

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2022

PRESENT: Mrs M. Dodd [Chair] (Ph)

Independent Members:

C. Davies (R), J. James (Ph) and P. Rogers (Ph)

Councillors:

R. James (R), B.W. Jones (R) and G.B. Thomas (R)

The following Officers were in attendance:

L. Rees-Jones - Head of Administration and Law / Monitoring Officer (R)
R. Edgecombe - Legal Services Manager / Deputy Monitoring Officer (Ph)
M. Evans Thomas - Principal Democratic Services Officer [Note Taker] (R)
J. Owen - Democratic Services Officer (Ph)
S. Hendy - Member Support Officer (Ph)
A. Eynon - Simultaneous Translator (Ph)

Also in attendance:

Ms S. Cook, Assistant Investigating Officer, Office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (R)
Town Councillor L. Wride (R)

[Ph = physical attendance at County Hall R = remote attendance via Zoom]

**Multi Location: Chamber, County Hall, Carmarthen and remotely :
2.30 pm - 3.22 pm**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mrs D. Evans, Independent Member.

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED, pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item as the report contained exempt information as defined in paragraphs 12 & 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

4. **PRE-HEARING REVIEW IN RESPECT OF REPORT ISSUED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES REGARDING TOWN COUNCILLOR LOUISE WRIDE**

Following the application of the public interest test it was **RESOLVED** pursuant to the Act referred to in minute no. 3 above not to publicise the content of the report as it contained exempt information relating to a particular individual and information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual (Paragraphs 12 & 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the Act). The public interest test in respect of this report outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information contained therein as disclosure at this initial stage of a two stage process would be a disproportionate and unwarranted intrusion into the private and family life of the Councillor and other third parties referred to in the report.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Town Councillor Louise Wride and Ms Sinead Cook of the Office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Chair reminded the Committee that at the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 25th August, initial consideration was given to the report issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in respect of Town Councillor Louise Wride. The Committee resolved that Councillor Wride be given the opportunity to make representations to the Committee in respect of the findings of the investigation.

The main purpose of the Pre-Hearing Review was to consider Councillor Wride's request that the final hearing be heard in private. The relevant legislation is set out in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act and includes provision for a matter to be considered in private where it contains information relating to a particular individual (para 12) and Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual (para 13). Both these grounds are subject to a wider public interest test.

Ms Cooke of the Ombudsman's Office was invited to address the Committee and provided some background and context to the case.

Councillor Wride was thereupon invited to address the Committee regarding the further progress of the case.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that, should the Committee decide to hold the next stage in public, the option would still be available to the Committee to enter into private session should they deem it necessary.

Following a lengthy discussion, it was

RESOLVED that, in line with the requirement for openness and transparency in relation to the duties undertaken by the Standards Committee, the final hearing of the case in respect of Town Councillor Louise Wride be held in public but with the Committee entering into private session should it be deemed in the public interest at any stage.

5. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT TO SECTION 100B(4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.

There were no items of urgent business to be considered.

CHAIR

DATE