
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE 20/09/16

Present: Thomas G. Ellis (Chair)
Lesley Day (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Annwen Daniels, Gweno Glyn, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Annwen Hughes, Charles Wyn Jones, Dilwyn Morgan, Jean Forsyth, Anne Lloyd Jones, Anwen J. Davies and Jason Humphreys

OFFICERS: Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Manager - Democracy and Deivery), Vera Jones (Democratic Services Manager), Huw Ynyr (Senior Information Technology and Transformation Manager) and Siôn Owen (Member Support Officer).

ALSO PRESENT:

APOLOGIES: Councillors Michael Sol Owen and Sion W. Jones

1. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED to elect Councillor Lesley Day as vice-chairman of this Committee for the year 2016/17

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous committee meeting held on 22 March, 2016, as a true record.

4. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted - a draft of the annual report to be submitted to the full Council on 6 October, 2016, updating members on the activities of the Committee in 2015-16. It was emphasised that this relatively quiet period for the Committee at a time when it appeared that standards of public conduct were deteriorating, reflected well on Council Members. In addition, the need to show leadership and to remain true to the Nolan principles, was emphasised.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- Concern regarding the level of comprehension of the Code of Conduct among Community Council members and clerks. In response, the Monitoring Officer noted that training had been arranged for community councils and that a copy of the latest code of conduct had been distributed. He added that training was also being offered by Once Voice Wales. He noted that no fundamental problems had become apparent.
- Would it be possible to contact the Community Councils' Clerks in order to get a better idea of the situation? In response, the Chair of the Standards Committee asked that Members bring any specific problems to his attention.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

5. 2017 ELECTIONS

Submitted - a progress report on the preparations for the 2017 election following the formation of a focus group at the previous meeting of this Committee. It was reported that there would be three main avenues to this work:

- Preparing applicants, focusing on raising awareness and using data from Members' development interviews in order to improve the experience of Members elected in 2017. Also, arrange sessions early in 2017 to inform prospective candidates.
- Arrange an induction programme for elected members following the May 2017 election and a training programme for the year, with the aim of setting up induction sessions and informal training using various methodologies.
- Electronic devices, reporting that the sub-group was about to start trialling various electronic devices. It was also noted that the Learning and Development service had been working on an online provision for Members.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- How can prospective candidates who will not be able to attend information sessions be provided for? The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery replied that the information available on the Council's website had been updated to include comprehensive information. Any ideas on how to attract more attention were welcome.
- Packages for prospective candidates distributed through the libraries before the 2012 elections had been a success. The observation was noted.
- Concern was raised as to the short time between the election and the induction sessions which could prove tricky for newly elected members in 2017 to arrange time off work to attend the induction sessions. In response, the Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery noted that the induction dates for prospective candidates would be spread out in order to pre warn and prepare them should they be elected.
- The political groups should be encouraged to consider undertaking a mentoring system by pairing up a new councillor with a more experienced one.
- It would be beneficial to arrange an opportunity for the 75 members to meet informally in order to learn about different groups and wards and encourage collaboration.
- There was a risk of creating confusion and delay should a range of devices be available for Members.
- The need for thorough training for new Members was emphasised, especially in the field of IT. The Senior Manager – Democracy and Delivery replied that work was ongoing to identify the training required by new Members and to decide on the best time to programme this. The Senior Manager - Information Technology and Transformation added that they had learned a lot about the level of support required by Members, and how to time this, as a result of the IT experiences of providing Members with the existing equipment.
- That internet connectivity in some parts of Gwynedd was very slow, affecting Members' ability to receive on-line services.
- It would be beneficial to have a type of reference documents library for Members.

RESOLVED to accept the report, recommending that one electronic device be used for convenience.

6. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRACY SUB-GROUP UPDATE

Submitted - an update on the recent work of the diversity sub-group, which coincides with the aforementioned work of preparing for the May 2017 elections:

- Attract the attention of prospective candidates in order to encourage them to stand.
- Understand and identify the obstacles that exist among prospective applicants and try to respond to them pre-emptively (where possible)
- Make the information on the Council's website more accessible.
- Produce a second video to promote and encourage prospective candidates.
- Improve the advertising when there are vacant seats on the Council.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA PROTOCOL

The report was submitted with an explanation of the change of emphasis in the latest version of the Protocol, emphasising that the core message is to show respect for others. A provision for connecting to Members' social media pages was also added. It was highlighted that the Council did not take any responsibility for their content and that the content should follow the protocol.

Observations arising from the discussion:-

- Encourage Members to have a 'personal' page and an 'official' page, both of which would be registered with the Monitoring Officer so that Members' personal and public lives were kept separate. In response, the Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery reminded Members that there was no real difference between personal and public pages. That the same standards of conduct would be relevant to both.
- That a notice be posted renouncing responsibility for the content of external websites on the page which contains the link to the social pages.
- That situations where a Member had 'blocked' another user (and, as such, did not see his/her messages) and could not therefore respond when the person who had been blocked sent a message to the Member, needed to be addressed.

RESOLVED to accept the report.

8. OUTSIDE BODIES AND THE ROLE OF CHAMPIONS

The report was submitted. It was reported that the situation regarding Outside Bodies had been unclear in the past, and that a request had been put forward to look into the issue as there was a number of Outside Bodies and variation in their reporting responsibilities. The need to try to set up a reporting arrangement by Members of Outside Bodies and Champions in various fields was noted.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- That some Members had been members of outside bodies for a long time before being invited to the meeting, demonstrating the nature of the range of various outside bodies.
- That it was important to inform the Outside Bodies when changes occurred in

order that they could update their records.

- The question as to who appointed Members to Outside Bodies was raised. The Senior Manager - Democracy and Delivery replied that it was the Cabinet Member who appointed Members to the majority of Outside Bodies and that he did this as a portfolio holder leader than a politician.

Resolved to accept the report.

9. MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS

The report was submitted, noting that 29 Members had submitted an annual report for 2015-16 despite technical problems hampering the process of their preparation. It was noted that confusion existed as to the best way of preparing annual reports for 2016-17 due to the Election. Official guidance was yet to be received. Resolved not to hold further discussions on the issue until official guidance had been received pertaining to the reporting requirements of 2016-17.

10. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES WORK PLAN 2016-17

Submitted – the draft work programme.

RESOLVED to approve the work programme.

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 11.55am

CHAIRMAN