

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2013

PRESENT: **Independent Members**

Mr. Mr. Michael Wilson (Chair)
Mr. Mr. Islwyn Jones (Vice-Chair)

Mrs. Mrs. Denise Harris Edwards
Mr. Leslie Lord
Mrs. Dilys Shaw

Representing Town and Community Councils

Councillor William Raymond Evans
John Roberts

Representing the County Council

Councillor Trefor Lloyd Hughes
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Council Business/Monitoring Officer,
Interim Head of Democratic Services (JHJ) (In respect of Item 5),
Solicitor – Corporate Governance (AP),
Corporate Web & Information Manager (PA) (In respect of Item 4),
Customer Care Officer (BJ) (In respect of Items 6, 7, 8 & 9),
Senior HR Development Officer (MW) (In respect of Item 10),
Committee Officer (MEH).

ALSO PRESENT: None

APOLOGIES: None

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest received.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September, 2013 were confirmed, subject to the correction of the word, in the Welsh version of the minutes at Item 8 from '*Change 2*' to '*Dewis 2*'.

ARISING THEREON

8 – Planning Procedure Rules

The Head of Council Business/Monitoring Officer stated that the changes to the Planning Procedure Rules supported by the Standards Committee was approved by the County Council on 5 December, 2013.

14 – Outcome of an Investigation by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in relation to a complaint against a Community Councillor

The Vice-Chair suggested that other Members of the Standards Committee should be involved in respect of outcome of investigation.

3 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROJECT - AUDIT REVIEW

Submitted – a draft Audit Assignment Planning Sheet in respect of the Council complies with its Corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy and therefore deals effectively with the concerns and complaints of its customers.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : To invite the Audit Manager to attend the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MEETINGS AND REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Submitted – a report by the Corporate Web & Information Manager on the progress to enable Elected Members to complete the above statutory registers on-line.

It was highlighted that Elected Members are still registering their gifts and hospitality within a written register and not on the online version.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION :

- (1) That a letter be sent on behalf of the Standards Committee, reminding the Elected Members that they should be registering their gifts and hospitality online.**
- (2) To remind the Elected Members that the paper registering of their gifts and hospitality will cease in due course.**
- (3) An update report be presented by the Corporate Web & Information Manager at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.**

5 WEB CASTING/REMOTE ATTENDANCE AND ICT SUPPORT FOR TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Submitted – an update report by the Interim Head of Democratic Services in relation to the above.

It was noted that the Democratic Services Committee had recommended proceeding with webcasting of meetings for a 2 year pilot period, to utilise Welsh Government funding. The full Council, Executive and the Planning and Orders Committees would be part of this pilot scheme.

Questions were raised regarding the functionality of remote access to meeting of the Council. The Officer responded that further work was required to investigation options for remote access and he hoped to report back to the Standards Committee thereafter.

Members of the Standards Committee raised concerns regarding the encouragement of some Town/Community Councils to use the funding to assist them to set up websites. The Officer responded that 'One Voice Wales' has been contacted to help Town/Community Council to move ahead with the funding available.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : That an update report be submitted by the Interim Head of Democratic Services at a future meeting of the Standards Committee.

6 CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

6A Submitted, for information – a report by the Customer Care Officer in the form of an updated matrix for County Councillors.

RESOLVED to note the report for information.

ACTION : An update on any further developments from the Customer Care Officer at the next Standards Committee.

6B Submitted, for information – a report by the Customer Care Officer in the form of an updated matrix for Town and Community Councillors.

RESOLVED to note the report for information.

ACTION : An update on any further developments from the Customer Care Officer at the next Standards Committee.

7 ADJUDICATION PANEL DECISIONS

Submitted, for information – a report by the Customer Care Officer and a Paper by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) containing a summary of recent decisions of the Adjudication Panel between the 1st April, 2011 and 1st November, 2013.

The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) gave a background report on results of cases before the Adjudication Panel. Members of the Committee consider that a General Sentencing Sanctions Guidance is required in dealing with complaints.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION :

- **To request the Standards Committee Forum to add to its agenda :-**
 - (1) The viability of contacting the Ombudsman for Wales for guidance to be produced on a bespoke basis for the Standards Committee (based on the APW guidance) to decide what sanctions to provide which will benefit them when discussing complaints; and**
 - (2) The viability of asking the Ombudsman to add reported Standards' Committee decisions to its website.**
- **An update or any further developments from the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) at the next Standards Committee.**

8 PRE-REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS - UPDATES BY COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Submitted – for information, an updated report by the Customer Care Officer on pre-registration of interests.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : None

9 TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS - CODE OF CONDUCT AND UNDERTAKINGS UPDATE REPORT

Submitted, for information – an update report by the Customer Care Officer in relation to the above.

It was noted that all Town/Community Councils have now responded and have provided copies of their Code of Conduct and Undertakings.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : None

10 TRAINING FOR MEMBERS AND TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS- TRAINING ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT

10A Submitted – a report by the Senior HR Development Officer on the current situation with regards to member training to include progress on the Member Development Annual Plan.

The Officer reported that a total of 34 formal sessions have been organised between May and November for Elected Members since their election, these are included at Appendix 1 attached to the report. Details of all training offered/attended are recorded on Elected Members' individual personal records. As part of the commitment to support Elected Members, Personal Development Review training has been introduced and training to support this was delivered in October with the aim of completing the reviews early January 2014.

The Officer also provided a report on the recently submitted draft application for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. This has received satisfactory response from the WLGA although some additional information is required. These issues will be addressed and a further submission made to the WLGA in due course.

It was suggested that the Members of the Standards Committee, as part of their role in analysing Members Declaration of Interests, the element of Elected Members attendance at Training Sessions could be monitored at the same time.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION: That the Independent Members of the Standards Committee shall analyse attendance of Members at Training Sessions as part of their role of analysing Declaration of Interests.

10B Submitted – a report by the Senior Development Officer on the training offered to Town and Community Councils and the feedback received.

The Officer provided a report on the training on the Code of Conduct delivered by One Voice Wales. Written feedback from attendees was generally positive but some concerns were expressed by members of the Standards Committee about the delivery of the training sessions.

It was suggested that some in-house training could be considered to Community Council Clerks on the Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION :

- **That consideration be given to in-house training for Community Council Clerks on the Code of conduct.**
- **That the Senior Development Officer provides written feedback to 'One Voice Wales' on the quality of training provided.**

11 TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS - TRAINING ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Submitted – a report by the Head of Function Council Business/Monitoring Officer in relation to the above.

The Officer reported that it is clear that there is a lack of support for the training sessions on the Code of Conduct as three sessions were arranged in September with limited attendance. It was noted that Holyhead Town Council was not included in the sessions as they have made their own arrangements with One Voice Wales.

It was suggested that the Standards Committee approach be :-

- That a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee thanking those Town/Community Council who sent 3 or more representatives to the training session. In addition, to ask that they disseminate the information to other members, given special consideration to consider declarations of interest and their registration in meetings, and also to take the opportunity to re-enforce the message on web presence.
- That a letter be sent to those Councils who sent some representatives to thank them for attending the training sessions but to express disappointment that they did not take up the full complement of places. In addition, to ask that they disseminate the information to other members, give special consideration to consider declarations of interest and their registration in meetings, and also to take the opportunity re-enforce the message on web presence.
- That a letter to the 13 Councils who did not send any representatives to the training sessions to explain the potential consequences in the event of a complaint. In addition, the Officers to write to the relevant Local Members expressing concern about non-attendance.
- All three letters to contain a request that they are put on an agenda, discussed and minuted and provide written confirmation to the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED to note the report and recommendations as noted above.

ACTION :

- **That the recommendations contained above be implemented;**
- **To recommend that a representative of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee attend the Holyhead Town Council as an observer during the training session on the Code of Conduct;**
- **That the Clerks of the Community Council be the main focus for training on the Code of Conduct at the next scheduled training sessions in the New Year.**

12 REVIEW OF REGISTERS

Submitted – a report by the Solicitor-Corporate Governance in relation to the annual review of registers by the Standards Committee.

The Officer reported that it is proposed that each independent Member of the Standards Committee shall review the pre-registration of interests, declarations at meetings and Gifts and Hospitalities of 6 Elected Members.

Members of the Committee considered that it would be advantages to contact Elected Members via e-mail to clarify any queries.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION :

- **That the letter enclosed as Enclosure 2 to the report be approved;**
- **That 6 Elected Members be allocated to each Independent Member of the Standards Committee to review the registers;**
- **The review to be conducted between the end of January and the end of February 2014 and that the findings be reported back to the Solicitor – Corporate Governance to allow time to formulate a report to the next Standards Committee on 12 March, 2014.**

13 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL CONSULTATION

Submitted – a report by the Head of Council Business/Monitoring Officer as to the outcome of the consultation discussed at the September meeting in respect of payments to Co-Opted Members of Local Authorities.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the correspondence from Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

ACTION : None

**MR. MICHAEL WILSON
CHAIR**