

Minutes



Standards Committee

Date: 19 April 2018

Time: 5.30 pm

Present: P Westwood (Chair), J Davies, H Britton and A Mitchell along with Councillors H Thomas and P Hourahine

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

Apologies: Councillors D Fouweather and Watkins

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 25 January 2018

The minutes of the meeting of 25 January 2018 were submitted.

Agreed:

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

4 Matters Arising

Item 4:

- Networking: The Chief Legal Officer provided feedback from the joint legal officers meeting on the subject of networking. Whilst there was not much to discuss, there were similar workloads within other local councils. There was an annual conference due to take place in September where the matter would be raised with Standards Committee Members from other authorities. Feedback from this conference would be deferred to the Autumn meeting. There were however some councils that provided a webcast of Standards Committee meetings which could be viewed on their respective websites.
- Code of Conduct Training: As agreed at the previous meeting, a letter was sent to those members that did not attend the arranged code of conduct training dates last May/June 2017 along with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation. The aforementioned was also circulated to the Leader, respective Business Managers and the Chair of Standards.

5 Chair's Announcements

No announcements made by the Chair.

6 Complaints

The Head of Law & Regulation referred to a complaint brought to the Ombudsman by a community councillor. The Ombudsman however decided not to proceed with the complaint as there was no breach in the code of conduct. There were no further complaints to report.

7 Officer/Member Protocol (redraft of the Protocol to follow)

As agreed at the previous meeting, the above report was revised and given consideration by Committee members. The Chair had provided feedback on the draft protocol, with reference to Appendix 3, intimidation, threatening behaviour and bullying which did not contain a reference to harassment.

The revised composite protocol was fit for purpose and members of the committee were welcome to make further comments, or recommend that it go to next Full Council for adoption.

Councillor Hourahine asked whether or not the union representatives had sight of the document. As it was a protocol document it did not need consultation with union representatives.

In response to Councillor H Thomas' query, the Head of Law & Regulation advised that the protocol protected both members and officers against bullying.

The Chair suggested that members peruse the revised protocol and provide their feedback by no later than Friday 4 May.

It was noted that the next committee was 19 July, which would mean missing the deadline for papers to be submitted to Full Council, the next Council date after that would be in November 2018. In light of this it was agreed that the meeting would be brought forward to ensure that the protocol be recommended for ratification at Council in July.

Agreed:

- That Members would have two further weeks to put forward their comments with a deadline of Friday 4 May.
- That the next Standards Committee be brought forward to meet the deadline for submitting papers to Full Council in July.

8 Community Councils Review (Update)

To date, out of the 14 community councils within Newport, eight responses had been received and one community council declined to respond, these were:

Goldcliffe
Graig
Langstone
Llanvaches
Llanwern
Marshfield
Nash
Wentlooge

The Head of Law & Regulation referred to an anomaly on one of the forms submitted, relating to lack of publication to their website. The respective community council would be contacted to seek clarification on the subject to ensure that they were fully compliant.

Overall the responses showed that community councils were aware of their legal obligation and had signed up to the code of conduct. In some cases, a handful of community councils

had adopted the local resolution protocol. There did not appear to be anything out of the ordinary regarding non-compliance.

Agreed:

That the questionnaire would be sent to the remaining Community Councillors that had not responded. These would be brought back to the next meeting to see if there was a common thread.

9 Standards Committee Co-opted Member Interviews (Update)

The Head of Law & Regulation informed members of the shortlist of applicants that were nominated.

A Mitchell referred to ratio of women to men within the shortlist. In light of this, the Chair asked for each individual member to share their opinion on the matter.

Lengthy discussion ensued and it was agreed that an additional female applicant be added to the shortlist.

The shortlist would be sent out to the panel along with some suggested dates for interview. This would however need to take place before the Council AGM in May due to the possible change of Councillors on the Committee.

Agreed:

- That an additional female applicant be added to the short list of candidates.
- A list of proposed dates for interviews be circulated to the interview panel before the Council AGM on 15 May 2018.

10 Any Other Business

No additional business to discuss.

11 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the meeting would be moved to accommodate matters that needed to be reported at Council. The meeting would take place on 12 July at 5.30pm in Committee Room 4.