

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

4 JULY 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of Flintshire County Council held as a remote attendance meeting on Monday, 4 July 2022

PRESENT: Julia Hughes (Chair)

Councillors: Teresa Carberry, Andrew Parkhurst and Antony Wren,

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

David Wynn Davies, Jacqueline Guest, and Gill Murgatroyd

APOLOGY: Mark Morgan

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer, and Democratic Services Officer

The Monitoring Officer clarified that the committee was still awaiting the appointment of a Town and Community Council representative and outlined the deadline for submission and the number of nominations received. Information on the process for the selection of candidates and voting preferences was given and he agreed to keep the Committee updated on progress.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

No declarations were received.

8 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2022 were presented for approval. The minutes were approved, subject to minor amendments as moved by Gill Murgatroyd and seconded by Councillor Teresa Carberry

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendments, the minutes be approved as a correct record.

9. INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR COUNCILLORS

In presenting the report the Monitoring Officer outlined the key themes for the training sessions which had been appropriate behaviours and understanding of the Code. The first part of the Induction Programme was delivered within the first two weeks and focused on behaviours. The current sessions included declaration of interests, dispensations, gifts and hospitality with detailed training on this provided to the political groups. Referring to Town and Community Councillors the Monitoring Officer confirmed that three sessions had taken place

with 43% of the Town and Community Councillors attending so far. Extra sessions were being held in the Autumn to capture those councillors who were co-opted during the summer. This was mandatory training and recordings were being made available for those unable to attend the planned sessions.

David Davies asked what the repercussions were for Town & Community Councillors who did not attend any of the Code of Conduct Sessions. In response the Monitoring Officer confirmed their risk of breaching the Code increased together with the risk of a complaint against them, which could lead to disqualification. He was unsure what the Ombudsman's opinion on this would be but confirmed that he would be asked to confirm if the councillor had attended a training session on the Code.

Referring to County Councillors that Chair commented that there was a requirement for Group Leaders to ensure their members undertook this training. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that was correct and that all Group Leaders had agreed for himself and the Deputy Monitoring Officer to attend their meetings to provide this training.

Councillor Antony Wren commented that he found the training very useful even if an information overload. When asked where the sessions were stored, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that links to the training sessions would be available on the Members' Page which was being developed on the Infonet. He agreed to find out when that would be made available for Members. The Chair asked if this could be fed back to the next meeting.

The Chair referred to the Constitution Code with 58 out of 67 Members having already attended the training and asked how the remaining 9 would be approached as the training was mandatory. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that all but one of the new Members had attended the training on interests and that in addition to himself and the Deputy Monitoring Officer attending group meetings the recordings would also be made available for Members. In response to a question regarding newly elected councillors, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that following a by election any newly elected councillors would have a face-to-face meeting with him, and training would be given then.

The recommendation in the report was moved by David Davies and seconded by Councillor Andrew Parkhurst.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee approved the ethical component of the Member Induction Programme held after the elections, included in Appendices 1 and 2.

10 ALL WALES STANDARDS CONFERENCE 2022 REPORT BACK

The Chief Officer (Governance) confirmed that the conferences were held bi-annually, though the 2020 conference had been delayed until this year. The conferences were organised by the monitoring officers in each region with this year being the turn of North Wales. The focus was on the Penn Report which was the biggest and most comprehensive review of the Code of Conduct since it was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000.

He provided a detailed overview of the conference and a summary of the recommendations and resolution made, with parts requiring changes to legislation and parts which could be adopted voluntarily. Discussions were being held during the summer with Welsh Government (WG) on the changes to legislation.

The Chair recommended that members of the Committee attend the next one to listen to views of other authorities, Ombudsman and other speakers. She provided a detailed review of the presentations, the topics discussed and sharing of good practice which included a discussion around the Code of Conduct. The conference was recorded, and the Chair asked if this could be shared. The Monitoring Officer confirmed it was Gwynedd who hosted the Zoom session and he would investigate it. The next conference would be held in South Wales in 2024.

Gill Murgatroyd had also attended and said it was very informative and helpful. She referred to the discussions with the Adjudication Panel for Wales and WG representatives? around timescales for the recommendations of the Penn Review and asked if the Monitoring Officer was able to comment on this. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would be meeting with WG and the Ombudsman's office over the summer to discuss how this could be taken forward and implemented.

David Davies asked if there was a sense that WG would accept all the Penn recommendations or would there be political resistance. The Monitoring Officer said that the Deputy Director for Local Government attended but gave no indication of likelihood of acceptance of specific recommendations pending discussion with affected stakeholders.

The recommendation in the report was moved and seconded by Jacqueline Guest and Gill Murgatroyd

RESOLVED:

That the report on the conference was welcomed and that the Committee agreed to incorporate work arising from the Penn Review of the Ethical Regime into its work programme as it arose.

11 **UPDATE ON THE CREATION OF NATIONAL FORUM FOR INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed the purpose for creating the Forum saying that there was support across Wales for the National Forum for Independent Members to be established. He would be meeting with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) over the summer to draft terms of reference and establish timescales for meetings. It was agreed that an update on this be included on the Forward Work Programme.

The recommendation in the report was moved by David Davies and seconded by Councillor Teresa Carberry

RESOLVED:

That the support for a National Standards Forum be welcomed

12 **ROLLING REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that this Committee was responsible for reviewing various codes and protocols to ensure their relevance. This was conducted once a term and referred Committee Members to the suggested timetable on page 126.

The Chair referred to the Members' Code of Conduct listed for December 2022 and sought clarification as it was also scheduled for July 2023. It was agreed to move this to the November 2022 meeting.

David Davies asked if there would be training provided for the Committee Members, especially for Planning Protocol and Officers' Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that training would be covered within each report being reviewed.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Gill Murgatroyd and seconded by Jacqueline Guest.

RESOLVED:

That the timetable for reviewing codes and protocols be adopted.

13 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Monitoring Officer presented the Forward Work Programme for consideration. A discussion followed regarding the items listed on the Forward Work Programme with clarification provided by the Monitoring Officer

The recommendation was moved by Councillor Teresa Carberry and seconded by Jacqueline Guest

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme, as amended, be approved.

14 **DISPENSATIONS**

None were received

15 **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE**

There were no members of the press in attendance.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.33pm)

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Chair