

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
7 DECEMBER 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold, on Monday, 7 December 2015.

PRESENT: Edward Hughes (Chair)

Councillors:

David Cox, Hilary McGuill and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted Members:

Jonathan Duggan-Keen and Ken Molyneux

APOLOGIES:

Robert Dewey and Phillipa Earlam

IN ATTENDANCE:

Deputy Monitoring Officer and Team Manager – Committee Services

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (including whipping declarations)

None were received.

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2015 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

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

30. DISPENSATIONS

None had been received.

31. REVIEW OF LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

The Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided details on the six cases that had been handled under the Local Resolution Procedure (LRP) since it was adopted by County Council on 25 June 2013. It was now an appropriate juncture to review the effectiveness of the procedure since its inception.

The information showed that where both parties worked in good faith the procedure could work swiftly and successfully to resolve an issue. The speed at which complaints were handled was important in resolving an issue whilst it was still relevant and whilst parties were willing to participate. There was no current mechanism for preventing delay.

The Chair referred to feedback received from Mr Robert Dewey from the Standards Conference Wales on 20 October 2015 where Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council imposed a 30 day time limit for complaints. He explained that the current procedure at Flintshire County Council imposed a 12 month time limit on bringing a complaint but there was no upper limit on how long they took to resolve.

A discussion took place on the current arrangements and Councillor Woolley suggested that a time limit be imposed on the time required to resolve a complaint which could include a caveat to extend that time period if required, which was supported. Following advice from the Deputy Monitoring officer, it was agreed that a 30 day time limit be imposed for referring a complaint to the Monitoring Officer. This must be within 30 days of the incident giving rise to the complaint coming to the attention of the complainant. From receipt of the complaint there should be a 12 month limit for resolution and both time limits could be extended at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that any changes to the LRP would need to be considered by the Constitution Committee and Council prior to adoption.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That a 30 day time limit be imposed for referral to the Monitoring Officer from the date that the complainant becomes aware of the incident giving rise to the complaint, with a 12 month time limit for resolution under the Local Resolution Procedure, and both time limits could be extended at the discretion of the Monitoring Officer; and
- (b) That the proposed changes to the Local Resolution Procedure be reported to the Constitution Committee and Council for approval.

32. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair invited any items from members of the Committee for the Forward Work Programme.

Councillor Woolley suggested that, following the Welsh Government elections in May 2016 and the topic of training that had been received prior to the meeting, an item be submitted to a future meeting on the Local Government Act 2000 – Part III, Conduct of Local Government Members. He also suggested that prior to the May 2016 elections the Committee receive training on what was permitted by Members during the election purdah period.

Mr Duggan-Keen referred to the Code of Conduct training that was scheduled for 26 January 2016 for Town and Community Councils. The training would be hosted by the Monitoring Officer and was taking place at Cymau Community Centre, Cymau, Near Wrexham.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That a future item be submitted on the Local Government Act 2000 – Part III, Conduct of Local Government Members; and
- (c) That training on what was permitted by Members during the election purdah period be received prior to the Welsh Government elections in May 2016.

33. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

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

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and ended at 6.58pm.

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Chairman