

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11 MAY 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Clwyd Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Monday, 11 May 2015

PRESENT: Edward Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors: David Cox, Hilary McGuill and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted members: Robert Dewey, Phillipa Earlam and Ken Molyneux

APOLOGY: Jonathan Duggan-Keen

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer (Governance) and Committee Officer

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations of interest were made.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 April 2015 were submitted.

Matters Arising

Minute Number 56: The Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) Annual Report 2013-14 - Mr. Robert Dewey pointed out that he, along with some other Committee members, had expressed disappointment that the Annual Report was merely numerical and contained no qualitative analysis which could assist the Committee in its considerations.

The Chief Officer (Governance) said that it was between the APW and the Ombudsman to provide this type of analysis and that he was happy to raise the issue with both organisations.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the amendment, the minutes be received, approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

62. DISPENSATIONS

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin

The Committee was asked to consider a request for dispensation submitted by Councillor Dolphin. The Chief Officer (Governance) explained that this was similar to another request considered at the previous meeting, whereby dispensation had been granted for Councillor Brian Dunn to write to officers on proposals for Flintshire payments to no longer be able to be made at Post Offices and to speak but not vote on that item. Both Members had declared a personal

and prejudicial interest as they owned Post Offices. The Chief Officer said that for reasons of consistency due to the decision made for Councillor Dunn, it would seem reasonable to grant the same level of dispensation for Councillor Dolphin.

Councillor Arnold Woolley pointed out that Councillor Dolphin's application sought dispensation to speak only on the item and sought advice on whether this should be amended in line with that of Councillor Dunn. The Chief Officer stated that if the Committee agreed to grant the same level of dispensation to Councillor Dolphin as had been given previously to Councillor Dunn, the same terms would be reflected in the resolution with a 12 month time limit imposed.

The Committee agreed to grant dispensation for Councillor Dolphin to enter into written communications with officers and to take part in debates but not voting when the issue was submitted to a meeting of a Committee or County Council.

Councillor Richard Jones

An application for dispensation had been received from Councillor Jones to participate in making the case against proposed car parking charges in Council owned car parks, by communicating written and oral representations and to speak and vote on the item. He had declared a prejudicial interest due to his wife owning a flower shop in Buckley, one of the areas subject to the proposals.

In outlining the background to the application, the Chief Officer said it was his view, and that of officers, that the imposition of parking charges across Flintshire would have no significant long-term detrimental impact on trade in towns where the charges were to apply. He advised the Committee that in considering whether or not to grant dispensation, it must first determine whether the Member had any interest. He provided an overview of the retail offer in Buckley in comparison with other nearby retail outlets and said it was the view of local Members in Buckley, including Councillor Jones, that trade would be adversely affected if parking charges were introduced.

Councillor Woolley referred to widespread concerns around the impact of parking charges which had been reflected in the petition submitted to Cabinet at the time of the decision. It was noted that the decision had since been 'called in' and was due to be considered by Overview & Scrutiny later in the week.

The Chair felt it was appropriate that Councillor Jones be given dispensation to make written communications with officers.

Mr. Robert Dewey said that as Councillor Jones had declared his interest, it would not be unreasonable for the Committee to determine the same. He therefore proposed that dispensation be granted for Councillor Jones to make written communications and to speak on the item, but not to vote. Following discussion, this was duly seconded and agreed by the Committee. It was further agreed that a 12 month time limit apply to the dispensation and that Councillor Jones be permitted to remain in the room during the item.

As a signatory to the 'call in' on proposed parking charges, Councillor Woolley asked that his abstention from the vote be recorded.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Councillor Rosetta Dolphin be granted dispensation to enter into written communications with officers on proposals for Flintshire payments to no longer be able to be made at Post Offices. To take part in the debate but not vote when the item is reported to a Committee or County Council meeting. The duration of the dispensation was granted for 12 months, ceasing on 10 May 2016; and
- (b) That Councillor Richard Jones be granted dispensation to enter into written communications with officers on proposed car parking charges across Flintshire. To take part in the debate but not vote when the item is reported to a Committee or County Council meeting. The duration of the dispensation was granted for 12 months, ceasing on 10 May 2016.

63. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented the current Forward Work Programme of the Committee and advised that discussion on the North Wales Standards Forum had been deferred to the July 2015 meeting, as the meeting was scheduled for 16 June 2015. Training on the Social Services complaints process would be arranged for immediately prior to the start of the next meeting on 8 June 2015.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be updated accordingly.

64. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Pride of Flintshire Awards

The Chair referred to the forthcoming Pride of Flintshire Awards and suggested that the Committee may wish to sponsor an award or raffle prize for the looked after children and care leavers whose achievements were celebrated at the annual event.

Councillor Hilary McGuill praised the ceremony which was to be held on 4 July 2015 at the Corus Sports & Social Club in Shotton and encouraged all to attend. She explained that an arrangement was in place for donations to be sought from Council Members to purchase rewards for the children and young people.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair agreed to liaise with the event organiser on progressing the proposed sponsorship.

Public Services Ombudsman Wales

Councillor Arnold Woolley asked whether all members of the Committee had received a copy of the revised guidance from the Ombudsman as it contained implications for the Committee. During discussion, it appeared that not

all were aware of the new guidance. The Chief Officer agreed to re-circulate the information, which could be the subject of a future training session.

North Wales Standards Conference

In response to a query, the Chief Officer advised that the conference was scheduled for 20 October 2015 in Cardiff. He agreed to check the number of available places allocated to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Chair liaise with the organiser of the Pride of Flintshire Awards to seek information on proposed sponsorship by the Committee;
- (b) That the Chief Officer (Governance) re-circulate the revised Ombudsman guidance to the Committee and schedule as a future training topic;
- (c) That the Chief Officer (Governance) confirm the number of places available for the North Wales Standards Conference in October 2015.

65. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and ended at 7.00 pm)

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Chairman