

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October, 2012

PRESENT:

Independent Members

Mr. Michael Wilson (Chair),
Mr. Islwyn Jones (Vice-Chair),
Ms. Denise Harris Edwards,
Mr. Leslie Lord,
Mrs. Dilys Shaw

Representing the County Council

Councillor Ieuan Williams.

Representing Town and Community Councils

Councillor Raymond Evans,
Councillor John Roberts.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Head of Function (Legal and Administration)/Monitoring Officer,
Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer (RMJ),
Housing Services Manager (HR) (In respect of Item 3),
Corporate Web & Information Manager (PA) (In respect of Item 4),
Customer Care Officer (BJ) (In respect of Items 5, 6, 7),
Senior Development Officer (MW) (In respect of Items 8 & 10.2),
Committee Officer (MEH).

APOLOGIES:

Councillor T.LI. Hughes.

ALSO PRESENT:

None

1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest made by a Member or Officer.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the following meetings were confirmed :-

- Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July, 2012, subject to the inclusion of the names of Councillors Raymond Evans and John Roberts (Representing Town and Community Councils) to the list of those present at the meeting.
- Minutes of the Dispensation Hearing held on 25 July, 2012
- Minutes of the meeting held on 16 August, 2012

3 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND THE ROLE OF MEMBERS

Submitted – an update report by the Head of Service (Housing) in relation to the above.

The Housing Services Manager reported that a leaflet has been produced by the Housing Section with information about social housing, comprising a section on frequently asked questions and answers, including a question clarifying the role of Elected Members in the process. An authorisation form has been introduced for the disclosure of information to Elected Members,

Members of Parliament, Assembly Members, family members or other individuals acting as advocates for the applicant.

The Officer further noted that a Customer Care Unit has been established since August 2012 and it is hoped that the Unit will be able to resolve issues and operate as a point of contact with the service for Elected Members.

It was noted that when Phase 1 of the Orchard IT system is implemented at the end of November 2012, and Phase 2 in the first quarter of 2013/14, the services for customers can be further improved.

It was **RESOLVED to note the report.**

ACTION : None

4 ON-LINE PUBLICATION OF STATUTORY REGISTERS

Submitted – an update report by the Corporate Web and Information Manager regarding extending on-line publication of Members' Declarations of Interest to include declarations of gifts and hospitality, in addition to interests in meetings, and to enable gifts and hospitality forms and Standing Register to be updated interactively.

The Corporate Web and Information Manager noted that Agenda's and Committee papers aspect of the new Mod.Gov system will be operational and published to the internet by the beginning of November with training needs addressed for the new Council.

It was **RESOLVED to note the report.**

ACTION : That the Corporate Web and Information Manager provide further update on progress, implementation and proposed induction training for new and returning Members, at the meeting of Standards Committee in March 2013.

5 COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Submitted – an update report by the Customer Care Officer on the Complaints Management Project.

It was reported that work has been completed to adapt the Policy to 'Anglesey's' circumstances and reflects the realities imposed by resource constraints. It is anticipated that the New Policy will be taken to the Executive on 19 November, 2012 for approval with a proposed implementation date of 1 April, 2013. The Customer Care Officer further noted that it is hoped that complaints can be dealt with more efficiently and that fewer complaints are forwarded to the Ombudsman.

It was **RESOLVED to note the report and support the proposal.**

ACTION : An update report to be received from the Customer Care Officer at the Standards Committee on 13th March, 2013.

6 CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

6.1 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 on 11th December, 2012.

6.2 Submitted for information – a report by the Customer Care Officer in the form of an updated matrix for Town and Community Councils.

RESOLVED to note the report for information.

ACTION : An update on any further developments from the Customer Care Officer at the next Standards Committee on 11th December, 2012.

6.3 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Submitted for information- a report by the Customer Care Officer including a summary of matters relevant to the Isle of Anglesey County Council.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the County Council has a Local Resolution Protocol which deals with low level complaints between elected members and elected members and officers; there has been one Panel Hearing. She noted that there is a role for the Standards Committee if the disagreement is not resolved then the Leader of the Council is able to request that the Standards Committee to meet informally.

Councillor Ieuan Williams expressed that the Council must show to the Ombudsman that it has procedures in place to reduce complaints received. He noted that complaints are still high within the Benefits Section and suggested that the matter should be referred to the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee to requested details of the weaknesses and the way forward to reduce complaints this service receives.

Following further deliberations it was **RESOLVED to note the report.**

ACTION : To request that the Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee requests a report to discuss the issues of high levels of complaints within the Benefits Section.

7 SUMMARY OF ADJUDICATION PANEL DECISIONS

Submitted – a report by the Customer Care Officer in relation to the above.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : An update on any further developments from the Customer Care Officer at the next Standards Committee on 11th December, 2012.

8 (A) STATUS OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Submitted – an update report by the Senior Development Officer on matters arising from Member Development Plan and the Member Development Working Group.

RESOLVED to note the report.

(B) INTRODUCTION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS FOR MEMBERS

Submitted – an update report by the Senior Development Officer regarding Personal Development Reviews for Members.

Councillor I. Williams referred to IT software available at other authorities for training. He considered that this authority should investigate the possibility of computerised training on different topics rather than arranging training sessions at the Council Offices with only minimal attendance.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : An update report be submitted by the Senior Development Officer at the next Standards Committee on 11th December, 2012.

9 NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

Submitted – the Agenda of the Standards Committees Forum meeting held on 17th July, 2012 and 4th October, 2012 together with the notes of the Monitoring Officer and Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer.

The Monitoring Officer referred to the forum she attended and noted that there was indepth discussion on training of members and whether training should be made compulsory and if sanctions are available for non-attendance.

Discussions arose in respect of poor attendance of Members and representatives from Town/Community Councils at training sessions. It was noted that slides from training sessions could be made available to persons unable to attend and feedback questionnaire be filled on the understanding of the material given.

The Senior Development Officer reported that training sessions are being arranged in respect of E-Learning in the near future.

The Monitoring Officer further reported that the Standards Committee Conferences have been convened every 2 years. It has now been decided that the Membership of the 6 North Wales Authorities Standards Committees should arrange the next Conference at Venue Cymru, Llandudno in April next year.

The Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer reported on the forum he attended and referred to the agenda items for the All Wales Conference next April.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION :

- (1) An update report be submitted by the Senior Development Officer at the next Standards Committee on 11th December, 2012 in relation to training issues raised.**
- (2) Arrangement and agenda items to be considered for the All Wales Conference in April at the next Standards Committee on 11th December, 2012.**

10 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

10.1 Protocol for Members in Multi-Member Wards

Submitted – a report by the Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer attaching multiple choice clauses for the Committee to agree and draft a protocol in readiness for consultation with Members.

Following discussions it was considered that a small Panel of 3 Members of the Standards Committee be established to meet informally to discuss the Protocol.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : That Ms. Denise Harris Edwards, Mr. Islwyn Jones and Councillor Ieuan Williams be nominated to meet informally to discuss the Protocol for members in Multi-Member Wards with the relevant Officers and to report back to the next Standards Committee on 11th December, 2012.

10.2 Member Training

Submitted – a report by the Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer regarding the training of Members on the Code of Conduct and other aspects including the issue of compulsory training on the Code and undertaking and recording continuous professional development on an annual basis and attaching a number of options for the Committee's consideration with a view to consulting Members thereon.

RESOLVED to recommend to the full Council :-

'that the Code of Conduct be amended to make training on the Code of Conduct mandatory; for newly elected Members of the County Council and those County Council Members without continuity of office, to attend one training session during the induction process and certainly within the first six months; and for other members of the County Council to attend one training session during their term of office'.

ACTION : A report by the Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer be submitted to the County Council in respect of amendments to the Code of Conduct.

11 ANNUAL REVIEW OF REGISTERS OF INTEREST OF MEMBERS AND CO-OPTED MEMBERS

Submitted – a report by the Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer in relation to the above.

Members of the Standards Committee were asked to carry out the annual review on the Declarations of Interest Forms of Members and Co-Opted Members with regard to the 'Standing Register' (pre-declaration information), Declarations in Meetings, Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality and Outside Bodies.

RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION : Members of the Standards Committee to report their findings following their review of the Declarations of Interest Forms of Members and Co-Opted Members together with Declarations in Meetings, Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality and Outside Bodies.

12 THE CODE OF CONDUCT – GUIDANCE FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Submitted, for information – the link to the Guidance on the Ombudsman's website. All Members of the Council have been advised.

**MR. M. WILSON
CHAIR**