

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING:	County Council
DATE:	14 May 2015
TITLE:	Annual Report of the Chair of the Standards Committee
REPORT BY:	Michael Wilson, Chair of the Standards Committee & Co-opted Member of the Council
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To Report on the Activities of the Standards Committee in 2014-15 and to secure Council Approval for the Committee's Programme for 2015-16
CONTACT OFFICER:	Lynn Ball, Head of Function (Council Business) / Monitoring Officer (ext 2568)

Introduction

1. The Standards Committee is a statutory committee which comprises 9 members (2 county councillors, 5 independent members and 2 community council members).
2. The current Committee was appointed for a period of 4 years until 17th December 2015. The Monitoring Officer has taken a report to the full Council requesting the opportunity for the independent members of the Standards Committee to serve another term. The decision of full Council on 26th February 2015 was to extend all future appointments to an automatic two terms for all independent members of the Standards Committee. The term of the current independent members is therefore extended to 17th December 2019.
3. The Standards Committee has the following roles and functions (amongst others):-
 - (a) promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors;
 - (b) assisting councillors to observe their Code of Conduct;
 - (c) advising, training, or arranging to train, councillors;
 - (d) granting dispensations;
 - (e) dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on a report referred to her by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

Background

At its meeting on the 8th May 2014 the County Council resolved to approve the Standards Committee's Programme for 2014/15. The original Programme identified proposed areas of work, timetable and resources. This document is reproduced at **ENCLOSURE A** to this

Report and has been updated to include the work which has since been delivered against the agreed objectives.

Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman would like to thank the Committee members for their hard work and commitment during the year.

Last year, the Committee was pleased to note that less of its time had been spent in conducting hearings, or attending meetings/mediation arising from alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct. This positive development has continued and, in the three and a half years in which the current Standards Committee has been in place, it has seen significant improvement in standards within the Council, resulting in a reduction in conduct issues and complaints being raised. The Committee would particularly like to thank members and officers for their commitment and dedication in continuing to maintain high standards and, after more than two years of the current Council, it is hoped that cultural change has embedded and that positive and productive working relations are now the norm.

As a consequence, during the past year the Committee has been able to take on a more proactive role, particularly in organising regional Standards Committee events in North Wales to promote good practice, and foster positive relationships among the Standards Committees of the region. These events have included:-

- i. Holding the Standards Committee training here for the six North Wales Authorities;
- ii. Holding the Standards Committee Forum;
- iii. Hosting the Ombudsman to come and speak with all Standards Committees in North Wales and to answer questions on future intentions and developments and, particularly, to try and influence future arrangements.

Once again the Committee has reviewed the three Registers of Interests and issued an advisory to all Members.

The Committee continues to try and innovate and improve its contribution every year and, while regional collaboration has been important, particularly given the introduction of provisions that will enable the establishment of regional Standards Committees in 2015, we have also extended our review of registers to a broad overview of training, and independent members of the Standards Committee have contacted members direct to discuss any individual issues or concerns arising from the review of the Registers.

We have also improved our own arrangements for personal development reviews and devised a training programme for the members of the Standards Committee.

We have also been trying to focus on ethical training for Town and Community Councils. The capacity for this has only become available owing to the reduction in issues relating to this Council.

The Standards Committee has also taken the view that, with a greater emphasis on transparency around the role of Community Councils (Guidance issued 7th May 2015 under the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013) and potentially more in the pipeline with the Welsh Government's White Paper on Reforming Local Government : Power to the People, as well as more transfer of responsibilities to Community Councils (e.g. CCTV to the Town Councils) it was considered important to support these Councils in those aspects of their work within the remit of the Standards Committee.

To this end, training was provided to community councillors in 2013/14 but in 2014/15 we chose, instead, to put the focus on the Clerks to the Town and Community Councils. This was well attended and well received and in 2015/16 we intend to take a risk based approach and focus our training offer on town councillors.

As Chair of the Committee I have reported our activities to Group Leaders with occasional attendance at the Group Leaders' meetings for specific issues.

The Standards Committee has also acted as consultee, for example on briefing notes for elected Members to supplement formal training <http://monitor.anglesey.gov.uk/corporate-resource/corporate-governance/briefing-notes-to-members/>. We have also responded to the consultation by the Welsh Government's Finance Committee on the powers of the Ombudsman (on 20th March 2015) and the provisions relevant to the work of the Standards Committee within the recent Welsh Government White Paper on Reforming Local Government with regard to paragraph 3.31, 3.32, 3.33, 3.34, 3.35, 3.36 and 3.42 (on 24th April 2015).

More detail about the activities undertaken by the Committee, and the Committee's future plans, are contained within the enclosures to this Report. We very much look forward to continuing our work and are grateful for the support we receive from councillors and officers.

RECOMMENDATION:-

1. To note the Programme delivered by the Standards Committee between April 2014 and May 2015 at **ENCLOSURE A.**
2. To endorse the Standards Committee's Work Programme for 2015/16 as outlined in **ENCLOSURE B.**

ENCLOSURE A

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – May 2014 to April 2015

		TIMETABLE	RESOURCES	STATUS AS AT YEAR END
1.	To conduct hearings into alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct following a referral from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when referrals are made and in accordance with the performance indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11/09/2014 Standards Committee conducted an interim hearing following a referral from PSOW. 19/12/2014 Standards Committee conducted a full hearing following referral from PSOW.
2.	To conduct hearings into applications for Dispensations made by County Councillors and Town/Community Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when referrals are made and in accordance with the performance indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required 1/4/2015 Generic applications made by Monitoring Officer at request of Group Leaders re: pay structure and terms and conditions.
3.	To undertake an advisory role in connection with any matters arising under the Council's Local Resolution Protocol, or its successors in the event that a national model is developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an when requested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No referral received
4.	To oversee training and development on the Members' Code of Conduct in accordance with paragraph 2.4(e) of the Code; to include training and development for Town and Community Councils.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30/10/2014 Training provided to the Clerks of Town and Community Councils by the Monitoring Officer 11/3/2015 A report on the positive feedback and attendance at the training event was submitted to the

				<p>Standards Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Standards Committee approves briefing notes to members which supplement formal training. Five briefing notes have been issued on the following topics:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Section 25 Localism Act 2011; Public Procurement; Local Council Housing Allocations; Political Freedom of Speech v Code of Conduct; Gifts and Hospitality FAQ's; Dispensations. <p>All Briefing notes are available on the Council's intranet at: http://monitor.anglesey.gov.uk/corporate-resource/corporate-governance/briefing-notes-to-members/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards Committee reviewed Members' training records as part of 5 and 6 below.
5.	To supervise the two Registers of Members' Interests by annual reviews followed by any necessary advice and guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of April 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2015 annual review of registers by the Standards Committee. 11/03/2015 findings discussed in meeting. 24/3/2015 General results from review circulated to all members.

6.	To supervise the register of Gifts and Hospitality by annual reviews followed by any necessary advice and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of April 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 2015 annual review of registers by the Standards Committee. 11/03/2015 findings discussed in meeting. 24/3/2015 General results from review circulated to all members.
7.	To undertake the role of consultee on any proposed change to the Constitution relevant to the role of the Standards Committee and especially where such proposed changes might disproportionately prejudice the rights and interests of any minority group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No action required
8.	To undertake the role of consultee on any proposed legislative/policy changes relevant to the Standards Committee's area of responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11th March 2015 Consultation papers were presented to the Standards Committee relating to the PSOW's powers (Finance Committee of WAG), and on Reforming Local Government : Power to Local People. The Committee has submitted its collective response to the relevant parts of the consultations on 20/3/2015 and 24/4/2015.
9.	To make any recommendations to the Council for improvements in those areas of work which relate to the Standards Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation for independent Committee members to sit for two terms. 26/5/2015 Approved by Council
10.	The Chair of the Standards Committee to present an annual report to the Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14th May 2015

	outlining the work of the committee during the previous year.			
11.	<p>To ensure that the knowledge and skills of the Standards Committee are developed and updated by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular reviews of decided cases from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o other relevant authorities o Adjudication Panel for Wales - to participate and contribute on the North Wales Standards Committee Forum 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of published decisions : <p>11/06/2014 11/09/2014 11/03/2015</p> • 1/7/2014 IOACC's Standards Committee organised training for all North Wales Standards Committee members. The event was adjudged successful and beneficial. • 26/11/2014 IOACC's Standards Committee hosted the IOACC's North Wales Standards Committee Forum and invited the new PSOW to attend. The Forum presented the PSOW with questions. A report enclosing those questions and the responses was presented to the Standards Committee on 11th March 2015.
12.	To monitor progress on Member complaints filed with the PSOW and to undertake an annual analysis of complaints data in relation to Ynys Mon County Council in order to identify trends/issues of concern/training needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Customer Complaints Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed on:- <p>11/06/2014 11/09/2014 23/09/2014 11/03/2015</p>

13.	To maintain contact with Group Leaders, through regular informal meetings, in order to discuss issues of concern/common interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All year 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 31 July 2014- discussion on Standards Committee's recommendations from the review of registers. 5 February 2015- discussion of findings from hearing held on 19/12/2014.
14.	<p>Report quarterly performance indicators</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships between Members and Political Groups. The effectiveness of the Council's Standards Committee Standards of conduct and behaviour of Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed on:- 11/06/2014 11/09/2014 11/03/2015
15.	Training and Development of the Standards Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chairman HR Training Manager Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11th June 2014 the Standards Committee approved and signed their new job descriptions. September 2014 Personal Development Review ("PDR") forms were devised for the committee by Legal and HR, and PDR reviews were conducted by the Chair September 2014 Monitoring Officer conducted the Chairman's PDR. Following the PDRs, Chair devised a Training Plan for the Committee's Members.

ENCLOSURE B

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – MAY 2015 TO APRIL 2016

		TIMETABLE	RESOURCES	STATUS AS AT YEAR END
1.	To conduct hearings into alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct following a referral from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when referrals are made and in accordance with the performance indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
2.	To conduct hearings into applications for Dispensations made by County Councillors and Town/Community Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when referrals are made and in accordance with the performance indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
3.	To undertake an advisory role in connection with any matters arising under the Council's Local Resolution Protocol, or its successor, in the event that a national model is developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when requested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
4.	To oversee training and development on the Members' Code of Conduct in accordance with paragraph 2.6 of the Code; particularly Town Councils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
5.	To supervise the two Registers of Members' Interests by annual reviews followed by any necessary advice and guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the end of April 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring Officer Deputy Monitoring Officer 	

6.	To supervise the register of Gifts and Hospitality by annual reviews followed by any necessary advice and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By the end of April 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
7.	To undertake the role of consultee on any proposed change to the Constitution relevant to the role of the Standards Committee and especially where such proposed changes might disproportionately prejudice the rights and interests of any minority group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
8.	To undertake the role of consultee on any proposed legislative/policy changes relevant to the Standards Committee's area of responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
9.	To make any recommendations to the Council for improvements in those areas of work which relate to the Standards Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
10.	The Chair of the Standards Committee to present an annual report to the Council outlining the work of the committee during the previous year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair 	
11.	<p>To ensure that the knowledge and skills of the Standards Committee are developed and updated by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regular reviews of decided cases from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o other relevant authorities o Adjudication Panel for Wales - to participate and contribute on the North Wales Standards Committee Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when required subject to capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to participate and contribute to the All Wales Standards Committee Conference. - To be reviewed under a performance review scheme similar to that used by the elected members. 			
12.	To monitor progress on Member complaints filed with the PSOW and to undertake an annual analysis of complaints data in relation to Ynys Mon County Council in order to identify trends/issues of concern/training needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	
13.	To maintain contact with Group Leaders, through regular informal meetings, in order to discuss issues of concern/common interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As and when required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair 	
14.	<p>Report quarterly performance indicators</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relationship between Members and Political Groups. 2. The effectiveness of the Council's Standards Committee 3. Standards of conduct and behaviour of Members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer • Deputy Monitoring Officer 	