

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
2 MARCH 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Monday, 2 March 2020

PRESENT: Rob Dewey (Chairman)

Councillors:

Patrick Heesom, Paul Johnson and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted members:

Jonathan Duggan-Keen, Phillipa Earlam, Julia Hughes and Ken Molyneux

APOLOGY:

Mark Morgan

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor Jean Davies was present as an observer

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Officer

64. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2020 were submitted.

On minute 58, the next ethical liaison meeting had been arranged with Group Leaders for the end of the month. The Democratic Services Team Leader would co-ordinate rota visits to observe committee meetings once she had returned from sick leave.

The minutes were approved, subject to corrections in minute numbers 57, 58 and 62, as moved and seconded by Ken Molyneux and Councillor Woolley.

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments, the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

65. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

66. DISPENSATIONS

None.

67. REVIEW OF MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to consider updates to the Member/Officer Protocol as part of the Committee's rolling review of the Constitution. In addition to reflecting changes in working practices, the proposed amendments took account of recent work on the Flintshire Standard, the review of handling Member queries and the outcome of the Case Tribunal recently reported to the Committee. Once agreed, the proposed changes would be reported to Constitution & Democratic Services Committee for recommendation to Council for adoption.

In response to a question from Councillor Heesom, the Monitoring Officer referred to the recently updated Officers' Code of Conduct which was available within the Constitution. Any Member with a concern could raise it with the officer - or their line manager who was required to address any potential breaches against the standards. As employees had the right for disciplinary issues to be handled in confidence, the Member could only be given a high-level summary of the outcome as feedback.

The following amendments to the protocol were agreed:

- Section 7.3: Remove 'to' from the first sentence. 'Lead Members' to be removed and include reference to Chairs of Audit, Licensing and Planning to reflect the varying levels of support provided. No capital letter needed for 'services' in the final sentence.
- Capital letter for 'Members' in sections 5.3, 7.2, 9.1, 9.2 and 10.3.
- Section 9.2: insert 'key' before 'decisions under delegated powers'.
- Section 14.2: should read 'in relation to'.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Woolley and seconded by Phillipa Earlam.

RESOLVED:

That the amended Protocol be recommended to Council for adoption.

68. SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to consider the merits of establishing a sub-committee to determine dispensation requests in the event of there being no other convenient meeting of the full Committee. This followed the meeting in January which, having been initially cancelled, was re-convened with the bare minimum quorum in order to consider a single dispensation request.

In explaining the provisions required to set up a sub-committee, the Monitoring Officer advised that this option would offer less flexibility in terms of membership. He went on to say that the Committee met on a monthly basis and that the arrangement in January had worked well.

Members spoke in support of this suggestion and wished to continue with the current arrangements without the need for a sub-committee. This was moved and seconded by Julia Hughes and Councillor Woolley.

In response to comments from the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer gave assurance that Members were reminded of the need to submit dispensation requests as early as possible.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee agrees that a sub-committee is not required.

69. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer presented the current Forward Work Programme for consideration. The following changes were agreed:

Items for inclusion in the list 'to be scheduled':

- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Casebook.
- A review of the proforma to assist Independent Members observing Council meetings.
- Feedback from those visits.

Items shown on the Forward Work Programme but not yet scheduled:

- Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales - to remain on the list until publication of the next report.
- Dispensations process at Gwynedd and Ynys Mon Councils - to be scheduled for 27 April.
- Frequency of reporting on the Overview of Ethical Complaints - to be scheduled annually on the anniversary of when last reported.
- Confidential Reporting Procedure - to be removed due to it being under the remit of the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

70. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

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

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.25pm)

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Chairman