
STANDARDS COMMITTEE 10/07/17

Present:

Elected member: Councillor Dewi Roberts.

Independent Members: Ms Jacqueline Hughes, Miss Margaret Jones, Mr David Wareing and Dr Eirir Young (Chair).

Also in Attendance: Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Sion Huws (Senior Solicitor) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

Apologies: Aled Jones (Independent Member) and Mr Richard Parry Hughes (Community Council Member).

Councillor Dewi Roberts was welcomed to his first meeting of this committee.

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received from any members present.

2. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 23 January, 2017 as a true record.

3. THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017

Submitted - the draft of the committee's annual report for 2016-2017. The committee's observations and approval of the document were invited.

It was noted that no complaints of breaching the Code of Conduct had been referred to the committee for a decision during the year, however one of the complaints listed in Appendix 2 of the report may be referred to the committee's attention in due course.

Reference was made to two minor errors in the English version of the report and the section that referred to the committee's work during 2016-2017, namely:

Dispensations - there was a need to delete the following sentence from the second paragraph, *'Both applications were turned down'*.

North Wales Standards Committee Forum - miss-spelling of the word *'request'* in the last sentence.

RESOLVED to approve the draft of the annual report with the minor corrections noted, and to submit it to the Council's meeting on 5 October.

4. LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCEDURE FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer asking for the committee's approval of One Voice Wales' Local Resolution Procedure for Town and Community Councils.

The protocol was welcomed as a method of seeking to resolve low level complaints about members locally, but some concern was expressed that there were no specific time-frames for the process.

A recommendation was made to encourage Town and Community Councils to adopt such a procedure. It was also noted that it would be beneficial to ask the councils to report back to confirm whether or not they had decided against the guidelines.

RESOLVED to support One Voice Wales' Local Resolution Procedure and to encourage Town and Community Councils to adopt such a procedure.

5. ROLE DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Submitted, for information - the report of the Monitoring Officer appending a copy of the report on role descriptions that had been submitted before the Full Council on 15 June along with a copy of the Job Descriptions that were relevant to the Standards Committee.

The officers were asked to notify members when it was time for them to sign the job descriptions.

RESOLVED to note the report.

6. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted - the report of the Monitoring Officer asking the committee to hold a self-assessment of the Committee's work and outputs during 2016-17 and to consider the draft work programme for 2017-18.

Members were asked to consider the functions listed in the first column of the self-assessment and to note which assessment they believed was relevant to them using the following categories:

- Category 1 – Evidence that the Committee had made significant progress in achieving the functions or in the case of specific tasks, that the need to act had not arisen.
- Category 2 – Evidence that the Committee had substantially implemented the function, maintaining the same standard as last year.
- Category 3 – Evidence that the Committee had implemented the function but there was a need to give further attention.
- Category 4 – There was no evidence that the Committee had implemented the function and there was a basis for concluding that the area needed attention.

It was also explained:

- It was necessary to note the evidence which supported the category which the Committee awarded.
- By assigning a category to each function and noting the evidence, it was possible for the Committee to come to a conclusion regarding which further steps it needed to take (if any).
- Any suggestions for further actions would be fed through to the Committee work programme in the future.

It was noted that the 2016-2017 work programme (Appendix 2 to the report) should include the reason for not holding a meeting of the committee on 27 March, 2017.

RESOLVED

- (a) To adopt the following as the committee's self-assessment of its work (additions to the document in *italic and underlined*):

FUNCTION	ASSESSMENT (1/2/3/4)	EVIDENCE	FURTHER ACTIONS
Promote and maintain a high standard of conduct amongst members	2	<p>The Chair or Vice Chair have attended the North Wales Standards Forum to share experiences with other standards committees.</p> <p>The number of complaints brought before the committee is very low</p> <p>An induction programme is provided for new members.</p>	Keep an eye on complaints patterns.
Assist the members to keep to the Code of Conduct	1	<p>Supported an induction programme for the new Council</p> <p>Nearly all members have attended the brief sessions on the Code of Conduct on the induction days that introduce the essentials to the members. Approximately 20 members have attended further training and more training is on the way in September.</p>	<p>The committee to consider the feedback data from the training sessions and use this as a basis for effective targeting. The quantitative report should also note the percentage of members who have received the training.</p> <p>Consider methods of increasing members' interest in the subject.</p> <p>The committee to receive a report on how community and county members are trained with the intention of forming a plan that will use less conventional training methods.</p>
Advise the	2	The Committee	Consider whether there

Council regarding adopting or amending the Code of Conduct		considered amendments to the Model Code of Conduct for adoption by the Council	is a need for more local considerations on the Illustrative Code of Conduct.
Monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct	2	<p>Receive regular reports on allegations against members. Receive the annual reports of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and the Ombudsman.</p> <p>Receive annual reports in relation to the interests register and the declarations made.</p> <p>Receive annual reports on the register of interests and hospitality.</p>	<p>Look at the method of reporting on the registers of interests / hospitality and seek to obtain a better understanding of the interests and hospitality environment. Is the guidance clear on this?</p> <p>The committee to receive a report on the draft interests / hospitality protocols. The report should include examples of the types of gifts that are appropriate / inappropriate, also looking for any patterns in terms of who has given gifts etc.</p>
Advise, train or arrange training for members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct	2	<p>That input is given to the training.</p> <p>The induction sessions and also the 2-3 course that have been run. It should also be noted that it is an election year.</p>	<p>New Training Programme and follow this further.</p> <p>Look at the entire training regime on the Code of Conduct</p>
Grant dispensations to members	1	The Committee dealt with applications for dispensations in an objective and appropriate manner.	
Deal with reports of tribunals and any reports from the Monitoring	N/A	No hearings arose during the year.	

Officer on matters referred by the Ombudsman			
Authorise the Monitoring Officer to pay allowances to persons assisting with an investigation	N/A	No need arose for such allowances to be paid	
Exercise the above functions in relation to community councils		The amendments to the Model Code were communicated to the Community Councils and a joint advertisement was prepared with a number of them.	Look at ways of raising awareness and developing the relationship with community councils.

- (b) To approve the following work programme for 2017-2018, with the suggestions for items that have been fed through from the further steps noted above under (a):

10 July 2017

Annual Report
 Self-Assessment and Work Programme
 Allegations against members
 One Voice Wales' Local Resolution Procedure

2 October 2017

The Ombudsman's Annual Report
 Allegations against members
 Protocols Review

22 January 2018

Gifts and Hospitality Register
 Declaration of Interests Register
 Adjudication Panel's Annual Report
 Allegations against members

27 March 2018

Self-Assessment and Work Programme
 Training

7. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS

Submitted, for information – the report of the Monitoring Officer on formal complaints made against members.

It was suggested that it could be possible to analyse these complaints further to see whether or not there was a pattern in terms of the type of areas that were problematic in Gwynedd.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

Submitted, for information – the minutes of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum meeting held on 17 October 2016.

It was noted that a further meeting of the forum had been held in April, and that the minutes had not yet been received.

It was noted that the forum should announce dates for its meetings in good time to enable attendees to be present.

The Monitoring Officer referred to item 6 of the minutes - Register of Interests, and noted that Gwynedd Councillors' interests were now published through the Modern Gov system on the Council's website. Referring to the fact that the Modern Gov software did not provide a Welsh option to enable members to complete their standard register on-line, it was emphasised that it was a duty under the act for all councils to publish everything bilingually and that it was unfair for the councils to make the point that it was too expensive to pay the company to update the software.

RESOLVED to note the report.

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES 2014-2016

Submitted, for information – the report of the Monitoring Officer appending the Annual Combined Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting commenced at 11.00am and concluded at 12.15pm.