

Minutes



Standards Committee

Date: 17 January 2019

Time: 5.30 pm

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

Pamela Tasker (Governance Officers)

In Attendance:

Apologies: Councillors V Dudley

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor H Thomas, Councillor Hourahine, Councillor Dudley

2 Agenda - Cym

3 Declarations of Interest

None received

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 1 November 2018

The Minutes of the meeting of 1 November 2018 were submitted.

Agreed

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

5 Matters Arising

Councillor Thomas presented the Annual Report to Council in November and it was well received.

The Staff Councillor Survey presentation was circulated for the meeting. This was a **Response to the Ethical Standards Questionnaire**. The survey will be debated under Chairs Announcements.

The Chair stated that there was a comment under Section 11 in the minutes of the previous meeting in relation to the training of Councillors. Mr J Davies stated that the training that Members received through the Council was free and some members did not take up training if it was through One Voice Wales due to the expense. When the Council run training there was usually a good uptake from members.

The Chair enquired as to whether there was any training arranged for Councillors this calendar year. The Head of Law and Regulation confirmed that training had not been planned yet and it was unlikely for training to commence before April as the Council Chamber is to be booked in the evening. It was likely that training would now commence in April or May 2019. Concurrent expenditure was mentioned as relations between Newport

City Council and Community Councils are a bit strained at present and those Community Councils have not been pressed or chased due to the current strained relationship as cuts to local concurrent funding in April were not well received. It would then be followed up in due course. It was confirmed that in the Charter it stated that one of the commitments was to provide training and the feeling was that this relationship between Newport City Council and Community Councils could continue once financial issues have dissipated.

It was hoped that the training would be specifically for Community Councillors as their role was slightly different and members of the Standards Committee were welcome to attend. Dr Worthington confirmed that he would like to attend. Training sessions could also be added onto a Standards Committee meeting in the year.

Social media for Councillors (new guidelines) published by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) can be brought forward to the next meeting. It was mentioned that supporting Councillors in their local roles can be looked at as well as how Councillors can best engage with their constituents.

6 Chair's Announcements

The Chair referred to the survey; **Response to Ethical Standards Questionnaire** which was deferred to this week. The Chair asked what was the Committee's feelings on the staff/member survey? It was noted that only 18 out of 65 individuals responded and that this was a disappointing result. The Head of Law & Regulation confirmed the response from Councillors was patchy and stated that the questionnaire was a starting template and that follow up meetings would need to be completed. It was not taken up further when the last survey was last completed in 2011 as there had been an Election at that time so members had changed etc. It was noted that there needed to be a considerable improvement in relationships between Officers and Members and there had been concerns expressed regarding certain Members conduct in Council and Planning committees. These issues were noted at a previous meeting and it was said that things had improved.

Dr Worthington confirmed that there was a positive view on having a survey but the low rate was concerning and was acknowledged. Issues raised at that point have improved.

Councillors and Senior Officers were spoken to and there was a need to evidence these statements. We should be able to document the improved relationship in an up to date survey.

It was noted that maybe it was necessary to find out from members how they felt about the induction sessions, types of training they can access etc. Some Councils do not carry out Members surveys and at the moment Newport Council are not in a formal position to say that the Council are aware of the outcomes. It was noted that the graphs on the survey were good but the free text was more helpful on seeing actual Members views.

The Chair felt that a new survey would be welcomed and felt it was uncomfortable that there had been none recently. The Chair suggested that they would meet with the Principal Leaders to see what their thoughts were and what should be done. Should the questions on the survey be structured differently for example?

Ms Watkins agreed and stated that the questionnaire was very useful as long as Councillors responded and that it was important to get both Officers and Councillors points of view. It was noted that on the back page of the questionnaire it had been proposed that the Council ought to consider sanctions for members not attending training. However, it was discussed that this cannot be enforced.

The Head of Law and Regulation commented that the leaders are good at getting people to attend and business managers also do their best. If Councillors did not attend for Licencing and Planning training, then they could be removed from attending those Committees.

It was discussed that an upfront meeting between the Leaders and the Chair might be better and that Dr Worthington might garner better support if a meeting took place. The Chair confirmed that it was not necessary for a questionnaire to be presented at this Leaders meeting but that he would welcome questions that the committee might find useful to add to the survey.

All present supported the Chair meeting with the leaders and that this will be brought to the next meeting.

Ms Britton mentioned that as the Standards committee meet four times a year, it was asked whether other Councillors know the role of the Committee and do they pay any further thought to the Standards Committee? Ms Britton confirmed that she had attended a Council meeting some time ago and found it quite interesting. It was suggested that maybe it may be worth having a rota to attend these meetings to make other co-opted Members aware that a representative from the Standards Committee is present and is observing.

It was mentioned that as full Council and Planning committees are web cast some Committee members present were not aware of this. It was confirmed that the Standards Committee member present at those Council Committees was announced at the time of Council but it was questioned as to whether Councillors know why they were there. The name of the Standard Committee representative does not have to be mentioned but a presence can be acknowledged.

The chair confirmed that this item can be added to the list.

Agreed:

-A meeting to be arranged between the Chair, the Leader and the Leader of the opposition to discuss the Questionnaire.

-Social Media for Councillors Guidelines to be brought forward to the next meeting.

-An open invitation for members of Standards Committee to attend Council and this can be announced before Council takes place.

7 Complaints

There has been one complaint received from a Counsellor, which has since been resolved under Local Resolution Protocol at Phase 2. The complaint was received as a result of a Licencing panel hearing. A Member present felt strongly about a point made and stormed out. The Councillor in question apologised to the Chair and said that they felt new members did not understand their role. As a result of the complaint further licencing training is to be arranged.

8 Date of Next Meeting

11 April 2019 at 5.30pm

The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified