 minute post-meeting would be most productive after what may be a long TCC meeting. They also highlighted that TCCs also invite other statutory organisations to their meetings, such as Fire Service and Police, and therefore suggested that it may be helpful to include other parties in the post observation meeting process.</p>
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In conclusion, the Monitoring Officer reassured the Committee that good practice following observation visits was shared and discussed at the six-monthly meetings with Clerks, which also afforded the opportunity to raise any generic issues of concern and to offer advice and guidance. Feedback was also provided to Chairs of TCCs on a 1-2-1 basis by the Monitoring Officer following observations where necessary.

The Monitoring Officer also advised of a recent consultation from Welsh Government, relating to its statutory guidance for meeting governance as per the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which considered requirements for mandatory code of conduct training and remote meeting functionality for TCCs.

The Monitoring Officer also advised of their recent attendance at a Welsh Government Workshop where the Vale of Glamorgan observation process was referred to and was welcomed with interest by attendees.

In response to a comment raised by the Chair in relation to public speaking at their Penarth Town Council observation, the Monitoring Officer advised that Penarth Town

Council did have provision within their standing orders for public speaking however, permission to address was decided upon by the Council.

With no further comments or questions, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the reports and the feedback received in respect of observation visits undertaken by Independent Members of the Standards Committee be noted.

(2) T H A T where matters following observation visits are highlighted by Independent Members as issues requiring further attention or further visits and / or requests are made by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services for visits to be undertaken, these be arranged as and when required.

#### Reasons for decisions

(1) Having regard to the observations undertaken and the role of the Standards Committee.

(2) To maintain a watching brief having regard to the role of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

#### 332 CIVILITY IN PUBLIC LIFE – PROGRAMME OF WORK (MO / HLDS) –

The report updated Members of the Standards Committee on recent work associated with the Civility in Public Life Programme (“the Programme”) being led by the Local Government Association (LGA) in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

The Programme continued to address abuse, intimidation and declining standards of discourse in public life, while promoting Councillor safety, transparency and accountability.

The report built on the update provided in September 2024 and reflected UK-wide and Welsh developments reported during 2024/25, including the launch of the Defending Democracy Policing Protocol, the Debate Not Hate campaign evaluation, and a refreshed focus on online safety and democratic literacy.

Therefore, the report was presented to the Committee by the Monitoring Officer to ensure that Committee Members remained informed on the Programme of work which was aligned to the role of the Committee in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct, principles of good governance, long-term resilience of democratic processes, and community well-being.

Following the Monitoring Officer’s presentation of the report, the Committee subsequently

RESOLVED – T H A T the further progress being undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA), Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the other UK associations on this programme of work be noted.

Reason for decision

For Committee's consideration and information.

333 CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (MO / HLDS) –

The Monitoring Officer advised that the report before the Committee was a standard item on the Committee's forward work programme and set out the communications that they had received from the PSOW. A Part II version of the report had also been provided to the Committee and therefore, the Monitoring Officer would provide an update to the Standards Committee at the meeting under Part II of the agenda in relation to recent correspondence and matters arising.

RESOLVED – T H A T the content of the report alongside the verbal overview provided by the Monitoring Officer be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the content of the report on the correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ('the Ombudsman') and matters arising under the Part II report later on the agenda.

334 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC –

RESOLVED – T H A T under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 4 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act, the relevant paragraphs of the Schedule being referred to in brackets after the minute heading.

335 CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (MO / HLDS) (EXEMPT INFORMATION – PARAGRAPHS 12, 13 AND 14) –

As outlined at Part I of the agenda, it had been agreed by the Standards Committee that a standing item appear on the Committee's agenda in order that the Monitoring Officer would be able to apprise Standards Committee Members of correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman) on any matters arising, the items being confidential in nature in line with the Ombudsman's procedure.

The Monitoring Officer therefore provided the Committee with a verbal update in respect of recent confidential correspondence with the Ombudsman.

RESOLVED –T H A T the update on correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ('the Ombudsman') provided verbally by the Monitoring Officer, and matters arising under the Part II report on the agenda be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions held at the meeting.