

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
8 FEBRUARY 2016

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold, on Monday, 8 February 2016.

PRESENT: Robert Dewey (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors:

David Cox, Hilary McGuill and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted Members:

Jonathan Duggan-Keen, Phillipa Earlam and Ken Molyneux

APOLOGY:

Edward Hughes

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monitoring Officer and Team Manager – Committee Services

34. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (including whipping declarations)

None were received.

35. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2015 were submitted.

The Monitoring Officer explained that the proposed changes to the Local Resolution Procedure had been submitted to Constitution Committee on 27 January 2016 and were scheduled to be submitted to County Council on 1 March 2016.

RESOLVED:

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

36. DISPENSATIONS

None had been received.

37. REVIEW OF PROTOCOL ON COUNCILLOR NEWSLETTERS

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided background details on the decision of County Council to prohibit the use of Council resources for Councillors to produce newsletters in their ward. Also outlined was Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 which required the Council to make arrangements for every Member to prepare an annual report which it must then publish. Guidance published in May 2013

allowed Councils to set conditions/limits on what it contained within such reports, and also for Councils to decide how the reports would be published.

On 17 July 2013 the Democratic Services Committee resolved the following:

- (a) That the following conditions be imposed as part of the arrangements under Section 5 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011:
 - (i) That annual reports by Members must comply with the statutory guidance including the standard template referred to in paragraph 1.6 of that guidance;
 - (ii) That the contents of the annual report are not defamatory in the opinion of the Council's Monitoring Officer
- (b) That there are sufficient arrangements for publishing the annual reports and publicising their availability if they are published on the appropriate part of the Council's website and their availability publicised on it.

The Monitoring Officer said that since July 2013 there had been little take up of the production of annual reports, with three being published on the Council's website for 2014/15. However some Councillors did produce their own newsletters without support or assistance from the Council so there did not appear to be a need to amend the current arrangements. It was suggested that it would be useful to have clear data on the number of Councillors producing their own newsletters and the frequency.

Phillipa Earlam asked what was usually contained in annual reports and newsletters. The Monitoring Officer explained that they generally covered what the Councillor had undertaken on behalf of the electorate in a given time period. In response to a comment by Councillor Woolley the Monitoring Officer explained that details could be reported in a way in which individuals could not be identified.

Councillor Cox commented on a community newsletter that he and Councillor Aldrige produced for the residents of Flint Coleshill which provided information about the community only and did not cover any political issues.

In responding to a question from Councillor McGuill, the Monitoring Officer explained that under the current Council protocol Members should not use their iPad to draft newsletters, despite there being no cost implication. On a question from Councillor McGuill on what iPads could be used for, the Monitoring Officer referred to an adopted protocol for the use of IT which he would provide to Councillor McGuill.

Following a suggestion from Jonathan Duggan-Keen, it was agreed that the second recommendation in the report be amended to read "That all Councillors be asked to confirm whether they produce or contribute to newsletters or any other regular communications".

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the current arrangements for Councillor newsletters and annual reports be confirmed as sufficient and do not require amendment; and
- (b) That all Councillors be asked to confirm whether they produce or contribute to newsletters or any other regular communications.

38. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on the training event with Town and Community Councils on the Code of Conduct which was attended by approximately 20 people. The slides from the event were available on the Council's website via the County Forum link.

A future item for the Forward Work Programme would be a report back on the data received by Members on newsletters or other regular communications produced. No other items were suggested by the Committee for inclusion in the programme.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted; and
- (b) That a future item be submitted on the data received by Members on newsletters or other regular communications produced.

39. 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 7.05pm.

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Chairman