

CYNGOR SIR YNYS MON / ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
COMMITTEE:	Standards Committee
DATE:	17 September 2019
REPORT TITLE:	Review of the Registers of Interests for the elected and co-opted members of CSYM
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	To advise Standards Committee members of the general findings made and agree on the advice note to be shared with elected and co-opted members
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A REVIEW OF THE ELECTED MEMBERS' REGISTERS

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 13 March 2019, the Standards Committee resolved to undertake a review of the three registers of interests for elected members and co-opted members of CSYM/IOACC.
- 1.2 The review of the elected and co-opted members of the Council (excluding co-opted members of the Standards Committee – see Section B of this report) was conducted in June/July 2019.
- 1.3 It was also resolved at the 13th March 2019 meeting that, following an informal discussion by the Standards Committee of the findings made by each member, a general letter would be circulated to all members confirming the outcome of the review. It was also decided that the Chair of the Standards Committee would attend the next available meeting of the Group Leaders following the review in order to discuss the findings.
- 1.4 The Chair of the Standards Committee attended the Group Leaders meeting on 21st March 2019 in order to advise Group Leaders of the Standards Committee's intentions and proposals as to the reviews of the registers. The Chair of the Standards Committee also attended the Group Leaders meeting

on 5th September 2019 when matters arising from the review of the registers were discussed.

1.5 An informal meeting of the independent members of the Standards Committee (who conducted the reviews) was held on 19th July 2019.

1.6 A general letter of advice has been drafted, based on the discussions at the 19th July meeting, and is at **Enclosure 1**.

2. General findings

2.1 The review is deemed to have been a beneficial exercise. The Standards Committee was generally pleased with the findings made as several good practices were noted. Some common areas of concern were also identified and, as explained in the email to members (**Enclosure 1**), these require attention. The Chair of the Standards Committee noted that whilst there is still room for improvement, the standards are an improvement once again on the previous year, which is encouraging.

2.2 As a result of the review, and as noted in **Enclosure 1**, certain matters will need to be raised with the Council's officers. These are:

2.2.1 ICT section / Head of Democratic Service:

Not all Annual Reports appear on the website. Where Councillors have completed an Annual Report, it should be published.

2.2.2 ICT section / Human Resources Development Manager:

Councillors are required to update their own training records. Is it possible to include further training for members on how to do this?

2.2.3 ICT section:

It is not currently possible for co-opted members to record their training online. So as to ensure transparency, is it possible to arrange this?

2.2.4 ICT section:

Is it possible to include a link to the Dispensations which have been granted to members from each member's biography page/annual report?

B REVIEW OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERS' REGISTERS OF INTERESTS

3. Background

3.1 As a separate exercise, it was resolved that the Town and Community Council members of the Standards Committee would undertake a review of the interests of the independent members of the Standards Committee.

3.2 This review was conducted on 28th June 2019.

3.3 Individual letters of advice were distributed to the 5 independent members of the Standards Committee on 19th July 2018.

4. General findings (Co-opted Members generally)

4.1 The general findings made, which refer to limitations within the systems rather than being a reflection on the actions taken by the independent members, include:

4.1.1 No information regarding independent member training has been captured online. The reviewers considered that this should be published. Even if it is not possible to input via the website software then it was proposed that a pdf document be published for each member on their biography page (list to be maintained by each member individually) and this would list all training attended.

4.1.2 It is known that one member made a declaration of interest at a meeting and the Minutes for that meeting confirm the declaration was made. However, details of the declaration does not appear against a search of all declarations of interests made during that period, on the website; presumably as there is an issue that the website only allows declarations by elected members (i.e. The dropdown list of names only includes elected members and not co-opted members).The reviewers felt it was imperative that this should be published on the website as it was conflicting information for members of the public.

4.1.3 On basis of the result noted in 3.4.2 above, it was difficult for the reviewers to ascertain if the information included in relation to “declarations in meetings” and “gifts and hospitality”, on the website, were correct because no information was included. The reviewers speculated whether this was because no declarations had been made by independent members in meetings and/or no gifts and hospitality received? Or was it the case that these did not appear on the website (because independent members are not included on the dropdown list)?

4.2 The Standards Committee is asked whether it wishes for matters 4.1.1 – 4.1.3 to be raised with the ICT section.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 The Standards Committee is asked to

(a) Note the contents of this report;

- (b) Approve the contents of **Enclosure 1** and confirm its agreement for the letter to be shared with co-opted and elected members;
- (c) Confirm it agrees to follow the action noted in relation to the items identified in paragraph 2.2 of this report; and
- (d) Decide if it wants to contact the ICT section in relation to the items identified in paragraph 4.1 of this report, or what other action to take (if any).

Dear Member,

As you are aware, as part of its annual work programme, the Standards Committee conducted a review of the three Registers of Members' declarations of interests. The Standards Committee believes its role is to assist Members to comply with their duties, and I am pleased to report that this latest review was encouraging and certainly an improvement on previous years, but still with room for further improvement by a few Members.

Thank you for your support and assistance with the Review. The information reviewed included:-

- The Standing Register of Interests
- Declarations of Interests in meetings
- The Gifts & Hospitality Register
- Members' Annual Reports
- Agenda and Minutes of Meetings
- Training offered by the Council and the Training Record of each Member
- Personal Development Reviews (no detail – only that it has been offered)
- Biography as included on the Council's website
- Outside Bodies list.

Following this year's Review, the Standards Committee asks that you have due regard to its general findings / recommendations, which are as follows:-

The Standing Register

There have been examples recently of complaints being submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) as a result of a lack of information being included on the Standing Register of some individuals. Members are therefore encouraged to take note of the following matters in particular:

1. To ensure that addresses and land holdings are clearly and fully described. Additionally, if a Member has no interest in land they should enter 'None' or 'No Interest' on the Register.
2. It is also important that Members disclose their membership of other public bodies, charities and associations. Members should provide the full name and address of organisations/charities of which they are members. Members should review their Registers to check that they have included details of their role/status within any such organisations.
3. Where Members state they are school governors, the Register should identify the school and also in what capacity i.e. appointed by the Council / parent governor etc. The reason for this is because this affects Members' right to speak/vote on some matters as the inbuilt dispensation in the Code of Conduct may/may not be relied upon.
4. Where Members are elected or co-opted onto another Town/Community Council, membership of that Council should be included in the Standing register.

5. Members are reminded of the statutory requirement to update the Standing Register within 28 days of any changes occurring.
6. Members are also reminded of the statutory requirement to update the Standing Register following every election, even where the information is unchanged.
7. Whilst not a statutory requirement, Members are encouraged to review their Standing Register annually even if there are no changes so as to refresh the date (which appears online) and which demonstrates that the Register is being reviewed by the Member.

Declaration of Interests in Meetings

1. When Members are ticking the box to declare an interest they must also provide details of that interest. Both the nature of the interest, and whether that interest is a personal or a prejudicial interest must be evident on the form.
2. Greater clarity is required in respect of the information supplied by Members regarding the nature of the interest and how it relates to the item on the agenda.
3. Members should not use abbreviations of organisations etc. on the declaration forms, nor assume the reader has any background information in relation to the interest being declared.
4. Members are encouraged to fully complete the forms by answering each relevant question in their correct order.
5. If Members are unsure as to whether they have a declarable interest in meetings they should seek advice.

Register of Gifts and Hospitality

1. One declaration was noted in respect of gifts and hospitality.
2. Members are invited to re-familiarise themselves with the [Protocol of Gifts and Hospitality](#) to ensure they are aware when declarations may be required.

Annual Reports

1. Not all Annual Reports appear on the website and the Standards Committee is making enquiries in this regard.
2. Two of the thirty Members have decided not to publish Annual Reports. Whilst there is no statutory requirement for Members to produce Annual Reports, it is considered best practice by the Standards Committee and Members are encouraged to provide this information.

Training

1. In conducting this review, the Standards Committee considered the training record available online (which each Member is personally responsible for updating) and a

list of Member attendance at training events provided by the Human Resources Section. The Standards Committee is concerned that Members are doing themselves a dis-service as Members seem to be recording fewer training sessions online than they have actually attended.

2. On the other hand, the number of training events attended by some Members was considered to be low (as was attendance at meetings). This has been raised with Group Leaders. Members are encouraged to attend training and meetings in accordance with the requests made.
3. Members are encouraged to complete their online training record after every training event. Training includes classroom events, e-learning and briefing sessions.
4. The Standards Committee is trying to arrange further training for Members on how to update their training records.
5. Enquiries are also ongoing in relation to the recording of training by co-opted members as this is not currently possible online. The Standards Committee considers this to be a limitation in the system which should be ratified as soon as possible so as to provide assurance and transparency.

Personal Development Reviews

1. PDRs are not compulsory and they are outside the direct scope of the Standards Committee. However, Group Leaders have been encouraged to ensure the option of a PDR is offered to Members and Members are encouraged to attend when invited.
2. PDRs are a useful tool for developing a training needs plan for each Member and feeding into the training offered to Members generally so as to ensure training is specific, useful, targeted and good value for money.

Biography

As you know, each Member has a biography section on the Council's website. The information included in the biography does not always match the information contained within the Standing Register for each Member. Members are encouraged to review their biographies and cross-reference with their Standing Register and the register of outside bodies held by the Council.

Membership and Attendance on Outside Bodies

Group Leaders have been asked to reconsider the responsibility on outside bodies placed on various individual Members, as the Standards Committee is concerned that the workload of some Members is disproportionate (even disregarding senior salaries). Whilst this is a matter for Council, the Standards Committee considers that the Council should review its membership on outside bodies to which it is committed to sending Members. The Council's expectations of its Member should be realistic.

Miscellaneous

A number of Dispensations have been granted recently to Members. The Standards Committee is making enquiries as to whether it would be possible for a link to all Dispensations to be created, perhaps from each Member's biography page, or within their annual report.

These findings set out the general conclusions of the Review. Some Members have received personal emails from the Standards Committee with recommendations for review / updating / explaining some of the information which has been published. Where it was considered necessary, some Members have been requested to meet with me, or letters have been sent for responses. Where responses have not been received, please be aware that we will be raising the matter with Group Leaders.

The Committee appreciates that you are all very busy and is aware that this task is only one of a number that you have to address. However, we hope that the above recommendations will assist in saving time for Members as improving the standard of the forms will hopefully avoid, what may be potentially groundless and time consuming complaints. As we have seen, a lack of clarity in recent cases has resulted in complaints/challenges being issued because Declaration of Interest Forms have not been fully/accurately completed.

Regards,

Mike Wilson

Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor Safonau / Chair of the Standards Committee.
Cyngor Sir Ynys Môn / The Isle of Anglesey County Council