

CONSTITUTION FORUM
8TH APRIL 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the Constitution Forum of Flintshire County Council held in County Hall, Mold on Tuesday 8th April 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor R.J.T. Guest (Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. D.S. Banks, D. Barratt, J.G. Beard, D.M.D. Clayton, D.L. Cox, G.D. Diskin, R.P. MacFarlane, N. Phillips, N.R. Steele-Mortimer, Mrs. P.J. Walkden and A. Woolley

SUBSTITUTE: Councillor R. Griffiths for L.A. Aldridge.

APOLOGIES:

Councillor M. Higham and A.P. Shotton.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive, County Legal and Democratic Services Officer (Monitoring Officer) and Democratic Services Manager.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None were received.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28th November 2007 were approved as a correct record.

3. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Forum considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, previously circulated, the purpose of which was to consider the Self-Assessment Review 2007 which was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Forum was informed that at the meeting held on 25th September 2006 Members approved the Code of Corporate Governance and recommended its adoption by the County Council. Under the Code, the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer were responsible for ensuring that it was kept up-to-date by reviewing it in October each year.

The Group of Officers responsible for producing the Code had met on two occasions to initiate their Review and the information subsequently provided by Members of the Group had been collated and fed into the Self-Assessment. The existing Code was drafted on the basis of guidance set out in the CIPFA/SOLACF documents which were fully detailed in the report and whilst it applied equally to England and Wales, guidance on its introduction

and use in Wales had only just been published. Despite this, the Review had been undertaken against the six core principles set out in the new framework.

The Forum was informed that the Self-Assessment reflected the work of officers and the decisions of the Council, the Executive and the Council's Committees during the course of the year. The Self-Assessment Review had been considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team and if it was approved by this Forum it could be sent to the Council's Internal Audit Manager for audit, as part of the Council's annual Audit Programme.

Significant work had already commenced in relation to a number of the action points set out in the Review and each of the actions would be tracked at quarterly intervals during the course of the year. If approved the Self-Assessment Review would assist in the preparation and publication of the Council's annual Governance Statement.

The Monitoring Officer took the Forum through the key points of the review for 2007 and indicated that since the appointment of the Chief Executive, a number of the key areas had been strengthened.

A Member indicated that through postal difficulties, he had only recently received his Agenda and therefore had not been able to read the report fully. The Chief Executive indicated that if the Member concerned, or any other Member, needed to comment on the report and the information contained in it, that they could do so and their comments would be taken into account. The Chief Executive confirmed that it would not delay the process and he was keen for any appropriate input to be given due consideration.

The Chairman felt that this was a good suggestion and confirmed that it was not his intention to consider this item in another meeting of the forum but agreed that it would be in order for the Member to make comments directly to the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Self-Assessment Review 2007, be approved; and
- (2) That it forms the basis of the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The Forum considered the report of the Assistant Director (Democratic Services) which was presented by the County Legal and Democratic Services Officer, the purpose of which was to consider a recommendation from the Member Development Working Group; that when it had concluded its current work, it be reconstituted to include officer representation with the Chair of that Working Group being designated Member "Champion".

At its meeting held on 5th April 2007, a report was considered which gave details of the Welsh Local Government Assembly (WLGA) Charter for

Member Support and Development and a recommendation to constitute a Member/Officer Task and Finish Group to form new proposals on Member training and/or the Charter.

It was agreed that a Working Group be established and it was noted that the Member Development Working Group had subsequently met on a number of occasions, most recently on 19th December 2007. The Working Group had approved proposals for an annual Member Development Programme, Member Induction and a Member Mentorship Programme. It had also progressed various requirements necessary for the Council to obtain the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development, such requirements included having a Member “Champion” and a Member Development Working Group made up of officers and Members.

At its meeting held on 19th December 2007 the Working Group agreed to recommend to the Constitution Forum, that when the Working Group had concluded its work, it be reconstituted to include officer representation with the Chair of the Working Group being a designated Member Champion. It was confirmed that this Champion would be a Member of the Council.

A report on the WLGA Charter was submitted to the Council meeting on 29th January 2008 which included the above recommendation of the Working Group and was subsequently accepted by the Council. The report detailed the current membership of the Group and it was anticipated the Working Group would have completed its work by the end of the current Council when various initiatives relating to Member Development would be in place ready for the new Council. It was noted that initiatives such as the Membership Programme, the Annual Member Development Programme and the Member Development Strategy would require ongoing consideration.

The Forum was informed that an ongoing Member Development Working Group would also recognise the importance the Council attached to Member Development as well as meeting one of the requirements of the WLGA Charter. The Forum felt that this was an appropriate means to progress this issue.

RESOLVED:

That for the new Council, a Member Development Working Group, be established comprising nine Members and four Officers with the Chair of that Working Group being designated the Member “Champion”.

5. FINAL MEETING OF THE FORUM

The Chairman indicated that this would be the final meeting of the Forum before the forthcoming County Council Elections and thanked the Membership for its support during his tenure. He also wished to record his thanks to the Monitoring Officer for all his guidance during this period. Members shared this view and wished to extend their thanks for the excellent manner in which the Chairman had undertaken his duties.

6. **DURATION OF MEETING**

The meeting commenced at 3.45 and ended at 4.15.

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Chairman

SUMMARY OF DECLARATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS
IN ACCORDANCE WITH FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S
CODE OF CONDUCT

CONSTITUTION FORUM	DATE: 8TH APRIL 2008
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
NO DECLARATIONS WERE MADE		