

# Minutes



## Standards Committee

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Date: 26 October 2017

Time: 5.30 pm

Present: Councillors Westwood (Chair), Davies, H Thomas, P Hourahine, A Mitchell and Watkins

Apologies: Councillors D Fouweather and Britton

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### 1 **Declarations of Interest**

None received.

### 2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 29 June 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of 29 June 2017 were submitted.

#### **Agreed:**

That the Minutes of the meeting were accepted as a true record.

The Chair advised those present that the Minutes were sent to Council.

### 3 **Matters Arising**

- Network group will be picked up under the work programme. Would need to set up a meeting as soon as possible to ensure not missing anything on policies and procedures.
- Code of Conduct – set up a training session agreed amongst ourselves and book a session and invite the councillors.

### 4 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Mr J Davies, Bishton Community Council to the meeting. Community Councillor Davies was the successful candidate recent interviews of Community Council Representative. The appointment would be confirmed at Council on 28 November 2017, however Mr Davies was invited to attend and observe the meeting.

The Chair did meet with the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and there was not much to report other than the basic questions asked by the IRP regarding the committee and how the Chair was happy with the proceedings of the committee. One point was activity around the meeting and using the time and best practice.

### 5 **Complaints**

There were no complaints to report to the Committee.

### 6 **Standards Committee Annual Report**

The Standards Committee Annual Report for 2016/17 was circulated to committee members for comment. The Annual Report would be presented to Council by the Chair of Standards Committee on 28 November 2017. The report outlined the work carried out by the Committee during the past 12 months, identifying particular issues that had arisen and setting out the forward work programme for the year.

The Head of Law & Regulation advised members to peruse the report and if they had any comments to send them in to A Jenkins via email.

The Head of Law & Regulation also asked the Chair if he would like to attend Council to present the Annual Report, or nominate a Council representative from the Committee seek the Council's approval on the Annual Report.

The Chair would meet with Gareth subject to member's comments and make a decision on whether to report to Council.

**Agreed:**

Any comments to be sent to A Jenkins by 21 November 2017.

## 7 **Work Programme**

The Committee Members gave consideration to the Annual Work Programme.

The Chair referred to the Annual Review of Community Councils and it was agreed that a questionnaire would be sent to clerks to ensure that the information within the work programme was being maintained. Once information had been gathered from a questionnaire, it would be brought back to a future next meeting.

K Watkins referred to the deadline dates and suggested setting specific timescales. The Head of Law & Regulation advised that it was an indicative programme on what types of policies the Standards Committee would like to review. Discussion ensued regarding the topics that were tabled and it was felt that a meeting with other councils might be productive in relation to policy review. It was noted that only policies that had any relevance to ethical standards were reviewed by the Committee.

Whilst Councillor H Thomas suggested that it was a positive sign that no policies had been reviewed. K Watkins however suggested that lack of policy review could result in complacency.

In response to Councillor Hourahine query on whether declarations of interest should be reviewed, the Head of Law & Regulation advised that this was already on the work programme under the ethical standards audit.

It was once more reiterated that meaningful discussion with other councils would be productive and help towards building a framework.

**Agreed:**

- That a questionnaire was to be sent out community councils to ensure compliance and identify training and development needs.
- To arrange a networking meeting with other councils.

## 8 **Employee Code of Conduct**

The Employee Code of Conduct was considered by the Committee. The document had been sent out to union representatives recently for their comments, with a deadline for the end of October, the document would then be shown to the Cabinet Member for his endorsement.

There were elements of the document that did not relate to ethical standards. It was a different enforcement regime to the Member's Code of Conduct however the Head of Law & Regulation thought that it should be brought to the committee so that members were aware of its existence.

K Watkins asked if there were similar clauses in the code of conduct for employees and members, as one was staffing related and the other ethical. There were differences but the underlying principles were the same.

The Head of Law & Regulation mentioned those present that on a work programme in recent years was a protocol of officer/member relationships, which did go to Council but was not accepted as there was a lack of understanding on the policy. Standards had a 'good practice' protocol on how members and officers should work together and committee members could consider whether additional guidance should be in place.

It was therefore agreed that the original protocol would be brought to the next meeting with a view to adding it to the work programme for review.

Discussion ensued regarding officer/member relationships and how communication could be improved, for example how should junior officers deal with members requesting information or asking to carry out certain duties, which might be more than their position allows. This was one area that could be included in protocol.

**Agreed:**

That an officers/member protocol be brought to the next meeting.

**9 Community Councils: Draft Complaints Resolution Protocol - to follow**

The Chair asked the Head of Law and Regulation to give a brief overview on the One Voice Wales Model Local Resolution Protocol for Community and Town Councils.

The Ombudsman had requested a protocol for Town and Community Councils, as there had been many complaints. This was similar to the council's protocol which the Ombudsman had asked the Community Councils to adopt originally. One Voice Wales however had also put together a framework, which they felt were the appropriate and proper procedures to deal with complaints.

It was explained that One Voice Wales was an independent body that provided support, training and information to Town and Community Councils for a subscribed membership fee of about £200 although not all Community Councils were members. The Ombudsman was keen for Community Councillors to adopt the One Voice Wales protocol, which was why the protocol was brought to Committee Members with a view to discussing whether the document should be circulated to the Community Council Clerks. A questionnaire would also be resent to the clerks regarding training, code of conduct compliance and protocol.

The Community Council representative invited to attend and observe the meeting mentioned that Bishton was a member of One Voice Wales and they received a lot of information and attended courses, however the courses were not free, there was an additional cost which could on occasion be high, such as mediation training courses.

The Chair referred to the written protocol on how to perform misconduct hearings and suggested it might also be of use to Community Councils. This would also be circulated to clerks and included in the work programme.

**Agreed:**

- That the One Voice Wales Protocol be circulated to Community Council Clerks.

- A training questionnaire/audit form be resent to Community Council Clerks.
- Send out information on how to perform a Misconduct Hearing to Community Council Clerks and include in the work programme.

#### 10 **Meetings Dates for 2018**

To agree the following dates for 2018:

25 January  
19 April  
19 July  
25 October

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified