

SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2022 AT SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS

104. PRESENT:

Mr G Hughes (Chair)	Independent Lay Member
Mr R Alexander	Independent Lay Member
Mr S Barnes	Independent Lay Member
Dr M Kerbey	Independent Lay Member
Councillor A Roberts	South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority
Councillor J Williams (Joined at 1700)	South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority

APOLOGIES:

Mr D Fussell	Independent Lay Member
Councillor G Holmes	South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority
DCO S Chapman	Monitoring Officer

OFFICERS PRESENT: - Temporary ACO G Thomas – Director of Corporate Services, Mrs S Watkins – Deputy Monitoring Officer & Head of Corporate Support

105. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

106. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 1 February 2021, were received and accepted as a true record of proceedings.

The Chair stated that he was disappointed that the meeting had to be held remotely by Starleaf again due to the Covid pandemic. He took the opportunity to highlight various models used by other organisations, and whether they would continue with the hybrid model going forward.

107. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

The Temporary ACO Corporate Services informed Members that an independent review of the Ethical Standards Framework for Local Government was commissioned to ensure that it remained fit for purpose, was open and transparent, and that it commanded the confidence of all involved with the framework. The findings and recommendations of the first phase of the review was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED THAT

- 107.1 Following lengthy discussion on introducing an extra meeting per year, as well as mandatory training with a more structured approach, Members agreed to consider and note the contents of the report.
- 107.2 Officers agreed to include an additional meeting in the calendar year, and would provide further information in due course.
- 107.3 With reference to Members of the Standards Committee attending Fire & Rescue Authority meetings periodically as observers, Officers agreed to provide dates of when future meetings would be held, as well as copies of the reports.

108. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2020/21

The Head of Corporate Support informed Members that the presented report included extracts from the Annual Report and Accounts for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the year ending 31 March, 2021, in respect of Members Code of Conduct matters.

RESOLVED THAT

- 108.1 Members agreed to note the content of the report.
- 108.2 Following discussion on Key Performance Indicators contained within the report, Members agreed that they

would prefer 'Equality and Respect' complaints to be broken down into separate areas.

Councillor Williams joined the meeting at 1700 hours.

109. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – UPDATED GUIDANCE ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Temporary ACO Corporate Services presented a report which informed Members of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales's consultation on the revised guidance and associated consultation which set out Members obligations under the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED THAT

- 109.1 Members agreed to note the content of the report.
- 109.2 With reference to 'Equality' obligations under the Code of Conduct, Members reiterated that they would prefer this item to be broken down into specific areas.
- 109.3 Following discussion, Officers confirmed that all Fire & Rescue Authority meetings were open to the public and published on the Service's website with recordings of the individual meetings.

110. PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES – CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOK – ISSUES 24 AND 25

The Head of Corporate Support presented a report which informed Members of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales's Code of Conduct Casebook, Issues 24 and 25.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the content of the Ombudsman Code of Conduct Casebook, Issues 24 and 25, published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

111. ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES – ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Head of Corporate Support presented a report which advised Members of the Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report 2020/2021.

RESOLVED THAT

Following discussion on the number of low appeals and cases in general received over the last 4 years, Members agreed to note the Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report 2020/2021.

112. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT – FEBRUARY 2022

The Temporary ACO Corporate Services presented a report which brought Members attention to the relevant sections of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Draft Annual Report that related to payments to Members of Welsh Fire & Rescue Authorities.

RESOLVED THAT

- 112.1 Members agreed to note the extract of the Independent Remuneration Panel's Draft Annual Report attached at Appendix 1, which provided details of payments to Members of Welsh Fire & Rescue Authorities.
- 112.2 With reference to Determinations 38 and 39 within the report, stating that Members could claim pre-meeting preparation time, as well as travelling time to attend meetings, Officers agreed to clarify whether these were new Determinations, and to provide Members with a response via e-mail as soon as possible.

113. DRAFT STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022

The Head of Corporate Support presented a report for Members decision. She advised that as a matter of good corporate governance it was stated in the 2020/2021 Annual Governance Statement to introduce an annual report on the work of the

Standards Committee, in order to provide the Authority with an update on its activities during each financial year.

RESOLVED THAT

- 113.1 Following Members consideration and comments, they approved the proposed format for the inaugural Standards Committee Annual Report in order to enable publication with effect from 5 May 2022.
- 113.2 Following a question and answer session, Officers agreed to include further context and commentary into the Draft Standards Committee Annual Report, and would send a copy to Members for their final approval.
- 113.3 Follow further debate, Members unanimously agreed that their photographs and the date that they joined the Committee could be included in the Standards Committee Annual Report. More expansive profiles could be considered in the future.

114. ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRPERSON OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The outgoing Chair informed Members that after serving 12 years on the Standards Committee he sadly had to give up the role and ask Members to elect a new Independent Lay Member as their Chairperson.

Following discussion on the level of commitment, Mr R Alexander was nominated and seconded. There were no other nominations.

RESOLVED THAT

- 114.1 Mr R Alexander was unanimously duly elected Chair of the Standards Committee for a period of no less than 4 years, and no more than 6 years.
- 114.2 The newly appointed Chair responded by thanking Members for their unanimous vote of confidence, and confirmed that he would take up the role as from August 2022, when the outgoing Chair would have completed his full term in office.

114.3 The outgoing Chair also confirmed that he would sit on the selection process to assist in appointing a new Independent Lay Member.

Members and Officers took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Chair for his 12 years of excellent dedicated service on behalf of the Standards Committee, with 6 years being as Chair.

The outgoing Chair responded by thanking the group for their kind words and stated that it had been an honour and a privilege to be a Member of the Standards Committee, and thanked Members and Officers for their invaluable support throughout his term in office.