

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2014

PRESENT: **Independent Members**

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

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

Representing Town and Community Councils

Councillors W.Raymond Evans, John Roberts

Representing the County Council

Councillor Trefor Lloyd Hughes

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer,
Interim Head of Democratic Services (JHJ) (In respect of Items 9 & 10),
Solicitor – Corporate Governance (AP),
Senior Human Resources Development Officer (MW) (In respect of Item 7),
Committee Officer (MEH),
Administrative Assistant/Committee Officer (SC).

ALSO PRESENT: None

APOLOGIES: Councillor Dafydd R. Thomas

The Chair referred to Councillor Dafydd R. Thomas recent illness. It was agreed that a letter be sent, on behalf of the Committee, to express their best wishes to Councillor Thomas.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest received.

2 MINUTES OF MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 December, 2013 were confirmed.

ARISING THEREON

4.(1) - The minutes referred to a letter sent out to Elected Member reminding them to complete the register gifts and hospitality online. The Vice-Chair questioned why it was not possible to declare gifts and hospitality on the website at present. The Head of Function (Council Business) responded that Elected Members can complete the form online and need to move away from paper forms and use the facilities to register gifts and hospitality online. She further stated that at present the function to Declare Interests at Meetings is the one which is not available at present.

ACTION: The Corporate Web Manager to provide an update on the progress on the register of declarations of interests in meetings at the next meeting.

11. The minutes referred to training on the Code of Conduct. A question was raised by the Vice-Chair with regard to recommending a representative of the independent members of the Standards Committee to attend the Holyhead Town Council. He questioned whether a date had been set for the meeting. The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) responded that she has written to the clerk of the Holyhead Town Council twice to ask when the training sessions would take place, but has not yet received a reply.

Action: The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) to report on the progress at the next meeting following response from the Holyhead Town Council. Councillor T.LI. Hughes to raise this at the next meeting he attends.

3 STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM

3A Submitted and noted the minutes of the Standards Committee Forum held on 21st October, 2013.

ACTION : None

3B Submitted and approved the letters to be sent to One Voice Wales and WLGA dealing with the development of (i) Web copy for Town and Community Councils, and (ii) a 'toolkit' for Town and Community Councils.

RESOLVED to approve the letter to One Voice Wales and WLGA as noted above, incorporating the amendments suggested by the Vice-Chair in the meeting.

ACTION : To send a copy of the One Voice Wales letter to the Interim Head of Democratic Services for his approval.

3C Submitted – copy of letter to be sent to the Ombudsman requesting that decisions made by Standards' Committees should be published on the Ombudsman's website.

The Head of Function (Council Business) considered that this item be included on the Standards' Committee Forum requesting the Forum to decide whether or not to send this on in their name.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the letter to the Ombudsman.

ACTION : To request the regional Standards' Committee Forum to approve and send the letter.

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

The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) gave an oral update on the present situation regarding registers for the following:-

- The standing register;
- register of declarations of interests in meetings;
- gifts and hospitality.

With reference to the above, the Solicitor explained there had been no change since the previous meeting. Following discussion with the Corporate Web Manager, it was reported that there was a requirement for additional software to be developed for the register of interests in meetings to become interactive.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION: To receive an update from the Corporate Web Manager at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

5 CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

- 5A** Submitted - A report by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) in the form of an up-dated matrix for County Councillors.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report for information.

ACTION : An update report on any further developments from the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) at the next Standards Committee.

- 5B** 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 contents of the report for information.

ACTION : An update report on any further developments from the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) at the next Standards Committee.

6 ADJUDICATION PANEL DECISIONS

Submitted - A summary of decisions presented by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance), which were made by the Adjudication Panel between 13th December, 2013 and 12th March, 2014.

The Solicitor (Corporate Governance) gave a background report on results of a case before the Adjudication Panel.

RESOLVED to note the report for information.

ACTION : An update or any further developments from the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) at the next Standards Committee.

7 TRAINING FOR MEMBERS AND TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS - TRAINING ON THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW (STANDARDS COMMITTEE)

- 7A** Submitted - confirmation that letters were sent to Community Councils and Elected Members within their ward to highlight their attendance record at the training session.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : That an update report of responses received be presented by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

- 7B** The Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer stated that it is intended to convene in-house training for Town/Community Councils Clerks on the Code of Conduct in the Autumn.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : That arrangements be made to convene an in-house training session for Town/Community Councils Clerks on the Code of Conduct and that the slides to be prepared for the session be afforded to the Standards Committee.

- 7C** The Senior Human Resources Development Officer stated that communication had been sent to One Voice Wales to provide feedback on the standard of training provide last year.

The Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer noted that One Voice Wales had refused to allow the slides of their presentation to be released to the County Council.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : None

7CH The Senior Human Resources Development Officer gave a verbal report on the current Performance Review process for Elected Members and referred to the proforma documents used.

It was reported that Elected Members are now required to complete Annual Reports on their achievements during their year of office, roles and responsibilities together with training sessions they have attended.

The Head of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer stated that a similar review will be conducted for Lay Members and Independent Members of the Standards Committee in the future.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : That an update report be submitted to the Standards Committee by the Senior Human Resources Development Officer at the next meeting.

8 REVIEW OF REGISTERS

Submitted - A report by the Solicitor (Corporate Governance) on the summary of findings of the review of registers. She reported on the following issues:-

The Standing Register

- Councillors failing to provide information on interest in land;
- Forms were not being completed fully or accurately.

The Register of Declaration of Interest at meetings

- Confusion between personal/prejudicial interest;
- Some Councillors still used the old forms.

The Register of Gifts and Hospitality

- Very few declarations were made on gifts and hospitality;

Training Register

- Whether the Training register should be published online?

RESOLVED: To move forward and send the general findings of the review to all Elected Members following discussions with the Council Leader and Chair of the Standards Committee.

ACTION : That the training needs of Elected Members in the completion of the above Registers be discussed.

9 MEMBER CHARTER STATUS

Submitted - a verbal report from the Interim Head of Democratic Services in relation to the above.

The Interim Head of Democratic Services stated that the County Council has been awarded the foundation level of the Charter Status for Corporate Governance.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : None

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

Submitted for information, the report considered by the Democratic Services Committee on 30th January, 2014. This report sets out the context and proposals for webcasting of meetings and remote attendance. The County Council resolved on 10th October, 2013 to proceed with webcasting of meetings for a two year pilot period. Following a competitive tendering process the webcasting contract has been awarded to Public-i.

The Interim Head of Democratic Services gave an update on progress, and explained that the timetable for receiving the grant for the trial period has been extended to next year. He explained that live broadcasting will commence in June, commencing with the Executive, followed by the County Council and Planning and Orders Committee, and how the system will be trialled by Members and staff before going live. Public-I will provide training and on-going support initially. The Officer gave an update on remote attendance at meetings. He explained that he would report back to the Executive in May.

The Interim Head of Democratic Services reported on the grant allocated by Welsh Government for each Town and Community Councils, to spend on website development.

The purpose of this grant is to assist Town and Community Councils to prepare for the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013, which contains provisions which would require each community council to publish information on a website. He explained that the Welsh Government has relaxed the guidelines terms of using of the grant and further guidance was expected from the Welsh Government. He mentioned that by 2015, every community council should have a website. Guidance from the Welsh Assembly is expected on this matter.

RESOLVED

- **To note progress as detailed in the report on the broadcasting of meetings to commence in June 2014.**
- **To note the current position in relation to remote attendance.**

ACTION : An update report on the above be submitted to a future meeting of the Standards Committee.

**MR. MICHAEL WILSON
CHAIR**