



# Complete Agenda

**Democratic Service**  
Swyddfa'r Cyngor  
CAERNARFON  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

Meeting

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Date and Time

**11.00 am, MONDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2018**

Location

**Ystafell Gwyrfai, Council Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. LL55 1SH**

Contact Point

**Eirian Roberts**

**01286 679018**

**eirianroberts3@gwynedd.llyw.cymru**

(DISTRIBUTED 02/03/18)

# **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

## **Membership**

### **Elected Members (3)**

Councillors

Beth Lawton  
Anne Lloyd Jones  
Dewi Wyn Roberts

### **Independent Members (with a vote) (5)**

Jacqueline Hughes  
Aled Jones  
Margaret E.Jones  
David Wareing  
Einir Young

### **Community Committee Member (with a vote) (1)**

Richard Parry Hughes

# **A G E N D A**

## **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

## **2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

## **3. URGENT ITEMS**

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

## **4. MINUTES**

4 - 6

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 2nd October, 2017 be signed as a true record (attached).

## **5. COMMUNITY COUNCILS TRAINING**

7 - 8

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

## **6. FUNCTIONS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

9 - 13

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

## **7. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS**

14 - 15

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

## **8. NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM**

16 - 21

To submit, for information, the minutes of a meeting of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum held on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2017 (attached).

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## STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2/10/17

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**Present:**

**Elected Member:** Councillor Dewi Roberts.

**Independent Members:** Ms Jacqueline Hughes, Aled Jones (Independent Member, Miss Margaret Jones, Dr Einir Young (Chair)

**Community Committee Member:** Richard Parry Hughes

**Also in Attendance:** Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Siôn Huws (Senior Solicitor) and Ann Roberts (Members Support Officer).

**Apologies:** Mr David Wareing.

Eirian Roberts, Member Support Officer, was wished a speedy recovery and Ann Roberts, Member Support Officer was welcomed to the meeting.

### 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 10 July, 2017 as a true record subject to removing the words in brackets in the decision on Item 6 (a) To adopt the following as the committee's self-assessment of its work (additions to the document in italic and underlined).

### 3. PROTOCOLS REVIEW

Submitted - the report of the Monitoring Officer. The committee was asked to make observations and approve the two named protocols for supporting the Code of Conduct for Members.

Reference was made to the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations and specifically to

- point 21.7 Roles of Employees and it was suggested that there was a need to include additional wording to the role of a member in terms of the power to propose policies under 21.5.
- point 21.9.4 Familiarity. It was noted that there was a need to declare friendships between Members and Employees. It was suggested
  - o that the Police's protocol should be compared with the Gwynedd Council protocol.
  - o to adapt the wording to include 'creates a situation of impropriety'.

It was explained that a further report would be submitted to the Standards Committee after consulting Members and officers in general about the contents and the implementation of the protocol.

Reference was made to the Protocol for Members on Gifts and Hospitality and specifically to point 5.2 'You should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart

information or represent the Council in the community.' The point was discussed in detail and it was explained that the aim of the point was to get Members to think before they accepted invitations. It was agreed that no specific needs had arisen to review the Policy.

**RESOLVED to accept the observations as they arrived.**

#### **4. THE OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17**

The Monitoring Officer submitted the report and drew attention to the reduction in the number of complaints.

Attention was drawn to the fact that Council members who were standing for re-election were subject to the Code of Conduct and that other candidates were not subject to the same rules. It was suggested that those applicants who stood elections without currently being a member should be subject to a Conduct protocol as current members had to conduct themselves in accordance with the protocol. It was noted that there were some constraints within election law, but they did not match the Code.

It was noted that there was extensive information on the Council website for new candidates.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

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

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

It was explained that the format of the report now only included details of the allegations that had been closed.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

#### **8. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION**

Submitted - the report of the Monitoring Officer asking the committee to consider and determine three applications for general dispensation from the Bangor area members in association with a review of education provision in the Bangor area that was being undertaken by the Council. Before considering the individual applications, the Monitoring Officer provided an outline of the school organisation process. He reminded the Committee that it had set guidelines for dealing with such applications and had approved dispensations in the past to enable members to participate in local discussions.

Aled Jones (Independent Member) declared an interest in the matter and left the meeting.

Details were given on the three applications individually, namely:

- An application from Councillor Dafydd Meurig, asking for permission to speak only as his sister worked for Caban y Faenol Cyf Nursery, which was located on the land of Ysgol y Faenol, Bangor. He was the Local Member for Arllechwedd, and would represent the interests of the school in his ward, namely Ysgol Llandygai. Any interest would arise should there be a discussion on a matter that would be likely to affect the Caban y Faenol Nursery specifically.
- An application from Councillor Elin Walker Jones, asking for the right to speak only as she was a member of the Ysgol y Garnedd and Ysgol Tryfan Governing Bodies (with responsibility for special educational needs) and was also the parent of two

children at Ysgol Tryfan, and a former parent at Ysgol y Garnedd. It was explained that the only connection that led to prejudicial interests was the fact that she was a parent with children at Ysgol Tryfan.

- An application from Councillor Menna Baines, asking for the right to speak only as she had children who were pupils at Ysgol Tryfan and who were former pupils of Ysgol y Garnedd. She was also a member of the Ysgol y Faenol Governing Body. It was explained that the only connection that led to prejudicial interests was the fact that she was a parent with children at Ysgol Tryfan.

Each application was considered and voted on individually and the committee was in favour of approving the three applications for dispensation on the same terms that had been approved for similar applications in the past.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. To approve dispensation for Councillor Dafydd Meurig to speak but not to vote at meetings under the auspices of the Council regarding the process of reorganising education provision of the Bangor area, but that he may not speak, or be present or vote at a meeting of the Council, Cabinet or any of his committees, and that he is required to clearly state that he has been granted a dispensation at every meeting he participates in, explaining the exact nature of the restraints on him, and that this is noted in the minutes of such meetings.**
- 2. To approve dispensation for Councillor Elin Walker Jones to speak but not to vote at meetings under the auspices of the Council regarding the process of reorganising education provision of the Bangor area, but that she may not speak, or be present or vote at a meeting of the Council, Cabinet or any of her committees, and that she is required to clearly state that she has been granted a dispensation at every meeting she participates in, explaining the exact nature of the restraints on her, and that this is noted in the minutes of such meetings.**
- 3. To approve dispensation for Councillor Menna Baines to speak but not to vote at meetings under the auspices of the Council regarding the process of reorganising education provision of the Bangor area, but that she may not speak, or be present or vote at a meeting of the Council, Cabinet or any of her committees, and that she is required to clearly state that she has been granted a dispensation at every meeting she participates in, explaining the exact nature of the restraints on her, and that this is noted in the minutes of such meetings.**

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 11.55 am

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**CHAIRMAN**

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 March 2018</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Community Councils Training</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To introduce an alternative procedure for providing training to Town and Community Councils</b>

## Background

The Standards Committee holds the following functions

- promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the Authority's Councillors and Co-opted Members;
- assisting the Councillors and Co-opted Members to adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- advising the Council regarding adopting or amending the Members' Code of Conduct;
- monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct;
- advising, training or arranging training for Councillors and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

In accordance with section 56 of the Local Government Act 2000, these functions extend to Gwynedd's Town and Community Councils. There are 64 such councils in Gwynedd that fall within the remit of the Standards Committee. Across Wales, the number of Town and Community Councils per County Council vary from one in Merthyr to 111 in Powys. As a large rural area, Gwynedd has amongst the highest number.

## Training Procedure

There are practical implications to the above from the perspective of maintaining attendance and contact with these Councils. We make relatively regular contact if

changes are made to the Code or regarding matters such as the internal resolution process of UNLLAIS. In addition, there is a general message under the guidance of the Ombudsman and from us in the office stating that we are available to provide advice and support. Various clerks take advantage of the support available from time to time.

We also provide training occasionally. The numbers who attend, considering the total number of community councillors in Gwynedd, means that we do not reach the vast majority of the members. The last time an exercise took place, sessions were held in Caernarfon, Bala, Pwllheli and Dolgellau. The content had also been created after consulting with clerks. The presentations were well received and moderate numbers attended. However, arranging a course at a particular location and at a set time is subject to a number of factors that could influence who is able to attend.

After holding discussions with other Monitoring Officers in similar areas, a different approach was tabled, namely to offer to provide a trainer for a locally-arranged session. In simple terms, should the Committee support this, the proposal would be to send a letter to clerks offering to provide a trainer to come and hold a 90-minute session for their area at a nominal cost. The content could be tailored to respond to local need but there would be a basic course on the Code and a scenario exercise. The local Council would arrange the course.

There would be a need to be aware that it would not be possible to hold numerous sessions within a year and councils would be strongly encouraged to collaborate. On the other hand, it appears practical in my opinion to provide training that meets the Community Council function but is also flexible enough to respond to local requirements.

### **Recommendation**

That a pilot is held for a year on the training system of providing a trainer on the Code of Conduct to Town and Community Councils, in accordance with the report.



<b>Committee :</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>10 March 2018</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>The Functions of the Standards Committee</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To present information regarding the Standards Committee's Functions</b>

## 1. Background

1.1 The Local Government Act 2000 established a new 'ethical framework' for county councils and town and community councils in Wales. At the centre of this framework is the duty on each authority to adopt a code of conduct for its members, and for each member to undertake to abide by that code when accepting their position.

1.2 The duty was also introduced on each county council to establish a standards committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct both amongst members of the council and the members of the town and community councils within its area. New duties and powers were also given to monitoring officers and to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

1.3 The Act places certain duties and gives certain powers to a standards committees:

- Assisting the councillors and co-opted members to follow the Members' Code of Conduct
- Advising the authority regarding adopting or amending the Members' Code of Conduct
- Monitoring the implementation of the Members' Code of Conduct
- Advising, training or arranging training for councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct
- Determining complaints referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that members have breached the Code of Conduct
- Considering applications made by members for dispensations to allow them to participate in discussions despite them having a prejudicial interest under the Code
- Considering complaints referred to it under Gwynedd Council's local resolution procedure

- Overseeing the Gwynedd Council Members Gifts and Hospitality Policy (local, non-statutory)

1.4 There is a duty on all sixty four town and community councils to adopt the Code of Conduct, and for each member to undertake to abide by its provisions when accepting their office. Therefore, although the Standards Committee is one of Gwynedd Council's committees, its responsibilities extend to exercising the above functions (apart from the last two) in respect of all the town and community councillors in Gwynedd as well as the members of Gwynedd Council. This is reflected in the statutory requirement for each standards committee to include at least one 'Community Committee Member', who is an individual who is a member of a town or community council (but not also a county councillor)

1.5 In this report we will look in more detail at some of the Committee's functions

## **2. Deciding on applications for dispensations**

2.1 The Code of Conduct provides that a member should not take part in a meeting if he/she has a 'prejudicial interest' in the matter being discussed. The member must leave the meeting whilst the matter is discussed but also must not try to influence the decision in any way.

2.2 A member however has the right to ask the Standards Committee for permission to take part despite the existence of the prejudicial interest. This permission is called a 'dispensation'.

2.3 The Standards Committee has the right to grant a dispensation if the member's situation comes within one of the particular circumstances listed in the relevant regulations. However it is a matter for the Committee to decide whether it is appropriate to do so in the circumstances. It can grant a member a dispensation that allows him/her the right to take a full part by speaking or voting, or to speak only. It can grant a general dispensation or one that is specific to a particular meeting.

2.4 In coming to its decision, the committee must take into account the public interest, bearing in mind that the purpose of the code in this context is to maintain the public's faith in the way the council makes its decisions. The Ombudsman in his guidance on the code explains that:

*"The Standards Committee will need to balance the public interest in preventing members with prejudicial interests from taking part in decisions, against the public interest in decisions being taken by a reasonably representative group of members of the authority."*

## **3. Deciding on complaints against members**

3.1 The 2000 Act gives a standards committee the power to decide on complaints that members have breached the code of conduct and to impose sanctions if they have done so. The committee's functions form part of a wider statutory investigation

process and can only therefore consider complaints if they have been referred to it as part of that process.

3.2 The only way of making a formal complaint that a member has breached the code is by submitting it to the Ombudsman. Any individual can submit a complaint.

3.3 The Ombudsman will assess each complaint (along with any additional information) and decide whether or not he should investigate by using a 'two-stage' test:

- 1) Is there direct evidence that the Code has been breached?
- 2) Is an investigation or referral to the standards committee or The Adjudication Panel for Wales required in the public interest? (the 'public interest test')

(According to the Ombudsman in his Annual Report, of the 248 complaints closed in 2016/17 the majority (184) were closed under the 'Closed after initial consideration' category)

3.4 If the Ombudsman conducts an investigation, he can come to one of three conclusions:

- a) If he concludes that there is no evidence to suggest that the Code has been breached, he will discontinue his investigation
- b) If the evidence suggests that there has been a breach, the Ombudsman can decide in certain circumstances that further steps are not appropriate
- c) Where the Ombudsman finds that a complaint is justified and it is also considered to be in the public interest to do so, he may refer it either to the Standards Committee of the relevant authority, or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales to decide on the matter

3.5 If he refers the complaint to the Standards Committee, the Ombudsman will present a written report describing his investigation and the reasons for his conclusions. The committee's duty is to consider the report and to come to a decision on the complaint, and there is a statutory process that must be followed. There are two possible stages:

- (1) A meeting to decide, on the basis of the written report alone, either -
  - (a) that there is no evidence of a failure to abide by the code (and this will bring the matter to an end); or
  - (b) that a hearing should be held to consider the complaint and the member will be given an opportunity to make representations to the committee.

3.6 The accused member, and the Ombudsman's investigator may attend the hearing, which will be held in public. The exact procedures at the hearing are a matter for the committee and this committee has developed such a procedure.

3.7 The Committee after hearing the case must decide:

- (a) That there is no evidence that the member has breached the Code of Conduct;
- (b) That the member has breached the Code but that no further steps should be taken;
- (c) That the member has breached the Code and should be reprimanded;
- (ch) That the member has breached the Code and should be suspended (in full or partially) from being a member of eth authority for a period of up to 6 months.

3.8 Rather than investigate the complaint himself, the Ombudsman can refer the matter for investigation by the Monitoring Officer. If so, the procedure will be the same but it will be the Monitoring Officer who presents his report to the committee.

3.9 The member will have the right to appeal against the committee's decision to the Adjudication Panel for Wales, which will:

- (a) Uphold the sanction imposed, or
- (b) Refer the matter back to the committee with a recommendation that a different sanction be imposed, or
- (c) Overturn the finding that the member has breached the code of conduct

3.10 As noted above, the Ombudsman refer his report directly to the Adjudication Panel rather than the committee. The Panel has the power to impose greater sanctions and can suspend a member for up to a year or can disqualify him/her from being a member of any relevant authority for up to 5 years.

#### **4. The Local Resolution Procedure**

4.1 Although the procedure described above is the only way a formal complaint against a member, Gwynedd Council has adopted a local resolution procedure, in which the Standards Committee has a role

4.2 The Council has adopted two documents that are relevant to the procedure. These are the Member-Officer Protocol, which promotes effective co-operation between members and officers within the council, and the Gwynedd Standard, which promotes and maintains a high standards of conduct amongst members of the Council.

4.3 The purpose of the procedure is to ensure that there is a way to deal quickly and efficiently with any allegation that a member has breached the Protocol or the Standard. Therefore it is members or officers of the Council who can submit a complaint.

4.4 The procedure in summary, is as follows:

- A complaint must be presented to the Monitoring Officer
- Step 1 – the Monitoring Officer will refer the complaint to the Deputy Monitoring Officer or the Senior Solicitor, who will advise the complainant whether the complaint falls to be considered under the procedure or whether it should be referred to the Ombudsman.
- If the complaint wishes to proceed with the complaint it can either be referred for a conciliation meeting (Stage 2) or to a hearing of the Standards Committee (Stage 3).
- Stage 2- a meeting between the complainant and the accused member, the Leader of the relevant political group and the Chief Executive and/or the Monitoring Officer
- Step 3 – a hearing before the Standards Committee. The complainant and the accused member will be entitled to appear before the committee. The committee can come to one of three conclusions::-
  - a. That there is no basis to the complaint
  - b. To uphold the complaint, but that no further action should be taken
  - c. To uphold the complaint and to reprimand the member

4.5 The committee may also make recommendations to the Council with regard to changing any procedures or to take any further steps

4.6 No publicity is given to the parties unless it is decided to uphold the complaint. The public and press will be excluded from the hearing before the committee.

4.7 Nothing in this procedure affects an individual's right to refer the complaint to the Ombudsman.

## **5. Recommendation**

5.1 The committee is asked to note the information

# Agenda Item 7

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>12 March 2018</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Allegations against members</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>For information</b>

## **1. Background**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the Ombudsman's decisions on formal complaints against members.

## **2. Decisions**

### **Complaint 201704855**

Complaint by a member of the public that a member had been part of a decision to release confidential information

The Ombudsman decided not to investigate for the following reasons:

- There was insufficient evidence that the member was implicated in releasing the information

### **Complaint 7294/201705172**

Complaint by a member of a town council that a fellow member had made a vexatious complaint against her to the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman decided not to investigate for the following reasons:

- The Ombudsman had accepted the complaint for investigation and could not conclude that the complaint was vexatious

### **Complaint 201706038**

A complaint that a member had used his position as an elected member in relation to a complaint of harassment.

The Ombudsman decided not to investigate for the following reasons:

- The member was not acting as an elected member at the time but as a private individual.
- The comments made by the member did not damage the reputation of the Council.

### **Complaint 201706123**

Complaint by a member of the public that a councillor had refused to engage with him in relation to issues relating to his property and to a dispute with the council.

The Ombudsman decided not to investigate for the following reasons:

- It is a matter for a councillor to decide whether to meet or correspond with a member of the public. The principal duty of members is to represent residents in their constituencies, but there is no obligation to deal with each individual matter reported to them.

### **3. Open Cases**

The situation in relation to other cases is as follows:

- **Ombudsman considering if he should investigate** **2**
- **Ombudsman investigating** **2**

### **4. Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the information.

## NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

Minutes of a meeting of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin on Monday, 10 April 2017 at 10.00 am.

### PRESENT

Denbighshire County Council – Ian Trigger  
Ynys Mon County Council – Mared Yaxley, Mike Wilson and Islwyn Jones  
Conwy County Borough Council – John Robers and Iain Moore  
Wrexham County Borough Council – Michael Pugh and Neil Benson  
Snowdonia National Park Authority – Rachael M. Davies

### ALSO PRESENT

Denbighshire County Council, Monitoring Officer – Gary Williams  
Committee Administrator – Sharon Walker

#### 1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

It had been agreed at the North Wales Standards Committees Forum held on 17 October, 2016 in Llangefni that the Forum would meet twice each year at a different Local Authority in rotation and be chaired and administered by the hosting authority with the Monitoring Officer of the host authority in attendance. Therefore, Ian Trigger, Chair of Denbighshire County Council's Standards Committee was appointed Chair for the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

#### 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Sharon Warne, Eirnir Young and Jane Eyton-Jones.

#### 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2017

The minutes of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum held in Llangefni on 17 October, 2017 were presented.

The minutes were proposed by Mike Wilson and seconded by Islwyn Jones.

***RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2016 be accepted as a true record.*

#### 4 EXTENDED MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

The Chair explained he had been contacted by the Ceredigion Chair of Standards Committee to ascertain whether Ceredigion Standards Committee representatives together with the West Wales Fire & Rescue and Powys Standards Committee would be able to join the membership of the North Wales Standards Forum.



The Monitoring Officer confirmed he had consulted all North Wales Monitoring Officers who had stated there were no issues regarding this request. The only issue would be regarding travel but they would be more than welcome to attend the meetings.

During the discussion, members agreed they were in favour of the three Authorities attending meetings as the meeting rota had been confirmed for the next 2 years.

The Monitoring Officer stated he would liaise with the other North Wales Monitoring Officers and one would be nominated to write with an invitation attaching the meeting rota.

***RESOLVED*** that a nominated Monitoring Officer write to invite the three Authorities to attend the North Wales Standards Committee Forum meetings and a meeting rota to be attached for their information.

## **5 MODEL LOCAL RESOLUTION PROTOCOL FOR CITY, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

The Monitoring Officer informed the Forum that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) was to roll out a Local Resolution Protocol for City, Town and Community Councils.

Following consultation with the PSOW, One Voice Wales were drafting the Local Resolution Protocol. The matter had been raised to ascertain the views of the members of the Forum.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would be writing to the City, Town & Community Councils to ascertain their views on the Local Resolution Protocol.

The Chair confirmed, in his opinion, to have a Local Resolution procedure would be useful.

During discussion it was agreed that to gain consistency throughout the councils the Protocol would be extremely useful.

The Forum were of the opinion that One Voice Wales should have consulted with Councils regarding the drafting of the Protocol.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that Clerks were in favour of the Protocol and the draft would be an exceptional starting point for the final version.

It was suggested that the Monitoring Officer write to One Voice Wales to enquire if consultation had been completed and to express the Forum's disappointment at the fact consultation with Local Authorities and Standards Committees had not taken place. Another point raised was there didn't appear to be any role for Standards Committees, but that should be also be considered. All present were in agreement.

**RESOLVED** that:

- *The Forum were in agreement with a Local Resolution Protocol for City, Town & Community Councils;*
- *The Monitoring Officer to write to One Voice Wales to express the Forum's disappointment at lack of consultation together with no role for Standards Committees.*

**6 NEW MEMBER INDUCTION AND TRAINING ON ETHICAL ISSUES**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the New Member Induction and Training on Ethical Issues.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) were looking to produce a set of training material for use across Wales. This had been presented to Denbighshire's Standards Committee who were in favour.

It was suggested that Clerks attend training to enable them to reproduce the training to their Members. An e-learning package was to be drawn up also, to enable the training to be more accessible, which should be available in early May 2017.

The members in attendance clarified the training plans they had in place for Councillors and the Monitoring Officer confirmed there were no time limits for training to take place. For example mandatory Code of Conduct training to take place within a short period of time following the election and a refresher training session to take place in 18 months' time. He also confirmed that if Clerks had any particular issues, he would be available to attend for a mini-training session.

It was confirmed that other Local Authorities, apart from Denbighshire, did not have Code of Conduct training as mandatory within their constitution.

**RESOLVED** that the Forum were in agreement with the New Member Induction and Training on Ethical Issues.

**7 WEBSITES OF CITY, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

Mike Wilson of Ynys Mon County Council Standards Committee introduced the item. He stated that each Town & Community Council had been given a grant of £500 to set up their websites. Within Ynys Mon they had 40 Town & Community Councils with varying degrees of website standards. A few not having a website and one didn't utilise a computer.

During discussions it was confirmed that a number of the Town & Community Councils websites contained out of date information.

Members were in agreement the websites should be up to date for transparency and the fact that the external auditors would be checking the adequacy of the websites.

The Monitoring officer suggested members of the Standards Committee attending Town & Community Councils, to encourage the Clerks to contact each other to assist with the websites.

Ynys Mon had sent reports to all Community Councils with a request they respond within 12 months.

***RESOLVED*** that the Forum agreed up to date information be included on the websites and assistance from neighbouring Clerks if required.

## **8 USE OF NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITY STANDARDS COMMITTEES FOR HEARINGS INVOLVING INTERNAL CONFLICTS**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the use of neighbouring Authority Standards Committees for Hearings involving internal conflicts.

During discussion, there was a consensus of opinion that neighbouring Authority Standards Committees should not be utilised. The main reason being that the members of the Standards Committees were independent members apart from the county council members. If the county council members were involved then possible need for it but otherwise the Standards Committee were professionally independent to deal with the issues.

The utilisation of neighbouring Authorities Standards Committees would also be a costly process.

***RESOLVED*** that the Forum agreed only in exceptional circumstances should neighbouring Authority Standards Committees be involved with hearings as the Standards Committee was professionally independent to deal with hearings.

## **9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mike Wilson of Ynys Mon County Council Standards Committee raised the issue that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) had recently rejected a complaint but had recommended training for the councillors concerned.

The councillors concerned had attended training in May 2016, and therefore, the Standards Committee were unsure as to what training should be provided.

It was suggested, as all the information was not available, that they contact the PSOW office to ascertain which training was to be offered to the councillors.

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The Monitoring Officer referred to mediation training. Denbighshire's Training Officer was to liaise with others in the area to progress the matter. Training sessions would be for 5 days.

The next meeting will take place in November (date to be confirmed) in Wrexham.

**The meeting concluded at 11.25 a.m.**

