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## STANDARDS COMMITTEE, 11.10.10

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**Present:-**

**Elected Members:-** Councillors Stephen Churchman, Keith Greenly-Jones and Margaret Griffith.

**Independent Members:-** Mr John Pollard (Chairman), Mr. Gwilym Ellis-Evans, Mr. Malcolm Jones and Mr. Sam Soysa.

**Community Committee Member:-** Mr David Clay.

**Also Present:** Dilys Phillips (Monitoring Officer), Siôn Huws (Propriety Officer) and Eirian Roberts (Committee Officer).

**Apology:-** Mr. Gwyn Williams (Independent Member).

The Chairman announced that Councillor Margaret Griffith, Mr. David Clay, the Monitoring Officer and the Propriety Officer would attend the Wales Standards Committee Conference on the Thursday of that week.

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

### 2. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 5 July, 2010 as a true record.

### 3. STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2009/10 ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer proposing the contents of the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2009/10 and inviting the committee's observations.

The Monitoring Officer set out the context and the Propriety Officer expanded upon the different headings of the report.

Members were then given an opportunity to ask questions and submit observations.

It was noted that the first paragraph of the report should begin by referring to one of the most important duties of the Standards Committee, to promote and maintain standards.

It was emphasised that this was an excellent and comprehensive report which provided a flavour of what the committee stood for.

It was suggested that a concise version of the Annual Report would be ideal as an article for the press relating to the committee's work. It was suggested that the article should not include the names or backgrounds of the individuals, rather, it should be a summary of the Annual Report in the Chairman's name and should refer in general to the composition of the Standards Committee.

It was then suggested that the Annual Report itself should list individuals' names in order for people to know who served on the Standards Committee. Also, as the members had

a wide range of experiences extending from beyond the field of local government, it would be beneficial to include a few sentences noting the background of each member. The principle of including the members' photographs in the Annual Report was discussed and whilst some members were of the opinion that photographs should not be included, the majority agreed that a photograph would be advantageous as it would put a face to a name. It was also suggested that the Protocol on Officer / Member Relations should be attached to the Annual Report.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) **To adopt the Annual Report, subject to the following:-**
- **That a foreword by the Chairman should be included.**
  - **That it should be emphasised that the Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining standards.**
  - **That the report should include the names of each member serving on the Standards Committee and their photograph, along with a reference to each of their backgrounds.**
- (b) **That the press article should be a summary of the Annual Report in the Chairman's name and it should refer in general to the composition of the Standards Committee rather than listing individuals' names and backgrounds.**

#### **4. THE GWYNEDD STANDARD**

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer asking the committee to consider the responses to the consultation on the 'Gwynedd Standard' document and to submit a recommendation to the Council.

The Monitoring Officer noted, that in the absence of any response from the Ombudsman to the consultation, it must be accepted that he had no observations. He then expanded upon the nature of the observations submitted by four Council members and the observation regarding the practicality of the last point of the Standard was discussed, namely that a Council member was expected to inform the local member if dealing with any matter relating their constituency. On one hand, the opinion was that the local member should be informed if another member was dealing with a case in his ward, as this was a matter of courtesy and respect. However, concern was expressed, on the other hand, that this could lead to breach of confidentiality. Therefore, it was agreed, as a way forward, to amend the clause to note that a member was expected to inform a local member if dealing with any matter involving his constituency, unless it was a breach of confidentiality. It was also noted that a member dealing with the matter involving the constituency of another member should explain to anyone asking him for assistance that he was not the local member.

It was noticed that the report referred to three conclusions that the committee could reach following a hearing and it was asked whether these conclusions should be included in the Standard. The Monitoring Officer responded that she intended to include the conclusions in the report to the full Council, however, they could also be included in the Standard itself should that be the members' wish.

**RESOLVED to recommend that the full Council adopts the Gwynedd Standard, subject to amending the last point in the Standard to note, should a member be involved in any matter involving the constituency of another member, he should explain to anyone who asks for assistance that he is not the local member, and should also inform the local member, unless that would breach confidentiality.**

#### **5. ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST MEMBERS**

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer notifying the committee members of the latest developments in relation to allegations against members since her last report.

The Propriety Officer expanded upon the background of some of the cases and referred to further complaints that had been received since preparing the report.

**RESOLVED to accept the report.**

## **6. TRAINING**

Submitted – training for the committee members on Interests under the Members Code of Conduct and the committee was asked to approve a training format for the remainder of the Council and for town / community councils.

The Monitoring Officer noted that interests was a very important matter for this committee, as the committee which maintained and promoted standards of conduct for councillors and assisted them in adhering to the Code of Conduct. This was also the part of the Code with which people had the greatest difficulty in understanding.

A training pack was circulated submitting the information in written form and in the form of images and the committee was asked to consider whether there were any other methods of introducing the training.

Media such as Power Point, DVD, video or the Council website were suggested. However, it was agreed that the most effective method would be through electronic modules (which presented information and assessed the understanding of a subject with a questionnaire at the end).

The Monitoring Officer noted that that the written information / images included in the training pack could be produced in the form of a small booklet. This information could be further simplified and presented in clearer terms.

It was suggested that such a booklet could be presented to new members alongside the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer noted that those without access to a computer could be invited to attend a half day training session.

The importance of ensuring that community council clerks received formal training was emphasised.

The Community Committee Member noted that the town council of which he was a member had Wi-Fi and projector facilities and would be happy to offer trialling the training in electronic form.

**Resolved to introduce training for the remainder of the Council and town / community councils through the medium of electronic modules, by inviting those without access to a computer to attend a half day training session.**

The meeting commenced at 11.00am and concluded at 12.15pm