

ATODIAD / ENCLOSURE A

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December, 2010

PRESENT:	Ms. Sue Morris - Vice-Chairperson in the Chair
	Lay Members
	Mrs. Pamela Moore
	Councillors J. Arwel Roberts, Ieuan Williams.
IN ATTENDANCE:	Monitoring Officer (LB), Personnel Manager (RLH), Committee Officer (MEH).
APOLOGIES:	Mr. J. Cotterell, Mr. Raymond Evans, Prof. R. Grove-White. Councillor T.LI. Hughes
ALSO PRESENT:	Councillor H. Eifion Jones

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest by a Member or Officer.

2 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to address the meeting. The Monitoring Officer drew attention to the report which had been submitted as part of the Agenda for the meeting. She reported that an application by Councillor H. Eifion Jones had been received for dispensation to enable him to take part in the discussion and voting on the Council's Pay and Grading Panel and any matters arising from the business of the Pay and Grading Panel which might at some stage be considered by the full Council.

The request received is that if any dispensation is granted it shall take effect from the 20th December, 2010, which is the next scheduled meeting of the Pay and Grading Panel and shall last for a minimum period of 6 months to allow the Panel to complete its work. However, if the Pay and Grading Panel fail to complete within the 6 months period then Councillor H. Eifion Jones would have to cease to be a Member of the Panel or present a further application for an extension of the dispensation granted.

The personal interest in respect of the dispensation relates to Councillor H. Eifion Jones' son who has become a temporary employee with the Council for 6 months. Councillor Jones is a member of the Pay and Grading Panel; the main remit of the Panel is to determine the terms and conditions of Council staff for the future and, in particular, is designing a new pay structure and other terms and conditions as well. The employment of Councillor Jones' son within the Council is a personal interest and his role and influence on the Pay and Grading Panel makes it a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct. In circumstances where there is a prejudicial interest, the Standards Committee has specific statutory powers to grant a dispensation to Members if it is satisfied that one or more of the specified statutory grounds is made out on the facts.

The Monitoring Officer further reported that the application has been made on the statutory ground that Councillor Jones' expertise and his role as a previous Chairman and a Member of the Pay and Grading Panel for the last four years would justify a dispensation.

She stated that the Standards Committee must decide whether Councillor Jones' expertise is sufficient to grant a dispensation. If the Committee decides that the expertise is sufficient then a decision must be made on the period of the dispensation and the right to speak and vote at the Panel.

The Monitoring Officer invited the HR Officer to address the Committee on the role of the Pay and Grading Panel and the possible impact the work of the Panel could have on the terms and conditions of a temporary employee and also to comment on the level of expertise that a Member might have acquired as a result of being on the Pay and Grading Panel for more than four years.

The HRO reported that the Pay and Grading Panel has been set up to facilitate a revised pay and grading structure, revised terms and conditions in respect of standby payments, travel allowances and possible revised flexible working arrangements within the Council. In March 1998, the County Council, through its Staff Committee, endorsed the implementation of a National Joint Council Job Evaluation Scheme. Subsequently, individual posts have been independently ranked and assessed by trained panellists and a formal rank order of posts has been created. Additionally, the County Council, in December 2006, resolved to set up a Pay and Grading Panel with the authority to agree a unified pay and grading structure for all staff. He noted that the remit of the Pay and Grading Panel was outlined in the documents attached to the Agenda of this Committee. The Terms of Reference of the Panel are :-

- to confirm the design of the pay structure which it is intended will be implemented within the organisation.
- to comment on issues such as allowances and special payments which it is proposed should be eliminated or changed through negotiations; flexibility's in working arrangements which might form part of an overall package of proposals; other efficiencies and efficiency savings which may legitimately form part of the negotiations on the adoption and introduction of the new pay structure; any proposals for the introduction of any form of performance reward or other incentives within the new pay structure.
- to convene, as and when required, to consider and offer a view to the negotiators where they deem it necessary to seek such guidance during deliberations with the trade unions.
- to approve the proposed implementation plan and timetable.
- to approve the final recommendations following successful completion of negotiations on the pay structure and related issues.
- to consider and determine any claims arising from the negotiations or approved grading structure and associated changes in conditions.
- to consider and determine any issues in relation to pay and grading which must be addressed prior to the implementation of the approved revised grading structure.

In addition, the Pay and Grading Panel have been made aware of the risks which may arise when making required decisions in respect of failure to decide or maintain the status quo; failure to invest sufficient funding and decision to act unilaterally i.e. considerable administrative costs, legal challenges.

The current proposed agreement has been considered by the Pay and Grading Panel following detailed negotiations and deliberations with the Trade Unions over the past 4 years. Panellists have also been made aware of the equalities issues and have been fully briefed on the Equalities Impact Assessment in relation to male/female and full and part time employees. He noted that this is where the area of expertise of the panellists comes into force.

However, the HRO stated that new panellists have joined the Pay and Grading Panel over the past few years but due to the advanced stage of the pay and grading structure he considered that expertise of the panel was paramount to finish the work.

The applicant, Councillor H. Eifion Jones stated that he was the first Chair of the Pay and Grading Panel and at the same time was the Portfolio Holder for Human Resources. He stated that he has been closely involved with the pay and grading structure for the last 4 years which has entailed detailed discussions with the Trade Unions in respect of this complex issue. Councillor Jones

expressed that critical decisions will have to be made in the near future in respect of the job evaluation scheme. He stressed that personally it would not make any difference to him if he was no longer a member of the Panel but it would be best for the Council for him to continue to be a panellist on the Pay and Grading Panel as it would be unwise to bring somebody new on the panel at this late stage. Councillor Jones further stated that the County Council had resolved to create a Pay and Grading Panel in 2006 to allow a small number of members to gain expertise of the job evaluation structure rather than having the full Council deliberating the issue. He considered that the temporary employment of his son would not colour his judgement in respect of the job evaluation scheme.

Having listened to the comments made by Officers and the representations made by the applicant and having asked questions, the Chair announced that the Standards Committee would retire to private session to consider its decision. On returning to public session, the Chair announced that it had :

RESOLVED unanimously to grant full Dispensation to Councillor H. Eifion Jones to speak and to vote on the Pay and Grading Panel and the work of the full Council in as far as it relates to the Pay and Grading Panel issues for a period of 12 months beginning on 20th December, 2010. The Standards Committee are satisfied that Councillor Jones demonstrated the necessary expertise to make out the statutory ground.

**MS. SUE MORRIS
VICE-CHAIRPERSON IN THE CHAIR**

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December, 2010

PRESENT: Mr Jeffrey Cotterell (Chair)

Lay Members

Mrs Pamela Moore
Ms Sue Morris
Mr H.Gray Morris

Representing the County Council

Councillors Trefor Lloyd Hughes, J.Arwel Roberts, Ieuan Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monitoring Officer
Legal Services Manager (RJ) (for item 3)
Corporate Information Officer (HP) (for item 4)
Senior Solicitor (ROH) (for item 5)
Committee Officer (ATH)
Administrative Assistant (SWJ)

APOLOGIES:

Professor Robin Grove-White, Councillor Raymond Evans (Town & Community Council)

The Chair welcomed all those present to this meeting of the Standards Committee and presented the apologies for absence which were noted.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Standards Committee held on 14 September, 2010 were submitted and confirmed as correct.

3 REVIEW OF PLANNING MATTERS PROCEDURE RULES

A report by the Legal Services Manager and the Head of Service (Planning and Public Protection) outlining the results of a review of the Planning Matters Procedure Rules as currently incorporated in Section 4.6 of the Council's Constitution was presented for the Committee's consideration and comment.

The Legal Services Manager explained that the Planning Matters Procedure Rules aim to set out guidance to both elected members and officers when dealing with planning matters. These rules do not aim to be a comprehensive or, indeed, a slavishly accurate guide to the law on what can be a complicated area. Rather, they seek to set out advice on conduct and procedure which, if followed, should allow both members and officers to avoid falling into error. The review above was not conducted in isolation: it can be seen in the context of the Corporate Governance Inspection of 2009 and certain recommendations that arose therefrom. At Section 1.4 of the report there are listed a number of other changes in the Constitution and to Procedures arising from the Corporate

Governance Inspection and various other matters which were subsequently incorporated within the Planning Services' Planning Decision Making Process Improvement Plan for 2010. Amongst the improvements in the Plan was a review of the Rules, and specifically, how the Rules operate as regards the conduct of the Planning Committee and as a code of practice for both members and officers dealing with planning matters.

The Legal Services Manager referred members to the Appendix to the report which set out the product of the review. This opportunity has been taken to generally tidy up the Rules as well as to make some fundamental changes. The major changes along with the reasons for them are documented in the Table at section 2.3 of the report and they refer to the following paragraphs -

- **Change 1** : Paragraph 4.6.4.3.3 - *It is proposed that a local member who serves on the Committee should not be allowed either to vote on, or to propose or second a recommendation on an application located in their ward. The reason for proposing this change is in order to reduce both the risk that a local member may be perceived to be pursuing a particular outcome on an application for political rather than purely planning reasons and the possibility that the decision may be challenged. The local member may still address the Committee but only as local member.*

With reference to the proposed change above, the viewpoint was expressed in the main by some of the Committee's lay members that one might have expected such a provision to be already operative and that in the interests of complete transparency the risk that a local member may be perceived to be biased has to be removed. This was countered by the view on the other hand that disallowing a local member from voting and seconding a recommendation on an application within his/her ward calls into question the member's objectivity and implies that despite rigorous training in the proprieties of the planning process, members may yet be swayed. It was also felt that being in the position of local member should not deprive a member of his voting entitlement when he /she has been democratically appointed to serve on the committee.

Following discussion, it was resolved by a majority vote not to support the change proposed above. (Two members voted in favour of the change)

- **Change 2** : Paragraph 4.6.10.2 - *It is proposed that the rules as to which applications by members and by certain officers should be referred to the Committee for decision rather than being made by officers under delegation are clarified. The changes now make clear what type of application ought to be referred to Committee (basically all applications that are required to be made by statute) and the category of officers' concerned (officers at and above Head of Service level and all officers directly involve in the planning process)*

With reference to the proposed change above, there was a general consensus amongst the members as to the acceptability of this amendment in so far as it was deemed that further clarification of the types of application to be referred to Committee and the category of officers to which they apply can only assist and facilitate the planning process.

Following discussion, it was resolved unanimously to support the change proposed above.

- **Change 3** : Paragraph 4.6.19.1.1(vi) - *That where the Committee votes for a site visit then only those Committee members who have visited a site shall be allowed to speak or vote when determining that application. This change is proposed on the basis that where the Committee believes that a site needs to be visited before an application can be determined, then it reasonably follows that only those members who have seen the site as part of the official site visit are properly placed to determine the application.*

There was considerable debate regarding the merits of the change proposed above including a lengthy discussion of the basis on which site visits are determined and made and whether the criteria for deciding whether a site visit should take place and is justified are always adhered to.

There was a view strongly put that as site visits are not always fully attended, should the change above be implemented and apply, then one could have a situation wherein a planning decision would then be restricted to a few members of the Committee which it was believed to be unacceptable and unreasonable given that it was felt the information provided in officer reports outweighs in depth and detail the information gained on a site visit. It was felt that the advantages of attending a site visit were not sufficient to justify imposing the restriction as proposed above. Moreover it was suggested that members are often very familiar with a particular area and would not need to visit a site to be able to make a decision on a development proposal in respect of it. The opposing view was that being aware or familiar with a site is very different from attending an in-depth site visit wherein members are provided with an officer's professional advice and where they can be advised of the properties and dimensions of a particular site. It was further suggested, that if a Committee decides a site visit is required in order to assist members in determining a planning application, then it would reasonably follow that those members attending the site visit are then best placed to come to a fully informed decision regarding the application.

Following discussion, it was resolved by a majority vote to support the change proposed above. (Four members voted in favour of the change)

(Councillor J.A.Roberts left the meeting at this point due to work commitments)

4 DRAFT INFORMATION PROTOCOL

A report by the Corporate Information Officer outlining a Protocol for members' access to information was presented for the members' consideration with a view to the Committee's recommending its adoption as part of the Council's Constitution.

The Corporate Information officer informed the Committee that whilst currently advice regarding the rights of access to information is contained within part 5.3.8 of the Council's Constitution, the Protocol above seeks to improve the presentation and clarity of that information based on the recognition that Councillors' rights of access and the Council's obligations to provide access to information need to be expressed in a clear and unequivocal statement. The draft Information Protocol provides a summary of how the members' rights of access to information are established in statute and common law and also expectations in relation to confidentiality. Providing this information in the form of a single, self contained Protocol will present a definitive statement on access to information issues. A protocol will also enable the Council to develop its content in order to better reflect changes to the legal landscape.

The Corporate Information Officer then proceeded to guide members through the individual sections of the draft protocol as they related to the following matters -

- Provision of Information
- Visits
- Ward Matters
- Briefings
- Managing Director's briefings for Group Leaders

With reference to the statement in the Protocol that the law does not provide a councillor with a roving commission through the documents of the Council, members sought clarification of a councillor's right of access to information, especially in-depth information on an issue that might be of Island wide relevance e.g. parking fees, but on which an individual councillor may not necessarily be able to demonstrate a need to know as a member of the relevant committee tasked with dealing with the issue. There was a query as to where a councillor should pitch a request for information especially if that councillor is a back bencher and whether he/she would be permitted to ask detailed questions if he/she is not a member of the relevant committee and/or task and finish group.

The Corporate Information Officer explained that the quotation "roving commission" derives from a definitive court case regarding councillors' rights under common law. A need to know exists where a councillor is able to demonstrate that access to a piece of information is necessary to facilitate a function of being a councillor, and normally, that would relate to current or forthcoming Council business. The term roving commission was included in the protocol in order to address the potential for requests by councillors which cite a need to know information in order to revisit historical issues which do not have a bearing on present business. The Monitoring Officer explained in clarification that there are two scenarios which can apply, the one where a councillor can demonstrate what is described in case law as a functional need to know as a member of a committee who requires the information to be able to for example, scrutinise a decision or to ask questions and the other where a councillor who is not a member of the relevant committee is able to make a Freedom of Information request in his capacity as an ordinary citizen up to a statutory limit in terms of time engaged in gathering that data.

The Corporate Information Officer stated that the rights of ordinary members of the public under Freedom of Information legislation are not included in the protocol above. However, the rights of the councillor to access to information is wide and, where a functional need to know cannot be demonstrated, he/she is able to exercise the citizen's rights to submit a Freedom of Information enquiry.

It was a resolved unanimously to recommend the Draft Information Protocol to the County Council for its adoption as part of the Council's Constitution.

5 DRAFT POLICY FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU CHECKS

A report by Mr Rhys Hughes, Senior Solicitor (Child Care) outlining the proposed content of a new draft Criminal Records Policy was presented for the Committee's consideration, with a view to its being recommended for adoption by the County Council.

The Senior Solicitor explained that the Council is registered with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and must by law undertake checks against those in posts which involve regular unsupervised direct contact with vulnerable people and children. The policy above supplements personnel background check procedures by providing guidance for identifying which jobs require what sort of check. In addition the policy proposes that every elected and co-opted council member will be subject to an enhanced CRB check before being able to perform certain duties, for example, serving on the Housing, Social Services or Education Committees, and being able to represent the Council on outside bodies, for example as a School Governor. Few Councils have such a policy in force and very few have included the requirement for Council members to be the subject of such checks. Denbighshire is one authority which does have a comparable policy in force and its Monitoring Officer has been included in the consultation process, along with the Acting Managing Director, Monitoring Officer, Corporate Information Officer, Corporate Directors and Human Resources Department. The Senior Solicitor referred also to a very commendable voluntary process whereby the Isle of Anglesey's elected members agreed that they themselves should voluntarily undertake an enhanced CRB check and that process has been followed with the exception of a very few members.

The Senior Solicitor drew the Committee's attention to the fact that as a draft version, the above policy is a work in progress and will be circulated to elected members also as part of the consultation process. The policy has been considered by the Political Group Leaders following which certain amendments were suggested which have been incorporated within the third draft. Whilst overall, Group Leaders were unanimously supportive of the draft policy, certain issues did arise in discussion one of which was the need to undergo more than one CRB check. In response to this point the Senior Solicitor explained that the policy allows for the appropriate Directorate to be able to exercise discretion in accepting a current valid CRB check thus obviating the need to undertake another check if a valid one is already in place. It is proposed that this discretion can be exercised if the CRB check was undertaken no longer than one year ago.

The Senior Solicitor then elaborated on the various sections of the draft policy with particular reference to standard and enhanced checks; the treatment of independent contractors and other types of agency workers; and the expectations regarding elected and co-opted members of the Council. He pointed out that another concern of the Group Leaders was member non-compliance and how might that be dealt with. If a member's unwillingness to comply is based on his/her having already been the subject of a CRB check, then the member concerned would be asked to show that the check had taken place; if non-compliance is due to a point of principle and to the fact that it is a code and is not mandatory, then it can be argued that if adopted by the Council the protocol becomes Council Policy and members are notified beforehand of the expectations in respect of undertaking a CRB check and in taking a post they should adhere to Council policy. Should a CRB check disclose information that makes an individual unsuitable, it was decided with the Group Leaders that decisions regarding compliance or the contents of a CRB check should rest with the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the individual member's Group Leader or in the case of unaffiliated members, in consultation with the Chair of the Council. The Monitoring Officer may advise a Group Leader that an elected member who is unwilling to undergo a CRB check is therefore not suitable to be selected to serve on certain relevant committees and, in the event of a question arising as to the contents of a CRB check, that information being confidential information, will remain in the possession of the Monitoring Officer for the purpose of making a recommendation thereon. In any case where there is a question in relation to the contents of a CRB check, an individual member would be informed and invited to stand down from any relevant committee on which he/she served e.g. Social Services or Education Committees and to withdraw from any sensitive duties outside the Council. There would be no need for any further action. In the event of any difficulties arising, the Monitoring Officer would make a complaint of non compliance to the Standards Committee whose members by virtue of their own CRB checks, would be able to come to a decision on the issue.

The Senior Solicitor briefly referred to the appendices to the policy which included rules for dealing with ex-offenders; a risk assessment form for determining what type of check is required; the storage, use, and retention of disclosure information together with a checklist for reviewing information disclosed. He concluded by saying that the draft policy above fills a current void in the Council's procedures and it draws together the four categories of individuals involved in the Council's business who should have a CRB check. However, the Senior Solicitor did point out that one category of individuals that has been omitted is that of school governors. The Vetting and Barring Scheme proposed by the previous Government and due to commence in the summer but which has since been put on hold, was intended to apply also to school governors. He stated that he had consulted with the Corporate Director of Education for his views on this particular point and was awaiting to learn what lead the Corporate Director of Education is intending to give to schools and school governors on the matter.

Members of the Standards Committee were very supportive of the draft policy above and they recognised the value of having such a policy in place. There was some discussion of the issue of school governors : the feeling amongst members was that the policy should apply also to the category of school governors. There were also some questions as regards the logistics of applying the policy to contractors and volunteers. A further query was to do with the potential impact of information disclosure on those individuals who might be considering a candidacy as an elected member or as a Standards Committee member but who might be deterred by the fact of a minor offence on their record which they might not want divulged. With reference to the first point, the Senior Solicitor explained that work for individual contractors would be subject to a risk assessment as part of the tendering process as outlined in section C3 of the Policy, and the advertisement and contact of work will state whether a satisfactory CRB check is required. It is the responsibility of the contractor to produce an original CRB check and to make available evidence of identity for every individual undertaking the work. As regards any uncertainty as to what happens to information disclosed, the Senior Solicitor stated that the policy sets out a clear pathway for the storage, handling and disposal of disclosure information.

It was resolved unanimously to recommend the draft Criminal Records Policy for adoption by the County Council with the additional recommendation that the policy be extended to school governors.

6 CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE OMBUDSMAN

An update report by the Customer Care Officer regarding current complaints to, and investigations by the Ombudsman in relation to Isle of Anglesey County Councillors was presented for the Committee's information.

The Monitoring Officer observed that the report above reflects a new format whereby members are provided with an annual report on the status of all complaints since the May, 2008 election and in addition, a quarterly update as above which updates members on the status of current complaints and investigations. She then proceeded to report on the status of the each of four current/ongoing complaints and/or investigations relating to Anglesey and drew particular attention to Complaint No 1 which had recently been referred by the Ombudsman to the Adjudication Panel. The Monitoring Officer observed that this particular case was likely to have a full contested hearing probably during the course of the first three months of the New Year and she recommended that members of the Standards Committee endeavour to attend the Hearing as a training exercise and to gain experience from it. She stated that she would inform members of the Hearing dates via e-mail once they had been confirmed.

It was resolved to note the information.

7 OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT AND ADJUDICATION PANEL DECISION REGARDING FORMER COUNTY COUNCILLOR PHILIP FOWLIE

A copy of the report of the Ombudsman along with a summary of its main findings in respect of former Councillor Philip Fowlie together with a copy of a letter by the Interim Managing Director dated 12 November, 2010 to ITV Wales were presented for the Committee's information.

The Monitoring Officer reminded the members that it is a requirement of the Adjudication Panel that its findings be reported officially to the Standards Committee at its next available meeting. The Managing Director's letter to ITV Wales is presented to the Standards Committee at his own request principally in order to highlight the concerns which he had regarding what he believed to be the imbalance of the programme which ITV Wales broadcast on the subject of the Isle of Anglesey County Council on 4 November, 2010 which featured commentary by former councillor Philip Fowlie, particularly in light of the Ombudsman's findings above. The Standards Committee's members took note of the Interim Managing Director's letter as well as the content of the Ombudsman's report and findings.

It was resolved to note the information as presented.

8 NEW TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR MEMBERS

A copy of the report submitted to the meeting of the County Council on 9 December by the Member Development Champion and Chair of the Member Development Working Group was presented for the Committee's information.

The Monitoring Officer informed members that due to the fact that the meeting of the County Council on 9th December overran, the consideration of some items on the agenda for that meeting were deferred and those included the new Training and Development Plan for Members above which was due to be presented for the Council's approval. Given that there is some uncertainty at present as to whether the deferred items will be presented to the next meeting of the Council in

March, or to an extraordinary meeting to be convened before then, she had advised the Training Section to proceed with putting the Plan into action in order to ensure that the Plan is progressed in a timely fashion and does not remain inactive for possibly three months.

It was resolved to endorse the New Training and Development Plan for Members and to note its contents.

9 REPORTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Standards Committee reported verbally on the following matters -

- The Chair's presentation to the All Wales Standards Committee Conference held on 14 October, 2010 at Cardiff City Hall. (A letter dated 12 November, 2010 from the Head of Democratic Services and Clerk to the Council on behalf of Cardiff Council's Standards and Ethics Committee and its Monitoring Officer thanking the Chair of the Isle of Anglesey Standards Committee for his attendance and contribution to the conference was included as part of the agenda papers).

The Chair informed members that he had addressed the conference on the subject of member training and development and how many problems can be resolved or averted by appropriate training and skills development.

- The outcome of the Chair's report to the County Council at its meeting held on 9 December with regard to the threshold for acceptance of gifts by members. (A copy of the report along with background information enclosures were included as part of the agenda papers).

The Chair briefly recapped on the Standards Committee's deliberations on this matter which concluded in its recommending to the Council that the financial threshold for the acceptance of gifts be fixed at zero. However, after due consideration and discussion, the County Council at its meeting on 9 December, resolved by a majority vote to retain the present arrangements i.e. to adhere to the current limit of £20.

- The Chair's presentation to Town and Community Councillors scheduled for 12 January in relation to their training requirements.

The Chair invited the Committee's members to present any ideas for the presentation above in the period from now to 12 January and he commented that he would welcome their suggestions.

10 DATES OF MEETINGS

Consideration was given to confirming the dates for formal and informal meetings of the Standards Committee for 2011 and to agreeing agenda items for the first informal meeting. A copy of the Standards Committee Work programme was presented for members' information on which suggested items for the next meeting were highlighted.

The Chair reminded members that consideration had been given to rescheduling meetings to the first Wednesday of the month. The Monitoring Officer observed that the Committee Section had raised concerns regarding this arrangement and the members were informed that as meetings of the Planning and Orders Committee are scheduled for the first Wednesday of each month, it would mean dispatching what can be sizeable agendas for both Committees simultaneously thus putting pressure on the system for replicating and producing agendas. It was suggested that formal meetings of the Standards Committee for which an official agenda is prepared be rescheduled to the second Wednesday of the month whilst the informal meetings take place on the first Wednesday of the month. The Monitoring Officer made a further suggestion that the Committee

might wish to consider reducing the number of informal meetings to one each quarter thus (subject to dispensation hearings) making a total of 8 meetings per annum - 4 formal meetings and 4 informal meetings. The Monitoring Officer also reminded members that the County Council will be appointing a new Standards Committee in December, 2011 for which the recruitment process will commence in the Summer of 2011. A Standards Committee Selection Panel of the Council will receive applications of interest and the Committee's current lay members (apart from the Chair who will have completed his statutory tenure) are eligible to reapply.

With reference to the Committee's next informal meeting, the Monitoring Officer referred to the following matters as ones requiring members' attention and as possible ideas for discussion at the next informal session -

- Public speaking at meetings of the Standards Committee.
- Establishing panels to deal with dispensation applications particularly at short notice.
- Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting in relation to members' ICT skills and members' attendance at committee meetings.
- To review the work programme.
- In light of the decision of the full Council at its meeting on 9 December, to revisit the draft protocol in respect of gifts and hospitality.
- To continue to address the issue of members' training in light of the fact that the 3 members who were given periods of suspension or disqualification for breaching the Code of Conduct regarding whom the Committee has received reports, cited lack of training as one of the reasons as to why they did breach the Code. Although the Ombudsman rejected this explanation, the Standards Committee and possibly the Member Development Group, need to look at this matter and to consider how it might be addressed.
- The Corporate Information officer is preparing a report on councillors' right to roam in respect of the use of swipe cards to gain access to various sections of the Council Offices. The Committee will be provided with an informal update on progress.

The Chair suggested also that a further meeting with Group Leaders needs to be discussed and arranged.

Following discussion, it was resolved that -

- **Subject to dispensation hearings, that eight meetings of the Standards Committee be convened during the year comprising of four formal meetings and four informal meetings.**
- **That the Standards Committee's formal meetings be rescheduled to the second Wednesday of the month.**
- **That the Committee's informal meetings be rescheduled to the first Wednesday of the month.**
- **To confirm that the next informal meeting will take place on 2 February, 2011.**

**Mr Jeffrey Cotterell
Chair**