

# STANDARDS COMMITTEE

## Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2014

**PRESENT:** **Independent Members**

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

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

**Representing Town and Community Councils**

Councillors William Raymond Evans and John Roberts (Not present for Item 4)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer,  
Solicitor (Corporate Governance) (AW),  
Communications Officer (GJ) (In respect of Item 4),  
Committee Officer (SC).

**ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor xxxx

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Trefor Lloyd Hughes and Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas

### 1 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Item 4 – The Monitoring Officer declared an interest given Councillor xxxx's allegations about one of her Services.

### 2 **MINUTES OF MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June, 2014 were confirmed as correct.

#### ***ARISING THEREON***

The Vice-Chair referred to the Welsh version of the agenda, and the translation of documents into Welsh. He pointed out that the quotations were not translated, and that these documents were published on the Council website. He requested that this should be looked into.

**Action: The matter to be referred to the Translation Section.**

#### **Item 3 - Standards Committee Forum Page 1**

The Chair provided an update on Item 3 on the agenda – to obtain a job description for Clerks of Town and Community Councils and submit a copy to the Chair.

The Chair reported that the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) had sent out a document, namely 'The Essential Clerk's Guide' from One Voice Wales to Town and Community Councils. There are also expectations set out in the Ombudsman's Guidance on the Code.

In response, it was concluded that there was not a general job description, and that it was the responsibility of the Town and Community Councils to agree their expectations with their Clerk.

**Action: Monitoring Officer will address issue with the Clerks at the forthcoming training.**

**Item 4 - Declaration of Interests in Meetings and Register of Gifts and Hospitality**

Mrs Shaw asked the Chair for an update on funding on software. The Chair responded that he had attended a meeting with the Group Leader and it was agreed that the initiative of the Standards Committee was supported.

The Monitoring Officer reported that it had been agreed in principle, and a report had to be presented to the Executive to allocate funding from the Group Leaders' contingency. They had asked the Standards Committee to contact the WLGA to see if there was funding available. A response has been received from the WLGA, stating that they could not provide funding. The Monitoring Officer further reported that the rationale for refusing funding was the commercial and contractual relationship between the Council and the software developer. The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) would contact the WLGA again to see if they would reconsider.

The Monitoring Officer stated that the report has been prepared and approved formally, but that she was not taking it forward until the WLGA have given their final answer or if any other Councils can provide funding.

**Action:**

- **The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) to write back to the WLGA following discussion with the Council's Web Manager and provide a further update;**
- **To await a final response from the WLGA or other Councils before moving forward.**
- **Then seek an Executive decision**

**Item 9 – Training for Committee Member and Town and Community Councils**

Mrs Shaw questioned the position regarding training for Community Councils.

The Monitoring Officer responded stating that the dates had been fixed and invitations sent out, but response has not been very good.

The Chair referred to an engagement meeting. The response by Clerks of the Town and Community Councils was that they did not believe it was their responsibility to provide advice on the Code of Conduct. The Chair attended another meeting in which Town and Community Councils in Holyhead had suggested grouping together for a training session. The majority of Clerks seemed less than enthusiastic about the training.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Standards Committee carry on with the training as planned. It was considered that building that relationship further would be beneficial.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

**Action: To approach the Clerks of Town and Community Councils to remind them of the training being offered.**

**3 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED**

**“Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during discussion on the following item on the grounds that it may involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the attached Public Interest Test”.**

#### **4 REPORT FROM OMBUDSMAN**

Submitted - A report by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) investigating a complaint relating to alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct, by a County Councillor.

**RESOLVED to conduct a hearing at a date and time to be fixed.**

*Councillors John Roberts and W R Evans joined at the end of this item.*

#### **5 REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY AND BRIEFING NOTES**

Submitted - a report by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) outlining the concept of publishing occasional briefing notes to Members on discrete subjects on which Members frequently seek advice.

The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) provided an update on the role of the Legal Section in providing information and guidance to Members regarding any questions they may have or to be kept up to date on any relevant changes in the law. The Solicitor stated that in the last 6 months, the Legal Section has completed 4 briefing notes.

It is intended to publish a new briefing note on Gifts and Hospitality, following a review that this Committee undertook this year. It had been noted that not many Members recorded gifts and hospitality. The Solicitor explained that the Legal Section have set out questions that Members are often asking, with suggested answers.

The Vice-Chair suggested that he would like to add receiving tickets and free admission on the form.

It was suggested that briefing sessions were held before meetings, as greater attendances could be achieved.

The Monitoring Officer did not think it was advisable to hold training sessions before meetings due to the work load Members already have. It was suggested that the briefing notes be mentioned again in the Standard Committee's Annual Report.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

#### **6 CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES**

6A Submitted – a report by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) in the form of an up-dated matrix for County Councillors.

Councillor John Roberts raised his concern that two of the complaints had taken a long time to come before the Committee.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the Ombudsman's target was one year to present a report to the Standards Committee, and this issue has also been raised in the Standards Committee Forum.

**RESOLVED to note the report for information and raise the issue again when the North Wales Standards Committee Forum meets with the Ombudsman in November.**

6B Submitted – a report by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) in the form of an up-dated matrix for Town and Community Councils.

**RESOLVED to note the report for information.**

The Chair referred to Personal Development Reviews and asked members of the Committee to complete a review. He stated that a Welsh version will be available also. He explained that he had allocated half hour slots for Members of the Standards Committee and would report back with a draft training plan for the Committee as a whole.

**MR. MICHAEL WILSON  
CHAIR**