

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
20 FEBRUARY 2012

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of the Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Monday, 20 February 2012

PRESENT: Mr. K.P. Sibbons (Chairman)

Mr. C. Bretherton-Watt, Mrs. D. Johnson, Mr. K.A. Martin and Mr. M. Roberts
Councillors: S.R. Baker and M.J. Peers

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor J.B. Attridge and A.P. Shotton
Dr. P. York (Chairman of Holywell Town Council)

APOLOGIES:

Councillor D.L. Cox
Mrs. P.S. Jones

IN ATTENDANCE:

Interim Monitoring Officer and Committee Officer

47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Including Whipping Declarations)

No declarations of interest were made.

48. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2011 were confirmed as a correct record.

Matter Arising

Councillor M.J. Peers indicated that he had given his apologies for the previous meeting due to his personal and prejudicial interest in one of the items on the agenda. Following receipt of a letter from the Interim Monitoring Officer, he indicated that he would also not take part in the discussions on agenda item 8 on this agenda and would leave the meeting prior to its consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting on 5 December 2011 be accepted and signed by the Chairman.

49. DISPENSATIONS

The Chairman explained that Dr. P. York was in attendance at this meeting as he had submitted an application for dispensation to chair the meeting of Holywell Town Council and speak on planning application number 049300.

Dr. York explained his reasons for the request for dispensation indicating that he lived near the site of the proposed wind turbines. It was possible that it could be perceived that he had a prejudicial interest. He provided details of those on Holywell Town Council and explained who had indicated that they would or would not take part in the discussion at the meeting.

Councillor M.J. Peers felt that Dr. York should be able to speak on the application but that he should not chair the meeting for the item. Others concurred with this comment but the Interim Monitoring Officer said that he could not attend the meeting and not be Chair for that item. Dr. York felt that it was appropriate for him to relinquish his vote on the application. Councillor Baker felt that Dr. York should be able to chair the meeting and speak but concurred that it was not appropriate for him to vote. Dr. York concluded that Holywell Town Council was not the decision making body but were an advisory body to the Planning Authority of Flintshire County Council.

The Chairman asked Dr. York to leave the meeting whilst his application for dispensation was considered.

Following a discussion, Mr. M. Roberts proposed that Dr. York be able to chair the meeting and speak on the application and that the Committee agree to his request for dispensation under paragraphs (d), (e) and (f) and this was duly seconded.

Dr. York was invited back into the meeting. The Chairman explained that his application for dispensation to chair the meeting and speak on the application number 049300 had been granted under paragraphs (d), (e) and (f). The Interim Monitoring Officer advised that a letter would be issued to Dr. York to advise him of the decision in writing.

RESOLVED:

That the request for dispensation to chair the meeting and speak on application number 049300 be granted under paragraphs (d), (e) and (f).

50. FEEDBACK FROM THE NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM

The Interim Monitoring Officer explained that she and the Chairman had attended the North Wales Standards Committee Forum.

Some of the issues raised included Terms of Reference and the Interim Monitoring Officer asked for details of when the terms of office ended for those on the Committee and responses were provided by those in attendance.

On the issue of Membership of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum, it had been agreed that two members from each Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer or deputy from each Authority should attend and that the meetings would be held quarterly. The date for the next

meeting of the Standards Committee Forum had not yet been agreed. A discussion had also taken place at the Forum on issues which members would like to discuss at future meetings and these included low level resolutions, indemnities, Code of Conduct, level of gifts and hospitality which it had been suggested may be increased from £10 to £25 and finally the siting of the All Wales Conference in 2013 and whether there was any support for it to be held in Llandudno.

The Interim Monitoring Officer explained that Flintshire County Council had changed the form of indemnity and that from 2011, this was now covered by insurance. The Chairman allowed Dr. York to ask whether all Councillors including Town and Community Councillors would be eligible for cover or whether this applied only to County Councillors. Councillor Baker said that some political parties provided their own cover and some may have cover through their home insurance.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

51. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Interim Monitoring Officer said that it was for the Committee to decide what topics it wanted to consider for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme.

Mr. M. Roberts asked whether the twice yearly meetings of the Standards Committee which in the past had been held at different Town & Community Council venues throughout Flintshire was to continue. It was agreed that it was of benefit to all those attending but that the meetings needed to be structured to ensure that the same questions were not repeated by the same attendees at different meetings.

Councillor S.R. Baker asked whether there was value in raising awareness with smaller Town & Community Councils that the Standards Committee existed. Mr. M. Roberts suggested that a list of Councils which had not engaged with the Standards Committee should be identified and visits arranged to those meetings.

Following a discussion it was agreed that the visits to Town & Community Councils would continue twice yearly with a meeting being arranged for September 2012.

RESOLVED:

That a meeting of the Standards Committee at a Town and Community Council venue be arranged for September 2012.

52. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 – TO CONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting as the following item was considered to be exempt by virtue of Paragraphs 12, 13 and 16 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

53. VERBAL UPDATE AND DISCUSSION BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE DEALING WITH THE COUNCILLOR REFERRAL FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

Councillor M.J. Peers having earlier declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, left the meeting prior to its discussion. Mr. M. Roberts also left the meeting following advice he had received.

Following a discussion as to whether Councillors J.B. Attridge and A.P. Shotton could remain in the meeting, it was agreed that they could both remain in the meeting.

The Interim Monitoring Officer explained the procedure for the hearing. She agreed that she would circulate some guidance for those who would sit at the hearing and advised that they should contact her if they had any queries. It was agreed that a training session would be held on 5 March 2012 for those who would be on the panel at the hearing.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Interim Monitoring Officer circulate guidance to those who would sit on the panel at the hearing; and
- (b) That a training session for those members would be held on 5 March 2012.

54. DURATION OF MEETING

The meeting commenced at 6.00 p.m. and ended at 7.08 p.m.

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Chairman

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

STANDARDS COMMITTEE	DATE: 20 FEBRUARY 2012
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MEMBER	ITEM	MIN. NO. REFERS
Councillor M.J. Peers	Verbal update and discussion between Members of the Committee dealing with the Councillor Referral from the Ombudsman	53