

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

8 APRIL 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of Flintshire County Council held at Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold CH7 6NA on Monday, 8 April 2013

PRESENT: Mrs P.S. Jones (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Mr. J. Duggan-Keen

Councillors: David Cox, Hilary McGuill and Arnold Woolley

APOLOGIES: Mr Chris Bretherton-Watt and Mr Merfyn Roberts.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor A.J. Davies-Cooke

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Democracy and Governance Manager, and Committee Officer

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be received, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

52. DISPENSATIONS

There were no requests for dispensation.

53. APPOINTMENTS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced a report on progress concerning appointments to fill existing and forthcoming independent member vacancies on the Standards Committee. He provided background information and context and advised that the Appointments Panel had met to consider the applications for the 3 vacant posts available with effect from May 2013 and a further vacancy arising in December 2013.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained that the maximum term of office was 6 years and to prevent positions becoming vacant at the same time in the future it was suggested that the terms of office for the new appointments be agreed at 4, 5 and 6 years. Members were asked to consider the appointment of the four candidates selected following interview with the start dates and terms of office as detailed in the report.

Councillor A. Woolley proposed that the Committee recommended to County Council that the four persons selected be appointed as independent members with the start dates and terms of office as stated in the report. The proposal was seconded by Councillor D.L. Cox and became the resolution of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee recommends to Council that the four persons selected be appointed as independent members with the start dates and terms of office as detailed in the report;
- (b) That the retiring members be thanked for their invaluable service on the Standards Committee; and
- (c) That the lay member be thanked for his involvement in recruiting the new members.

54. VOLUNTARY REGISTER OF MEMBERSHIP OF ORGANISATIONS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced a report to propose discontinuing the locally adopted requirement to voluntarily register membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership. He provided background information and advised that the Council currently had two requirements to register. Compliance with the statutory code of conduct was mandatory, well publicised, and had a statutorily imposed enforcement regime. The local register was voluntary and its existence not well known.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services referred to the requirements of the statutory code and advised that it was likely to cover membership of organisations such as the Masons and all of the bodies that were intended to be covered by the voluntary register. He recommended to the Committee that the voluntary register be discontinued and that an advice note be sent to Members to clarify what was covered by the requirement in the statutory code with respect to registration of membership of societies and bodies.

Councillor H.J. McGuill proposed that the recommendation to discontinue the voluntary register be agreed. This was seconded by Councillor A. Woolley and became the resolution of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the voluntary register set up in 1997 be discontinued;

- (b) That the Committee recommends to Council that the voluntary register discontinues; and
- (c) That the Monitoring Officer issues an advice note about what was covered by the requirement in the statutory code with respect to registration of membership of societies and bodies.

55. REVIEW OF CODES AND PROTOCOLS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced a report to set a programme for reviewing the codes and protocols within the Constitution. He advised that all such codes and protocols should be reviewed from time to time to ensure they were up to date and required and that the interval depended on the importance of the document and the frequency with which it might need to be changed.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services recommended that the Members' Code of Conduct be reviewed annually and that the remaining codes and protocols be reviewed once within a 3 year cycle. He asked members to consider the suggested timetable for reviewing the codes and protocols which was detailed in the report. Councillor A. Woolley proposed that the timetable be adopted and this was seconded by Councillor D.L. Cox and became the resolution of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the timetable for reviewing the codes and protocols as detailed in the report be adopted.

56. DATABASE OF PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS

The Democracy and Governance Manager introduced a report on the draft database of decisions on previous applications for dispensations. He commented that the availability of such a database should assist the Committee in making decisions consistent with those made in the past.

The Democracy and Governance Manager advised that it was proposed to make the database available on the Council's website and that the same part of the website would include the Members' Code of Conduct and the list of grounds on which an applicant could apply for dispensation. The database would include all the dispensations that had been considered by the Committee. He asked members to consider the draft database which was attached to the report and express their views to inform further progress.

Councillor H.J. McGuill referred to the information detailed on the back of the dispensation form to explain the circumstances when a Standards Committee may grant dispensations, and asked if this would be included on the website. The Democracy and Governance Manager confirmed that it would. In response to a query from the Chair concerning the reasons why previous dispensations

had been granted or refused the Head of Legal and Democratic Services suggested that a software link to the relevant minutes of the Standards Committee be set up to provide background information to the application.

The Chair proposed that the draft database of previous applications for dispensation be adopted with the additional information requested by the Committee incorporated. The proposal was seconded by Councillor D.L. Cox and became the resolution of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the draft database of previous applications for dispensation be adopted.

57. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the Forward Work Programme and invited members to put forward items for future consideration. He referred to the Standards Conference 2013 and the usefulness of feedback.

Members reviewed the current programme and agreed that the following items be considered at the next meeting of the Committee to be held on 13 May 2013:

- Election of new Chair person
- Feedback from Standards Conference 2013
- Local Resolution Procedure

Councillor A. Woolley referred to collaborative working and uniformity. During discussion it was suggested by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services than an item on handling ethics on joint committees concerning consistency of approach be scheduled for consideration by members at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 8 July 2013.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be agreed; and
- (b) That an item on handling ethics on joint committees concerning consistency of approach be scheduled for consideration by members at the meeting of the Committee to be held on 8 July 2013.

58. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press or the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 7.10 pm)

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Chairman