

STANDARDS COMMITTEE 21/01/19

Present:-

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

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

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

Community Committee Member:- Mr Richard Parry Hughes

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 1 October, 2018 as a true record.

5. REGISTRATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Submitted - the report of the Monitoring Officer asking the committee for its views on the process of registering interests and the Interests Registration Form, attached to the report.

RESOLVED that the committee supported the process of registering interests and was of the opinion that the Interests Registration Form was comprehensive and fit for purpose.

6. STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Submitted - the Monitoring Officer's report seeking the committee's opinion on the frequency and number of committee meetings.

RESOLVED to conduct three meetings of the Standards Committee annually, timed to correspond with the Council's timetable, with the right to convene an urgent meeting if required e.g. to consider applications for dispensations.

7. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS

Submitted, for information, the report of the Monitoring Officer presenting information about the Ombudsman's decisions on formal complaints against members.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:-

- It was noticed that the majority of the complaints stemmed from community and town councils and it was confirmed that the work of organising training for those councils was afoot, and it was intended to commence the sessions in the spring.
- It was asked if it would be appropriate for one of the Council's scrutiny committees to look at the structure of community and town councils to see if it was possible to establish a system of more professional full-time clerks to be responsible for more than one council. In response, it was explained that the Welsh Government was conducting a research study into the role and functions of community and town councils and their future potential. The fact that the Welsh Government was looking into this was welcomed as many part-time clerks worked under substantial pressure.

RESOLVED to note the report.

8. ADJUDICATION PANEL'S ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted for information, the report of the Monitoring Officer appending the Adjudication Panel's 2017/18 Annual Report.

Specific attention was drawn to the following matters in the report:-

- That one of the themes raised in the cases heard by the Adjudication Panel over the last year was elected members bullying and harassing council officers and failing to show respect and consideration.
- The need to carefully weigh up the essential right of representatives in a democracy to express their views and the right of others not to be bullied or abused in the workplace.
- That the main matters that had arisen dealt with a lack of respect and failure to express an interest.

Sadness was expressed regarding the bullying and lack of respect highlighted in the report and the importance of challenging, not demonising was emphasised. Reference was also made to the importance of not undermining public confidence by misusing language, especially when using social media.

RESOLVED to note the report.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 11.30 am

CHAIRMAN