

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2016

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

Councillor John Chorlton
Councillor John Roberts

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Function (Council Business)/Section 151 Officer,
Policy Officer (for Item 3),
Committee Officer (MEH).

ALSO PRESENT: None

APOLOGIES: Councillors Trefor Lloyd Hughes, Dafydd Rhys Thomas

The Chair welcomed Councillor John Chorlton, a Town/Community Council representative to his first meeting of the Standards Committee.

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The minutes of the following meetings were confirmed as correct :-

- Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 16 September, 2015.

ARISING THEREON

- **Item 3 – Review of the Planning Procedure Rules – Part 4.6 of the Constitution**

The Monitoring Officer referred to the resolution by the Standards Committee that no action be taken pending draft National Planning Procedure Rules. These are out for consultation until May.

It was AGREED that the Monitoring Officer circulate the draft to the Committee Members who will contribute their views to the Monitoring Officer during the consultation period. (submitted on 15/3/2016)

- **Item 4 – Revised Guidance on the Code of Conduct for County Councillors and Community Councillors**

The Monitoring Officer wrote to the Community Councils on the 23rd September, 2015 enclosing a copy of the Revised Guidance on the Code of Conduct and a link to the guidance on the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' website.

- **Item 5 – The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 and the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 (Commencement Number 2) Order 2015**

The Monitoring Officer said that this matter will be discussed under item 4 – Review of the Three Registers of Members’ Interests.

- **Item 6 – Factsheets Published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – Investigations and Interviews – Members’ Code of Conduct**

The Monitoring Officer said that the factsheets as noted above were forwarded to the Community Councils on 23rd September, 2015.

- **Item 7 - Draft Local Guidance on the Officers’ Code of Conduct**

The Monitoring Officer said the Standards Committee supported the Draft Local Guidance on the Officers’ Code of Conduct and recommended that it be approved for consultation. Issues were raised during the consultation process with regard to management buy outs and significant amendments have been undertaken to the documentation. Further consultation therefore has been undertaken on the document and it is anticipated that the Draft Local Guidance will be published soon. (Published 14/3/2016)

- Minutes of the Dispensation Panel held on 24 September, 2015.

ARISING THEREON

The Vice-Chair said that he and some Members of the Standards Committee attended a Dispensation Panel in Conwy County Borough Council. He stated that he considered that a training session be afforded to the Standards Committee on Dispensations and procedures.

It was RESOLVED that the Monitoring Officer arrange training session for Members of the Standards Committee on Dispensations.

ACTION : As noted above.

- Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 19 February, 2016.

Members of the Committee expressed concern that the “decision” of the Standards Committee with regard to Councillor Peter Rogers’ suspension was on the Daily Post website nearly an hour before the commencement of the meeting on 19 February, 2016. The Monitoring Officer said that she contacted the Daily Post asking them to remove the story from the website.

It was RESOLVED that the Monitoring Officer write to the Daily Post on behalf of the Standards Committee expressing concern with regard to this matter and asking for clarification/remedy.

ACTION : As noted above.

3 TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS - WEBSITES

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer with regard to the statutory requirement for all community councils to have a web presence and publish information on their websites.

The Policy Officer updated the report and stated that Bodedern Community Council has now claimed the website development grant. However, Bodorgan and Llaneluad Community Councils still have not claimed the website development grant and have stated that they did not intend to establish websites. It was reported that 26 Community Councils have websites in place, 6 Community Councils are in the process of developing websites.

The Monitoring Officer reported that it is a statutory requirement for Town/Community Councils to have websites in place and there is a requirement for their registers of interests to be available on the Town/Community Councils websites.

Members of the Committee requested that the Monitoring Officer write to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to ascertain his course of action when Community Councils do not have a website in place.

It was RESOLVED that the Monitoring Officer write to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to establish his course of action with regard to Community Councils not complying with the requirement to have a website in place.

ACTION : As noted above.

4 REVIEW OF THE THREE REGISTERS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer in relation to the process and timetable for the Annual Review of Registers.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the review of the registers is part of the Standards Committee's work programme and as there are 30 Councillors, the usual arrangement is for the independent members of the Standards Committee to review the registers of any six Councillors, selected at random.

The Registers are :-

- 'Standing' register i.e. pre-registration of interests.
- Declarations at Meetings
- Gifts and Hospitality

The Monitoring Officer stated that Members' Annual Reports are now on the County Council's website and those also include information about membership of outside bodies, including school governors.

The Monitoring Officer further stated that Town/Community Councils will also be subject to a review of their registers. She further noted that as it is a statutory requirement for Town/Community Councils to have a website, and Members' Interests should be included there. Members of the Standards Committee considered that the Chair should write to the Town/Community Councils outlining the requirement and process to be undertaken for the review of Members' interests. It was noted that the process will be undertaken in September 2016 by Independent Members of the Standards Committee.

It was RESOLVED :-

- **That the Independent Members of the Standards Committee undertake the Annual Review of the 3 Registers of Members interests as assigned last year;**
- **The Town/Community Councils Members shall undertake the Annual Review of the Interests of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee together with the Co-opted Members of the two Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee;**
- **The process of the Review of the Registers shall be completed by the end of April 2016 and an Informal Meeting of the Standards Committee will be arranged to discuss the findings of the review ;**
- **The Chair of the Standards Committee will include, in his Annual Report to the full County Council in May 2016, the main findings of the review;**
- **The Chair to write to Community Councils outlining the process of reviewing Registers of Members Interests and noting that the process will commence in September 2016.**

5 CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer in to the above.

The Monitoring Officer stated that one complaint is currently under investigation with regard to a County Councillor. She noted that there is no matter outstanding with regard to Town/Community Councillors.

RESOLVED to note the report.

6 REPORT FROM STANDARDS CONFERENCE WALES 2015

Submitted – a report by the Chair and Vice-Chair in relation to their attendance at the Standards Conference Wales 2015 held by Cardiff City Council.

The Chair and Vice-Chair outlined the ‘workshops’ they attended.

It was stated that the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has expressed that he intends to concentrate on Health matters rather than dealing with minor Council complaints.

It was RESOLVED to note the report.

7 FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

It was RESOLVED that the Standards Committee shall meet twice yearly with informal meetings held at a regular basis. The Monitoring Officer will report to the Executive and Council and the Chair will attend a meeting of the Council’s Group Leaders in order to ask for their support.

**MR. MICHAEL WILSON
CHAIR**