
STANDARDS COMMITTEE 9/07/18

Present:-

Elected Members:- Councillors Beth Lawton, Anne Lloyd Jones and Dewi Roberts.

Independent Members:- Mr Aled Jones, Miss Margaret Jones, Dr Einir Young (Chair) and Mr David Wareing.

Community Council Member:- Mr Richard Parry Hughes.

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

The Chair thanked Miss Margaret Jones, Vice-chair, for chairing the previous meeting and the committee for their kind words.

It was noted that Ms Jacqueline Hughes, independent member, had recently resigned from the Standards Committee due to other commitments and it was agreed to send her a letter on behalf of the committee to thank her for her work.

The Monitoring Officer noted that it was intended to advertise the vacant seat on the committee in the usual manner; however, as the appointment could not be implemented until the full Council meeting on 4 October, he suggested to delay the commencement of the process until after the summer holidays.

The Chair requested that everyone spread the word regarding the fact that this opportunity would arise.

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies for absences were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received by any member present.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent items were raised.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 12 March, 2018 as accurate.

5. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Submitted – a draft of the committee's annual report for 2017-18. Observations were invited along with the committee's approval of the document.

RESOLVED

(a) To approve the annual report to be submitted to the full Council meeting on 4 October, with the following addition:-

- Training on the Code of Conduct – note that training has also been provided for Gwynedd Council members as part of the induction process.

(b) To authorise the Monitoring Officer to complete the forewords and biographies, in consultation with the Chair.

6. SELF ASSESSMENT AND WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting the committee to:-

- undertake a self assessment of the committee's work and outputs during 2017-18; and
- consider a draft work programme for 2018-19.

RESOLVED

(a) To adopt the following as the committee's self assessment of its performance in 2017/18:-

FUNCTION	ASSESSMENT (1/2/3/4)	Evidence	Further steps
Promote and maintain high conduct standards by members	1	<p>The Chair and Vice-chair have attended the North Wales Standards Forum to share experiences with other standards committees.</p> <p>A series of induction courses were held for members along with detailed courses based on a WLGA template.</p> <p>Reviewed Protocols for Gratuities and Hospitality and Member Officer Relations.</p> <p>Submitted an annual report to the Full Council</p> <p>Number of complaints received is low.</p>	Continue to attend and support
Assist members to adhere to the Code of Conduct	1	<p>Supported an induction programme for the new Council.</p> <p>Monitoring Officer and his team providing advice and guidance in</p>	<p>Consider Training feedback and a new training programme</p> <p>Standards Committee members to attend training sessions on the</p>

		<p>meetings and on a one-to-one basis for members.</p> <p>Council door always open for members.</p>	Code.
Advise the Council regarding adopting or amending the Code of Conduct	1	No occurrence has arisen to amend the Code.	
Monitoring the function of the Code of Conduct	1	<p>Received regular reports of allegations against members</p> <p>Received annual reports by the Ombudsman and the Adjudication Panel for Wales</p> <p>Annual reports received about the interests register and declarations made</p> <p>Annual reports received about the interests and hospitality register.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor the consideration of alternative methods of receiving information</p> <p>Consider amendments to the Code of Conduct and how to share the change.</p> <p>Include the interests of the Standards Committee's independent members on the Council website and also consider other methods of raising the Standards Committee's profile on the website.</p> <p>Request the Democratic Services Committee to consider methods of raising the Standards Committee's profile on the Members' Portal.</p>
Advise, train or arrange to train members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct	1	A series of induction courses were held for members as well as detailed courses based on a template by the Welsh Local Government Association.	New Training Programme and include this as an item on the 2018/19 work programme
Grant dispensations for members	1	Applications for dispensations were dealt with and actions were taken on an objective and proper basis.	

Deal with reports from case tribunals and any reports from the Monitoring Officer on matters referred by the Ombudsman	1	No need for hearings has arisen during the year	
Authorise the Monitoring Officer to pay allowances to persons who assist with an investigation	1	No occurrence to pay such an allowance has arisen	
Exercise the above functions in relation to community councils	3	<p>Monitoring Officer and his team providing advice and guidance for councils, clerks and members.</p> <p>Adopted a pilot for Code of Conduct training.</p> <p>Promoted a One Voice Wales local resolution procedure for Community Councils</p>	<p>New Training Programme.</p> <p>It is recognised that more promotion work is required as community and town councils continue to generate complaints to the Ombudsman, although the threshold for complaint investigations has increased. The message needs to be disseminated in an attempt to change culture so that it is possible for more complaints to be resolved locally.</p> <p>Put the pilot in operation and timetable what is going to be done, when and how.</p> <p>Also, as part of the training, examine whether or not it is possible for community and town council clerks to offer training to one another on an informal basis.</p>

(b) To approve the following work programme for 2018/19:-

9 July, 2018

Annual Report

**Allegations against Members
Complete the Member Officer Relations Protocol Review
Approve Code Guidelines**

1 October, 2018

**Annual Report of the Ombudsman
Allegations against Members
Dispensations Procedure
Raise the Standards Committee's Profile on the Council Website**

21 January, 2019

**Gratuities and Hospitality Register
Declaration of Interest Register
Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel
Allegations against Members**

18 March, 2019

**Self-evaluation and Work Programme
Allegations against Members
Training Review**

- (c) **To ask the Democracy Service to programme a calendar of Council meeting dates in 2019/20 in a manner where sufficient time is allowed between meetings of the Standards Committee and the full Council to refer matters, such as the Annual Report, to the next Council meeting, rather than having to wait for another committee cycle.**

The Monitoring Officer and the Senior Solicitor were thanked for their work in the field of Code of Conduct training.

7. PROTOCOL ON MEMBER OFFICER RELATIONS

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting the committee to:-

- consider a series of proposed amendments to the Member Officer Relations Protocol in light of the members' wish to review the Protocol and consultation with the Democratic Services Committee, heads of departments and the Council's senior managers; and
- recommend the adoption of the Protocol to the Council.

Copies of Appendix 2 to the report (namely, item 6 from the minutes of the Democracy Services Committee meeting held on 12 April 2018) were circulated at the meeting as the document had been omitted from the agenda in error.

The Protocol was praised based on the fact that it provided clear guidance for members and officers on their relations with each other.

Referring to section 21.6 (a) of the protocol, which referred to the principle that there should be equal opportunities for all, it was noted that the Equality Act 2010 listed nine protected characteristics compared to six that had been listed here. The Monitoring Officer explained that characteristics were in accordance with what was included in the Code of Conduct, but that he would verify in case the Code required an amendment.

RESOLVED to recommend the adoption of amendments to the Member and Officer Relations Protocol to the full Council on 4 October, with the following addition:-

- **Section 21.9.3 – Bullying or harassment** – note that it is possible to refer to the Council's internal Bullying Policy for further information.

8. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT GUIDELINES

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting the committee to consider and approve the drafts of two guides to assist members with the Code of Conduct, namely:-

- Declaration of Interest Guidance;
- Guidance on Members' Contact with the Council as an Individual

It was noted that the Declaration of Interest Guidance would also be useful for community councils.

RESOLVED

- To approve the draft version of the Declaration of Interest Guidance, subject to including contact details for the Monitoring Officer, the Senior Solicitor (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Senior Solicitor.**
- To produce the Guidance in the form of a small colourful and engaging leaflet for members and also in poster form to be displayed in Council meeting rooms.**
- To approve the draft version of the Guidance on Members' Contact with the Council as an individual.**

9. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer submitting information about the Ombudsman's decisions on formal complaints against members.

Referring to the analysis of the nature of the complaints so far this year, it was noted that it would be beneficial to include cumulative figures in reports for the committee over the rest of the year.

RESOLVED to note the report.

10. WALES STANDARDS CONFERENCE 2018

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer outlining arrangements for the Wales Standards Conference that would be held in Aberystwyth on Friday, 14 September, 2018 and inviting the committee to agree on representatives to attend.

RESOLVED to put forward the names of Councillors Anne Lloyd Jones and Beth Lawton to attend the conference.

11. NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

Submitted, for information – minutes of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum meeting that had been held on 24 November, 2017.

The Chair noted that she had been pleased with the Forum meeting that had been held in Caernarfon on 29 June. The minutes of that meeting would be submitted to this committee in due course.

RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 12.35 pm

CHAIRMAN