

Minutes



Standards Committee

Date: 12 July 2018

Time: 5.30 pm

Present: P Westwood (Chair), Davies, H Britton along with Councillors V Dudley, P Hourahine

In attendance: Gareth Price (Head of Law & Regulation), Juliet Owen (Chief Legal Officer) and Michele Chesterman (Governance Officer)

Apologies: K Watkins, A Mitchell and Councillor H Thomas

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 19 April 2018

The minutes of the meeting of 19 April 2018 were submitted.

Agreed

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

4 Matters Arising

Item 4:

- Standards Conference Wales (14 September 2018): to be raised under item 9 in the Agenda.
- Code of Conduct Training: Only three Council members had not attended the training in May/June 2017. A letter had been sent to those members who did not attend the training along with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and copied to the Leader, Business Managers and Chair of Standards.

Item 7:

- Officer/Member Protocol: The protocol had been circulated. There had been no further comments/amendments. The Head of Law and Regulations asked Committee members if they were happy to recommend to Council for adoption. All agreed. The intention was to take to Council on 24 July 2018 but it may need to be deferred until the Council meeting in September 2018.

Item 8:

- **Community Councils Review:** In the minutes of the last meeting on 19 April 2018 it was mentioned that one of the community councils had declined to respond. Councillor Dudley asked which one. This would be reported back to the next meeting. The Head of Law and Regulation explained that they should give a reason for declining. Most of the responses received from the community councils stated that they had made steps to comply with the legislation and code of conduct and there were no signs of non-compliance. For those community councils that had responded the responses were satisfactory and members had received some training.

5 Chair's Announcements

Interviews had taken place to appoint a co-opted member of the Standards Committee. Subject to the new appointment being ratified at the next Council meeting they would be invited to attend the Standards Committee meeting on 1 November 2018.

The Head of Law and Regulation explained that the co-opted member had to be independent. It could not be a former Council member or officer. Other than that they should have experience of the public sector, ethical standards. The job specification had a number of performance skills to compare against. A DBS check was not a requirement of the post.

The Head of Law and Regulation stated that councillors were not required to undertake DBS checks as a matter of routine. Unless there is unsupervised contact with vulnerable persons it was not required although some councils do carry out DBS checks.

Councillor Dudley asked about residential home visits. The Head of Law and Regulation responded that this was one reason why a DBS check would be carried out but as the visits were supervised this was felt to be unnecessary.

6 Complaints

The Head of Law and Regulation had received no further reports of complaints.

7 Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

The Head of Law and Regulation reported that there had been no further comments. It was recommended that the Officer/Member Protocol be taken to Council for adoption.

The Chair referred to a survey in the Assembly of staff as opposed to members and asked if there was an appetite for the same in the Council. The Head of Law and Regulation responded that Council staff were surveyed in terms of satisfaction but one is not undertaken in relation to staff views on Members as out of the 3000 plus council staff not all will have contact with councillors. If there were complaints they would be brought back to Standards Committee. A survey had been undertaken of members previously on how ethical standards were working. This could be resurrected if felt worthwhile. Some of the questions used last time could be asked.

Councillor Dudley felt that with the proportion of new members in the Council this could be a good idea.

The Head of Law and Standards explained that it would be necessary to identify which staff had working relationships with members and how far the survey should be rolled out. For instance some staff might not have direct contact with members but may have contact via telephone calls etc. There would be a difficulty selecting staff but it could be done if

Committee members felt it was worthwhile. Agreed to place on the agenda for the next meeting in November and provide the Committee with examples of questions asked in the previous survey.

Agreed

- To recommend the Officer/Member Protocol to Council for adoption.
- Survey of staff relationship to Councillors to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting along with examples of questions asked in a previous survey.

8 Letter to Community Councils - Review of Ethical Standards: Questionnaire Follow-up

Since the last meeting Bishton and Penhow CC had sent in their responses for the Standards Ethical Review. The Bishton CC response was attached to the agenda but not the Penhow CC response. This would be circulated with the minutes.

The Chair asked if there was a common thread to the responses received.

The Head of Law and Regulation responded that there were two aspects –compliance and training requirements. All the responses so far had showed that members register and were up to date. In terms of training some attended sessions with One Voice Wales and some with training provided by Newport City Council. A composite response would be circulated for the next meeting.

The Head of Law and Regulation noted that Newport City Council had provided training previously for community councils, city councils or combined. This could be considered if members felt appropriate.

Agreed:

- The Penhow Community Council response, to the Review of Ethical Standards Questionnaire, to be circulated with the minutes.
- A composite response of the community councils, to the Review of Ethical Standards Questionnaire, to be circulated for the agenda of the next Standards Committee meeting on 1 November 2018.

9 Standards Conference: Aberystwyth

The Chair informed members that they had been circulated with correspondence on the Standards Conference Wales 2018 which would take place in Aberystwyth on 14 September 2018.

Each council in Wales was allocated 4 places. The Head of Law and Regulation had asked the Governance Team Leader to liaise with the Democracy and Communication Manager in terms of budget. Officers and members were welcome to attend. The Head of Law and Regulation and the Chief Legal Officer had attended previously but were happy to stand down if members wished to attend.

The Chair mentioned that A Mitchell had indicated he would like to attend.

Agreed:

- An invitation to the Standards Conference Wales 2018 be extended to all members of Standards Committee.
- Members to contact Democratic.services@newport.gov.uk if interested in attending
- An email to be sent to A Mitchell to confirm he wishes to attend.

10 **Date of Next Meeting: 1 November 2018 in Committee Room 4 at 5.30pm**

The meeting terminated at 6.00 pm