

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
6 OCTOBER 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold, on Monday, 6 October 2014.

PRESENT: Edward Michael Hughes (Chair)

Councillors:

David Cox, Hilary McGuill and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted Members:

Robert Dewey, Jonathan Duggan-Keen, Phillipa Earlam and Ken Molyneux

TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES:

Rhodri Hampson-Jones (Clerk) of Argoed Community Council

Gareth Robert (Clerk) of Bagillt Community Council

Ian Jones (Clerk) of Connah's Quay Town Council

Councillor C. Heycocks (Mayor) and Sam Roberts (Clerk) of Mold Town Council

Christine Johnson of Mostyn Community Council

Councillor Alan Evans (Mayor) of Saltney Town Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Officer (Governance), Democracy and Governance Manager, and Team Manager – Committee Services

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (including whipping declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

22. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September were submitted.

Accuracy

Councillor McGuill said she had submitted her apologies for the meeting which had not been recorded.

RESOLVED:

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

23. DISPENSATIONS

None had been received.

24. REVIEW OF THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Democracy and Governance Manager explained that the Members' Code of Conduct formed part of the Council's Constitution and the Council's Constitution Committee was in the last year of a three year programme to review all parts of the Constitution. The guiding principles were to ensure that the Constitution was up-to-date and that the wording was clear and unambiguous. A revised copy of the Members' Code of Conduct highlighting the proposed tracked changes, to update and clarify the existing wording had been circulated.

Councillor Hilary McGuill suggested clarifying the part of the code on declaring interests at meetings, in particular when an interest would be prejudicial. The Democracy and Governance Manager explained that the wording in the Code of Conduct was clear however it was complicated. He provided an example relating to being a school governor of when a Member would have a personal interest and when a Member would have a personal and prejudicial interest. However, he recommend that Members seek advice from the Chief Officer (Governance) or himself as soon as they became aware they could possibly have an interest.

The Chief Officer (Governance) added that if a Member had a personal and prejudicial interest they could apply for dispensation to the Standards Committee and cited Councillor Alison Halford's request for dispensation as the most recent example relating to being a school governor, which had been granted.

Following a suggestion from Robert Dewey, the Democracy and Governance Manager said the written guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales could be placed on the internet and infonet alongside the Members' Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the tracked changes shown in the circulated Appendix be approved;
- (b) That the guiding principles be attached to the Members' Code of Conduct; and
- (c) That the Public Services Ombudsman's for Wales written guidance be placed on the internet and infonet alongside the Members' Code of Conduct.

25. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

In the absence of any suggested topics for future training it was agreed these would be determined by the Chief Officer (Governance) and the Democracy and Governance Manager.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the forward work programme be noted; and
- (b) That the topics for training be determined by the Chief Officer (Governance) and the Democracy and Governance Manager

6.30pm – Members and Officers of the Town and Community Councils were invited into the meeting

The Chairman welcomed the Town and Community Council representatives to the meeting and invited everybody present to introduce themselves.

26. STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

The Chief Officer (Governance) invited comments on the Annual Report of the Standard Committee and the circulation list for the report.

It was suggested that in addition to being sent to County Councillors, a copy of the Annual Report could be emailed to Town and Community Councils and also that a copy be made available in the public libraries, which was agreed by the Chief Officer (Governance).

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report be approved.

27. INTERESTS

The Chief Officer (Governance) provided information on the obligation of Councillors to declare interests verbally at meetings at which that business was to be considered. He added the additional requirement on County Councillors to complete the form required for the statutory public register for the declaration of personal interests, which had to be completed within 28 days of election or appointment to office. In addition to completion of that form, County Councillors were still required to declare any relevant interests where they related to matters under consideration at a meeting.

On Part 4, the Register of Members' Interests, the Chief Officer (Governance) explained that as a result of a recent Welsh Government (WG) consultation paper, the appropriate civil servant had been contacted and had clarified the intention was for clerks of Town and Community Councils to be responsible for maintaining the online notifications of interests made at meetings by Councillors. This meant that each Town and Community Council would require a website to hold such information. There was a meeting of the County Forum the following week and the Chief Officer (Governance) said he would provide an update on this to Town and Community Councils.

The Democracy and Governance Manager added that Welsh Government had made grant funding available for the development of Town and Community Council websites which Flintshire had administered in the previous financial year.

RESOLVED:

That an update on interests be provided at the next meeting of the County Forum.

28. ETHICAL ISSUES CURRENTLY OF INTEREST OR RAISED BY TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Councillor Christine Jones, Mostyn Community Council, asked if there was a procedure in place if a Councillor had a complaint about a fellow Councillor or an officer. The Chief Officer (Governance) advised that if there was a complaint about a fellow Councillor, the complaint should be directed to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. If the complaint was about an officer, it should be made via the online complaints form on the Council's website.

Following a number of questions, it was suggested that the Members' Code of Conduct and complaints procedure should be relocated and better signposted on the new website and this was agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Members' Code of Conduct and complaints procedure be relocated and better signposted on the Council's new website.

29. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and ended at 7.30 p.m.

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Chairman