

Minutes



Standards Committee

Date: 25 January 2018

Time: 5.30 pm

Present: P Westwood (Chair), Davies, Britton, A Mitchell and Watkins

In Attendance: G Price (Head of Law & Regulation), J Owen (Chief Legal Officer), A Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors D Fouweather and P Hourahine

1 **Apologies for Absence**

2 **Declarations of Interest**

None received.

3 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 26 October 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of 26 October 2017 were submitted.

Agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting were agreed.

4 **Matters Arising**

Item 2: Chair advised members that the minutes were available on the website.

Item 7: The Chief Legal Officer would be attending a joint legal officers meeting in the near future and the subject of networking with other councils would be discussed. Any information relating to Standards Committee networking would be fed back at the next meeting.

In the meantime, committee members were reminded that they could attend Standards Committees held by other councils if they so wished.

The Head of Law & Regulation referred to the recent code of conduct training, carried out on 18 January. It was noted that seven of the 10 remaining councillors attended.

After brief discussion it was agreed that 47 out of 50 members was considered a good attendance. Information such as the PowerPoint presentation and the Ombudsman for Wales video could be circulated electronically for information to those members that had not attended, however no further action regarding training would be pursued.

The Chair suggested that the Leader and respective Business Managers be informed of the high number of councillors that attended code of conduct training, which was good news.

T Britton suggested that in the letter it should be noted that the remaining three did not attend.

Agreed:

- That the Committee Members would receive feedback from the Chief Legal Officer regarding networking.
- That a letter on behalf of the Standards Committee be sent to the Leader and respective Business Managers regarding the successful attendance of Code of Conduct training.

5 Chair's Announcements

No announcements made by the Chair.

6 Complaints

The Head of Law & Regulation had received no complaints.

7 Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

Committee members were asked to consider whether there was a continuing need for the Protocol to supplement the regulatory codes and if so, whether the current document was in need of revision. Any revised Protocol would be recommended to full Council for adoption as part of the written Constitution.

The attached protocol (Appendix 1) was out of date and needed revision, an alternative protocol (Appendix 2) was therefore considered by the Committee.

The question was also put to the Committee, was there a need for a protocol.

The Chair suggested that in light of the sexual harassment issues, a protocol should be in place providing more content on the subject.

A Mitchel agreed that there was a need for a protocol and asked was Appendix 2 the suggested approach, from Welsh Government. Appendix 2 was from a monitoring officer's group and part of a modular constitution. There was no prescriptive format, the Committee could decide to update the original protocol, the suggested version or combine both protocols.

The Chair asked whether other councils had a staff/member protocol in place, and whilst some councils had not adopted the protocol, it was considered good practice to include the protocol in the constitution.

K Watkins suggested it would be a useful tool for new members to help them understand the working officer/member relationship and promote mutual respect.

T Britton asked how the protocol would be endorsed. It would be formally adopted by full Council via the recommendation of the Standards Committee and published to the Newport City Council website under the constitution.

The Head of Law & Regulation suggested that the Committee members look at the document in detail and provide their feedback to A Jenkins.

Agreed:

That appendices 1&2 be sent emailed to all Committee members with responses by 29 March 2018 in order for all comments to be compiled in a final document which would be brought back to the committee for recommendation.

8 **Letter to Community Councils - Review of Ethical Standards**

The draft letter was considered by the Committee and the Chair invited comments from the members.

J Davies, the community council representative was happy with the content on the letter and hoped that all community councillors would sign up to the review.

The Chair asked J Davies did community councillors feel that the questionnaire be welcomed, or considered onerous. J Davies advised that whilst he could only speak on behalf of his council, they were eager to sign up to any courses and were fully aware of the code of conduct, ethical standards and other general requirements.

The main purpose for the Committee was to ensure that the community councillors were complying to the requirements set out in the letter.

The Chair proposed that the format of the letter be changed and the Head of Law & Regulation advised that it would be sent out as a box ticking format

J Davies suggested that the letter advised community councillors on what was mandatory or statutory training and what training was suitable for clerks. The Head of Law & Regulation advised that the relevant training could be highlighted however, the council could not promote or advocate any training by One Voice Wales. In addition, the Council could also offer to provide training.

Agreed:

That the letter be sent out to all clerks, with a deadline set for 31 March 2018 to be discussed at the next meeting in April.

9 **Any Other Business**

This item would be a rolling Agendas item.

10 **Date of Next Meeting: 19 April 2018**

The next meeting would take place on 19 April 2018 at 5.30pm in Committee Room 1.

T Britton suggested changing the 25 October date to 1 November 2018.

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified