

Minutes



Standards Committee

Date: 29 June 2017

Time: 5.30 pm

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

In Attendance: G Price (Head of Law & Regulation), M Chesterman and A Jenkins (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor D Fouweather

1 Appointment of Independent Vice Chair

A Mitchell was nominated and seconded as Independent Vice-Chair.

2 Declarations of Interest

None received.

3 Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements by the Chair.

4 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 16 February 2017

The minutes of the meeting of 16 February 2017 were submitted.

Agreed:

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

5 Matters Arising

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- Gareth briefly outlined the purpose of the Standards Committee for Councillor Hourahine.
- The Chair was keen to proceed with a network group of Standards Committee members within neighbouring authorities. G Price suggested a networking forum, which all members were in agreement with.

Agreed:

To arrange a Networking forum with local authorities.

- Code of Conduct training was provided after the elections in May. This consisted of three separate sessions, one morning, afternoon and early evening, accommodating all councillors and community councillors. It was noted that there were 10 remaining Newport councillors did not attend any of the training sessions provided.

Discussion ensued as to how committee members would want to proceed. Several suggestions included a later time slot for those working full time or writing to the respective business managers on how to go forward.

T Britton suggested writing individually to the councillors to advise that the Standards Committee members were fully aware that they hadn't attended mandatory training.

It was unanimously agreed that a letter be sent to the 10 outstanding councillors noting that their non-attendance was brought to the attention of the Standards Committee and a final mop up session date be set. The minute could also be raised at Council.

Agreed:

- That a letter be sent to individual councillors, noting that committee members were aware that they did not attend training and that a final mop-up session date be arranged.
 - A copy of the letter would go to the respective business managers.
 - That Council note the minute for information.
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- Councillor Thomas suggested a standard agenda item to cover any general queries that members might want to raise at the committee. After brief discussion it was suggested that Any Other Business be included on the Agenda for all future meetings.

Agreed:

Any other business item to be added to the agenda.

- Cllr Thomas referred to Community Councils and whether the Council kept a record of their financial spending, this wasn't the case. Discussion ensued regarding expenditure within Community Councils. They could incur expenditure on most things, as long as it was considered an appropriate use of money and a benefit to the public. Additionally, if a community councillor had any association or link with a group, a declaration of interest form would need to be completed, unless it was within the £500 de minimis level, otherwise any larger amount would go to the Standards Committee to ask for special dispensation.

6 **Complaints**

Two complaints went to the Ombudsman but were both declined on both and the investigations were not pursued.

7 **Nomination of Community Councillors Representative: Update**

As there were three community councillors interested in the position, G Price suggested that the interested persons; namely, J Small from Goldcliffe, J Davies from Bishton and J Harris from Graig attend an interview. The Chair, K Watkins and T Britton agreed to sit on the panel. A Jenkins would email all the interested parties to arrange an interview date.

Agreed:

That an interview panel for the selection of a Community Council Representative on Standards Committee be convened.

8 **Work Programme**

A work programme would be compiled and presented to the committee at the next meeting in October along with the draft Annual Report.

The Chair referred to the protocol on member/officer relations. G Price suggested preparing a draft report to discuss at the next meeting in October.

The Chair also queried possible protocol in relation to social media. There was a WLGA guidance note which was distributed a previous meeting, which members of the committee would be advised to refer to, as a positive way of using social media. There was therefore nothing to be picked up under the work programme.

Agreed:

The Annual Report would be brought to the next meeting.

The Protocol on Member/Officer Relations be brought to the next meeting

The forward work programme would be brought to the next meeting.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting would take place on Thursday 26 October 2017 at 5.30pm in Committee Room 4.