

# Item 3

## 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.**

