

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 20 November 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Standards Committee quoracy – Governance review, clarification and ratification of decisions.
Purpose of Report:	To advise the Committee of the outcome of a governance review into quorum arrangements for the Standards Committee, to seek formal ratification of decisions taken at meetings subsequently identified as inquorate under the clarified interpretation, and to provide an update on the remaining procedural matter under review.
Report Owner:	V. Davidson, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
Responsible Officer:	Amy Rudman, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report does not involve any consultation with other parties.
Policy Framework:	This report is a matter for consideration by the Standards Committee.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A governance review identified that the Standards Committee’s earlier interpretation of quorum composition under the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 required clarification. It has since been confirmed that, while the Town and Community Council (TCC) representative is a co-opted member of the Committee, they cannot be counted as an Independent Member for quorum purposes. • During 2024, attendance by Independent Members was on occasion affected by personal circumstances and technical issues, and several meetings proceeded on the good faith assumption that the presence of the TCC representative satisfied the Independent Member element of the quorum. The correct interpretation was clarified in November 2024, and all subsequent meetings, which are held remotely, have been convened in accordance with that clarification. • Following the finalisation of the Committee’s Annual Report 2024/25 the issue was revisited to ensure that all historical decisions and records were fully compliant and accurately reflected the 	

procedural requirements. To provide full reassurance, a comprehensive review of all Standards Committee meetings held during 2024/25 and 2025/26 municipal years (to date) was undertaken in October 2025. The review confirmed that only three pre-November 2024 meetings were inquorate under the clarified interpretation. It emerged that the May 2025 meeting of the Committee was quorate at the outset but became inquorate when an elected member joined the meeting late. The meeting was not adjourned at that point; however, the affected agenda item was later re-confirmed at a subsequent properly constituted meeting in September 2025 to ensure procedural compliance.

- All affected decisions were taken in good faith based on the Committee's previous understanding of the quorum requirements but now require formal confirmation to ensure full procedural validity.
- This report therefore seeks the Committee's approval to ratify and confirm the dispensations granted at two of the affected meetings in respect of two members. In relation to one previous item considered by the Committee during 2024, the Monitoring Officer is in consultation with the parties involved to address the procedural matter identified during the governance review. These discussions are ongoing to determine the most appropriate and proportionate resolution, and a further report will be presented to the Committee in early 2026 once those discussions have concluded.
- This process provides assurance that all Standards Committee decisions held during the municipal years 2024/25 and 2025/26 (to date) are transparent, procedurally sound, and compliant with the statutory quorum requirements under the Regulations.

Recommendations

1. T H A T the Committee notes the position regarding quoracy at certain meetings held during 2024 which, under the clarified interpretation of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001, were not quorate.
2. T H A T the Committee formally confirms the dispensations granted at those meetings to ensure that the relevant decisions are properly ratified and have full legal effect.
3. T H A T the Committee notes that, in relation to one previous matter considered during 2024, the Monitoring Officer is in communication with the relevant parties to address the procedural matter identified through the governance review, and that a further report will be presented to the Standards Committee in early 2026 once those discussions have concluded.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1-2 To advise the Standards Committee of the position regarding decisions taken at meetings subsequently determined to be inquorate under the correct interpretation of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and to seek the Committees formal confirmation of those decisions at a properly constituted meeting to ensure full procedural validity.
3. To ensure that the outstanding procedural matter identified during the governance review is addressed appropriately and transparently, following consultation with the relevant parties and that the Committee be updated through a further report before determining any further action.

1. Background

- 1.0 Under the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001, a quorum for the Committee requires:
 - (a) at least three members are present, including the chairperson, and
 - (b) at least half the members present (including the chairperson) are independent members.
- 1.1 Regulation 2 provides the interpretation of the various definitions used within the regulations:
 - (1) Member, unless the context otherwise requires, means in the case of a local authority, an elected member of that authority, and
 - (2) Independent Member means a member of a standards committee who is not a member, an officer, the spouse or civil partner of a member or an officer of a relevant authority or a community council.
- 1.2 Members of town and community councils were incorporated into the definition of Independent Members by virtue of Regulation 2(2)(c) of the Local Government (Standards Committees, Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016. Therefore, Town and Community (TCC)

representative cannot be counted as an independent member for the purpose of quorum of the Standards Committee.

- 1.3** A governance review identified that the Committee's earlier understanding of this requirement had been interpreted more broadly than intended, with the TCC representative being counted, in good faith, toward the independent member element of the quorum. This occurred at a time when Independent Member attendance was unavoidably affected by personal and technical circumstances. This crystallised in November 2024. From that point onwards, all Standards Committee meetings were held in line with the clarified interpretation. The only exception was a meeting held in May 2025 which became inquorate part way through when an elected member joined part way through proceedings. The affected items were formally reconfirmed later in this municipal year.
- 1.4** Although the issue had been addressed prospectively from November 2024, a comprehensive review of all meetings held during the 2024/25 and 2025/26 municipal years (to date) was subsequently undertaken in October 2025. The review was initiated as part of the Annual Report assurance process, which identified the need to formally regularise earlier decisions to ensure full compliance, transparency and good governance.
- 1.5** The review confirmed that three meetings held prior to November 2024 were not quorate under the clarified interpretation and that those decisions should be formally confirmed to ensure procedural completeness.
- 1.6** Details of all meetings held during the Municipal year 2024/25 are set out below. The Standards Committee met on eight occasions:
- 10th June 2024,
 - 29th July 2024,
 - 29th July 2024 (Hearing),
 - 26th September 2024,
 - 21st November 2024,
 - 22nd November 2024 (Hearing),
 - 30th January 2025, and
 - 27th March 2025.
- 1.7** During the Municipal year 2025/26 the Standards Committee has met on three occasions thus far:
- 15th May 2025,
 - 17th July 2025,
 - 25th September 2025

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The review identified three meetings held before November 2024 that were not quorate under the clarified interpretation. Each involved one or more decisions

that, while taken in good faith, must now be confirmed to ensure procedural validity.

- 2.2 Ratification of those decisions will provide full legal effect and certainty, including in relation to dispensations granted.
- 2.3 The Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer has confirmed that of the two dispensations granted, one at the 29th July 2024 committee meeting (**Appendix 1**) and one at the 21st November committee meeting (**Appendix 2**), only one dispensation has been relied upon during a meeting of another Council Committee, on an agenda item which was before the Committee for noting. There was no vote taken on the item. The member in respect of whom the dispensation was granted has been notified.
- 2.4 In relation to the third matter considered by the Standards Committee the Monitoring Officer is in communication with the parties involved to address the procedural issue identified through the governance review. Initial discussions have taken place with one of the parties, and a meeting is being arranged with the other to ensure that all perspectives are fully understood before determining the most appropriate and proportionate way forward. A further update will be brought to the Committee in early 2026 once those discussions have concluded.
- 2.5 All affected members have been notified of the position and have provided, and continue to provide, comments on the proposed approach.
- 2.6 Members of the Standards Committee, including elected Members, have also been consulted in advance of the report's publication. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee have been closely engaged throughout this process and have provided valuable advice and constructive input in helping to shape the proposed way forward.
- 2.7 This report therefore completes the governance assurance process in respect of the actions taken to date by seeking the Committee's formal approval to endorse and record the corrective measures, ensuring transparency and appropriate public reporting. One remaining matter is under active consideration and will be addressed at a subsequent meeting of the Standards Committee once the Monitoring Officers discussions with the relevant parties have concluded.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 The Standards Committee shall have the following roles and functions:
 - (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-Opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives,
 - (b) assisting Councillors, Co-Opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct,
 - (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct,
 - (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct,

- (e) advising, training or arranging to train Councillors, Co-Opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct,
- (f) granting dispensations to Councillors, Co-Opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct,
- (g) dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matters referred to that officer by the Public Services Ombudsman,
- (h) the exercise of (a) to (g) above in relation to the Community Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those Community Councils;
- (i) overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 None as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Employment

- 5.2 None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3 Regulation 24(1) of the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 (“the Regulations”) states that no business shall be transacted at a meeting of a standards committee, unless at least three members are present, including the chairperson; and at least half the members present (including the chairperson) are independent members.
- 5.4 A member of a Town and Community Council is not considered an Independent Member by virtue of Regulation 2. It states, where relevant, that an independent member means a member of a standards committee who is not a member, an officer, the spouse or civil partner of a member or an officer of a relevant authority or a community council.
- 5.5 Notwithstanding the above, the Council’s Constitution at paragraph 8.3 (pg. 64) states:
- 8.3 Quorum:**
A meeting of the Standards Committee shall only be quorate when:
- (a) At least three members are present (including the Chair) and
 - (b) At least half the members present (including the Chair) are independent members.

- 5.6** As a result of the governance review undertaken in 2025, it was identified that two meetings, and three items had proceeded on a broader interpretation of this requirement, with the TCC representative counted toward the Independent Member element of the quorum in good faith. The clarification confirmed that three meetings were inquorate under the correct interpretation.
- 5.7** The corrective action proposed in this report, namely, the formal ratification of affected decisions at a properly constituted meeting, ensures full procedural validity and compliance with the Regulations.
- 5.8** Ratification at this meeting will regularise the decisions taken at two of the affected meetings and ensure legal and procedural certainty.
- 5.9** This approach also reflects the Council 's commitment to transparency, and good governance in its decision making. All affected members have been notified and consulted, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee have been actively engaged throughout the process.

6. Background Papers

None.

No.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Hybrid Meeting held on 29th July, 2024 held at 9.30am.

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

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

Present: R. Hendicott (Chair); Councillors R.M. Birch, J.E. Charles and C.P. Franks; G. Olphert and G. Watkins (Independent Members); and Councillor P. Summers (Town and Community Council Representative).

279 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”.

280 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from L. Tinsley (Vice-Chair) and R. Alexander (Independent Members).

281 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

282 DECLARATION OF INTEREST –

Councillor C.P. Franks declared an interest in Agenda Item 4 – Applications for Dispensation. The nature of his interest was personal and prejudicial in that he had previously made a similar application for dispensation to Councillor Hennessy as a Trustee of a Community Library and would therefore withdraw from the meeting for the item.

283 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION (MO/HLDS) –

The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the purpose of which was to consider the application for dispensation from Councillor W. Hennessy to speak and vote at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council meetings as attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

No.

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

Member Requesting Dispensation	Paragraph(s) of the Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 Under Which Dispensation is Granted and as applied for	Decision
Councillor W.A. Hennessy	(d), (e) and (f)	To speak and vote on general matters relating to Rhoose Library and to speak only on matters regarding property or finance at both Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council meetings.

Reason for decision

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

284 VERBAL REPORT BY CHAIR OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE RE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM – JUNE 2024 (MO/HLDS) –

The Chair of the Standards Committee provided a verbal update following his online attendance at the meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum held on 24th June 2024. Judge Claire Sharp, the outgoing president of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APL) and her successor, Judge Meleri Tudur, had been in attendance, with Judge Sharp commenting on the issues she looked for when deciding whether to permit an appeal against a decision by a Standards Committee.

Mr. Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive, and Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive of One Voice Wales (OVW), the principal organisation for Community and Town Councils in Wales provided the Forum with details of the support provided by OVW to Town and Community Councils and the training, support and information the organisation provided in relation to standards of behaviour and Code of Conduct matters.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Michelle Morris, provided an update on the work of the Ombudsman’s Office, advising that in the last year they had had 8,000 enquires and 3,000 complaints received in relation to the Public Sector, which included the NHS etc. There had been 328 Code of Conduct complaints received and they tried to deal with such cases within 12 months but this was not always possible. With regard to the inappropriate social media posts by a now ex-

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employee, the final report on this matter was expected to be completed in the autumn.

The Forum also discussed the Group Leader duty in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and how this was being managed in the 22 Local Authorities. The Forum was informed that it was being developed differently in the majority of Local Authorities, with the Chair advising the Standards Committee that the Vale appeared to be progressing well with its interpretation and management of the provision.

RESOLVED – T H A T the verbal report provided by the Chair of the Committee at the meeting be noted.

Reason for decision

To apprise members of the Standards Committee of the Standards Committee Forum meeting held on 24th June, 2024.

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

In line with the Committee's Forward Work Programme, it had previously been agreed that a standing item would appear on the Committee's agenda so that Committee could be apprised of correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and any matters arising.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted having regard to the fact that any update on correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, and any matters arising under Part II of the report, would be considered under Part II of the agenda.

Reason for decision

To apprise members of the Committee.

286 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.

No.

287 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 / Head of Legal and Democratic Services 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 / Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised the Committee that no correspondence had been received since the last meeting. It was however noted that the Standards Committee had considered two investigation reports by the Ombudsman at its March meeting, with it being agreed that the Councillors involved be given the opportunity to make representations at a future meeting of the Standards Committee, either orally or in writing in respect of the findings of the investigation and any complaint that they had failed, or may have failed, to comply with the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED – T H A T the confidential information provided by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic and Legal Services at the meeting be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to correspondence received from the Ombudsman, noting that it was confidential at this stage.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote Meeting held on 21st November, 2024.

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

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

Present: R. Hendicott (Chair and Independent Member); Councillors J.E. Charles and C.P. Franks; G. Watkins (Independent Member) and Councillor P. Summers (Town and Community Council Representative).

583 ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Principal Democratic 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”.

584 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE –

These were received from R. Alexander, G. Olphert and L. Tinsley (Independent Members) and Councillor R.M. Birch.

585 MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

586 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

587 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION (MO/HLDS) –

The purpose of the report was to consider an application for dispensation from Councillor E.J. Goodjohn of the Vale of Glamorgan Council as detailed at Appendix 1 to the report. The Principal Democratic Services Officer also advised the Committee that following a recent discussion Councillor Goodjohn had also requested that the application be considered in respect of her role as a Member of Barry Town Council should such matters be required to be considered by that Council at its meetings.

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

Member Requesting Dispensation	Paragraph(s) of the Standards Committee (Grant of Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 Under Which Dispensation is Granted and as applied for	Decision
Councillor E.J. Goodjohn	(d) and (f)	To speak and vote on general matters and speak only on finance and property matters when matters relating to Newydd Housing Association are to be discussed at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Barry Town Council meetings.

Reason for decision

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

588 INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF INVESTIGATIONS BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS (HLDS / MO) –

The purpose of the report was to enable the Committee to consider the Report of the Independent Review of Investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) into Code of Conduct Complaints published on 27th September, 2024.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic and Legal Services apprised the Committee on the primary goal of the independent review, as detailed in Section 1 of the report, to evaluate the PSOW's Code of Conduct Team's processes, delegations, and decisions related to complaint assessment and investigation by the Code Team and Former Code Team Manager. The review aimed to confirm that the said procedures were unbiased, politically neutral, and identify lessons to be learned.

The Officer also drew the Committee's attention to the various appendices for the report which included a statement from the PSOW endorsing the seven recommendations that had arisen as a result of the review, and were detailed in full within Section 2 of the report.

RESOLVED – The Independent Review of Investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales into Code of Conduct complaints be noted.

Reason for decision

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

589 UPDATE REPORT NATIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRS FORUM WALES (MO / HLDS) –

The Chair of the Committee advised of their regular attendance at meetings of the Forum, the last being in June 2024 and the next scheduled for January 2025, and advised that the Forum was developing over time and was both an interesting and reassuring opportunity to hear how other Standards Committees were dealing with matters.

Subsequently, following a point raised at the Monitoring Officers Group meeting on 4th October, 2024, the Standards Committee's view on proposed agenda items for the upcoming Forum meeting in January 2025 were currently being sought. Therefore, any recommendations of the Committee would be reviewed at the next Monitoring Officer Group meeting in December 2024, with a view to finalising the next Forum agenda in consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) during December 2024.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic and Legal Services drew the Committee's attention to three proposed agenda items set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report, one of which being a potential review of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure (LDRP) for Elected Members, that they would be fully supporting and, in a position to provide future updates on any subsequent amendments to the procedure given their role on the LDRP Review Working Group.

In response to a question posed by Councillor Franks as to whether the threshold/ levels of complaints that were referred to the Committee would be reviewed, the Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic and Legal Services advised that the point was ultimately a matter for the Ombudsman to decide. However, it was intended that further information be brought to a future meeting of the Committee in relation to the various processes of dealing with low level complaints received by the Monitoring Officer.

Councillor Summers then queried if there were any particular concerns in relation to the current LDRP that would steer the related review. In reply, the Monitoring Officer/ Head of Democratic and Legal Services advised that they were unable to provide any specific details at such an early stage in the review however, pre-cursory discussions had related to the nature of the LDRP becoming quite adversarial and therefore a wholesale review was felt necessary. The experiences of both Monitoring Officers and Members who had previously applied the procedure would be fed back as part of the review and the Committee's views on the same were also welcomed.

In conclusion, Mr. Watkins stated that the process of dealing with a Standards Committee hearing once referred to the Committee by the Ombudsman was very cumbersome and therefore hoped that the hearing procedure could be simplified in

the future. The Chair echoed Mr. Watkins' comments and noted that there were also implications as to how the Ombudsman prepared the case.

The Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic and Legal Services thanked Committee for their comments and advised that a future report was intended for the Committee's consideration in relation to a review of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's internal procedure for Standard Committee hearings.

RESOLVED – T H A T the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum Wales update report be noted.

Reason for decision

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

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

In line with the Committee's Forward Work Programme, it had previously been agreed that a standing item would appear on the Committee's agenda so that Committee could be apprised of correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and any matters arising.

RESOLVED – T H A T the contents of the report be noted, having regard to the fact that any update on correspondence received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, and any matters arising under Part II of the report, would be considered under Part II of the agenda.

Reason for decision

To apprise members of the Committee.

591 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.

592 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 / Head of Legal and Democratic Services 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.

RESOLVED – T H A T the confidential information provided by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic and Legal Services at the meeting be noted.

Reason for decision

Having regard to correspondence received from the Ombudsman, noting that it was confidential at this stage.