

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Conference Room, Caledfryn, Denbigh on Friday, 2nd March, 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr C.B. Halliday (Chair), Councillors P.A. Dobb, P. Glynn and R.LI. Williams, Mr I. Lawson, Mr G.F. Roberts and Mrs P. White.

Councillors R.E. Barton and C.L. Hughes attended as Observers.

ALSO PRESENT

The Monitoring Officer and Administrative officer (C.I. Williams).

976 URGENT MATTERS

No items were raised which in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

977 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Friday, 20th October, 2006 were submitted.

Matters arising:-

3. Attendance at Meetings. (a) Henllan Community Council – The Monitoring Officer informed Members that information pertaining to the new Code of Conduct would, when available, be conveyed to Town and Community Councils at meetings with their respective Chairs and Clerks.

RESOLVED – that, subject to the above, the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.

978 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

(a) SACRE

A report by the Chair, which provided details of his attendance at a meeting of the SACRE Committee held on the 31st January, 2007, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting had been well-ordered and had run very smoothly. However, he had expressed reservations as to whether the respective Committee Members had a clear understanding of the guidance on disclosure of interests. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that he would pursue the issue of the provision of training and advice for Members of the relevant Committees which would also include co-opted Members.

In response to a question from the Chair, details of the role and remit of the Religious Education Inspector/Adviser at the SACRE Committee were provided for Members of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED – that the position be noted.

(b) Bodfari Community Council

A report by the Chair, which provided details of his attendance at a meeting of Bodfari Community Council, held on the 14th February, 2007, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Chair informed Members that, in response to an invitation from Bodfari Community Council, he had provided a summary of the role of the County Council's Standards Committee, as previously agreed by the Committee Members. He confirmed that the area which had generated the most interest had related to matters pertaining to the declaration of interests, with particular reference having been made to planning applications.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed that, as stated by the Chair in his report, help and assistance in respect of training would be made readily available for all Members of the respective Committees.

RESOLVED – *that the position be noted.*

(c) Llanferres Community Council

A report by the Chair, which provided details of his attendance at a meeting of Llanferres Community Council held on the 15th February, 2007 had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Chair informed Members that, in response to an invitation from Llanferres Community Council, he had provided a summary of the role of the County Council's Standards Committee, as previously agreed by the Members of the Committee.

He confirmed that the area which had generated the most interest had related to matters pertaining to the declaration of interests, the Chair explained that he had provided details pertaining to 'The Code to protect you' card produced by the Standards Board for England, together with, information on how to obtain a copy of the card via the website.

RESOLVED – *that the position be noted.*

Mr G.F. Roberts referred to the Code of Conduct, explaining that it also applied to Members of Local Health Boards, and suggested that it might be beneficial to circulate details of the Code of Conduct to current Members of the local Health Board. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that documentation relating to this matter had previously been circulated, but had not been updated, and he agreed to monitor the position.

In reply to matters raised by Mr G.F. Roberts pertaining to the Democratic Renewal Scheme and Members Appraisals, the Monitoring Officer agreed to examine this issue and report accordingly.

979 MONITORING THE CODE OF CONDUCT

A copy of a letter from Stephen Phipps, Head of Partnership and Ethics Team, Local Government Policy Division, Welsh Assembly Government, to Mr Steve Thomas, Director Welsh Local Government Association which provided a response for information in respect of the timetable for the progression of the implementation of the review of the revised Code of Conduct, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer referred to the timetable contained in the letter and confirmed that there had been a slippage of approximately one month. He explained that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken in England, with regards to the Code of Conduct, but informed Members that the Code of Conduct to be implemented in Wales could differ and he felt that any close examination of that document might cause confusion in the long term.

He stressed that it would be important for the revised Code of Conduct to provide clarification in respect of the roles of Councillors serving on both Town and Community Councils and County Councils.

Councillor R.LI. Williams explained that he felt that the manner in which Community Councils conducted their meetings differed considerably between the respective Councils. He suggested that all Community Councils should be encouraged to adopt an agreed Code of Practice and made particular reference to the importance of ensuring consistency when considering planning applications.

The Monitoring Officer responded and explained that the Welsh Assembly Government had already provided an indication of their intention to address this matter, he also stressed that it would be important for officers within the County Council, and particularly within the Planning Department, to assist and provide training for Members of Community Councils. Concern was expressed that due to

a lack of resources within the Planning Directorate difficulties might be experienced in providing the required assistance.

During the ensuing discussion Members agreed that the Monitoring Officer investigates the possibility of the County Council, with the assistance of the Planning Department, producing guidance notes based on the current rules for circulation to all Community Councils. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that a report of this nature had been already been circulated. However, he would investigate the matter further.

RESOLVED –that

- (a) *the position be noted, and*
- (b) *the Monitoring Officer investigates the possibility of the County Council, with the assistance of the Planning Department, producing guidance notes based on the current rules for circulation to all Community Councils.*

980 FUTURE MEETINGS

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that the next meeting of the Standards Committee would be held, as previously agreed, on Friday, 18th May, 2007.

Mr G.F. Roberts explained that he would be unable to attending the meeting of the Standards Committee scheduled for the 18th May, 2007 and submitted an apology for his non attendance.

Members agreed that the Monitoring Officer write to Members of the Standards Committee seeking agreement on possible future dates for meetings of the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED –that

- (a) *the next meeting of the Standards Committee be held on Friday, 18th May, 2007, and*
- (b) *the Monitoring Officer write to all Members of the Standards Committee seeking agreement on possible future dates for meetings of the Standards Committee.*

981 URGENT ITEM

In reply to a request from the Chair who sought clarification with regard to the correct procedures to adopt following the receipt of complaints from Members with regard to other Members, officers or the treatment of Members, the Monitoring Officer referred to the County Council's Constitution.

He explained that procedures were in place to deal with complaints registered against an officer of the County Council, and that in the case of a complaint being registered against a Member of the County Council the matter would be referred to the Ombudsman.

Members of the Standards Committee agreed that the procedures, as set out in the County Council's Constitution, be adhered to.

RESOLVED –that *the procedures for addressing complaints against Members and officers of the County Council, as set out in the County Council's Constitution, be adhered to.*

Meeting ended at 11.20 a.m.
