

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Conference Room, Ty Nant, Prestatyn on Friday, 28th March, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr C.B. Halliday (Chair), Councillors P. Glynn and R.LI. Williams and Mr G.F. Roberts.
Councillor R.E. Barton attended as an Observer.

ALSO PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Councillor P.A. Dobb and Mrs P. White

The Chair explained that the terms of office of Councillors P.A. Dobb and P. Glynn, as Members of the Standards Committee, would be ending and he thanked them for the work they had undertaken during their terms of office as Members of the Standards Committee.

899 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.

900 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Friday, 21st December, 2007 were submitted.

Matters arising: -

3. Membership – In response to a question from Mr G.F. Roberts regarding the provision of training for newly appointed Members of County, Town and Community Councils, the Monitoring Officer explained that he anticipated that the Welsh Local Government Association would be taking the lead in this matter and that a training package would be provided by the Welsh Local Government Association. Members were informed that an induction day would be held for Members of the County Council prior to the first meeting of the new County Council.

The Monitoring Officer referred to the vacancy which had arisen on the Standards Committee Selection Panel and confirmed that all Community Councils would be consulted in respect of this issue.

Councillor R.E. Barton joined the meeting at this juncture (10.08 a.m.).

5. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales' – The Monitoring Officer responded to a question from G.F. Roberts, he explained that it was hoped that improved links between Members of Standards Committees and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales could be achieved through enhanced interaction and consultation processes.

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

901 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Committee were informed that there were no reports to submit of attendance by Members of the Standards Committee at County, Town or Community Council meetings.

The Chair confirmed that he had attended a meeting of the County Council's Resources Scrutiny Committee but had nothing to report.

RESOLVED –that the report be received and the position noted.

902 THE ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES – ANNUAL REPORT 2006/2007

A copy of a report by the Monitoring Officer, which received the report prepared by the President of the Adjudication Panel which covered the Panel's activities over the last financial year, had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer explained the President of the Adjudication Panel had issued the Panel's latest annual report and copies of the document had been circulated by post to Members of the Committee. Members were informed that there had been no reported abuse of the Code of Conduct in Denbighshire and that this had reflected the high level of standards being achieved.

Councillor R.E. Barton referred to the format and content of the annual report and suggested that the document might be made more user friendly.

RESOLVED –that the Adjudication Panel for Wales – Annual Report 2006/2007 be received and its contents noted.

903 MONITORING THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Monitoring Officer outlined the roles and functions of the Standards Committee as set out in Article 9 of the Council's Constitution, which included the monitoring of the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct and advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Code arising from the Local Government Act 2000.

He referred to the draft copy of the Model Code of Conduct, circulated to Members of the Committee on the 28th January, 2008, and explained that confirmation had been received that on the 20th March, 2008 the Minister had made the Order for the new model of the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer provided a brief summary of the changes to the Code of Conduct and highlighted the following areas:-

12. Prejudicial Interests – Members were informed that the changes introduced in respect of the categories for voting and speaking would make the Code easier to apply as the ratchet system had now been removed.

The Monitoring Officer provided an outline of the issues relating to Administrative Law and made particular reference to the Administrative Law Challenge.

13. Overview of Scrutiny Committees – an outline of Members prejudicial interests in business before an overview and Scrutiny Committee was highlighted by the Monitoring Officer.
14. Participation in Relation to Disclosure Interests – It was explained that Members would now be afforded the similar rights to those of members of the public. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the making of Dispensations would now be easier and the declaration of Interest forms would be less bureaucratic.

Councillor R.II. Williams expressed the view that a Member could be disadvantaged in respect of the consideration of Planning matters.

15. Sensitive Information – In reply to a question from Mr G.F. Roberts, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that there would be no official or public record maintained of any personal interest declared and that the system operated would be based on trust.

At this juncture in time (11.14 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.) Councillor R.E. Barton left and then rejoined the meeting.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED –that the Standards Committee receive and commend to Council the new Code of Conduct made by the National Assembly for Wales.

904 FUTURE MEETINGS

Members confirmed that, business permitting, future meetings of the Standards Committee be scheduled to be held on Fridays on a six week cycle and that they be included in the County Council diary. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Standards Committee be held on Friday, 6th June, 2008 at a venue to be confirmed.

RESOLVED –that

- (a) *future meetings of the Standards Committee be scheduled to be held on Fridays on a six week cycle.*
- (b) *it be requested that dates, times and venues of meetings of the Standards Committee be included in the County Council diary, and*
- (c) *the next meeting of the Standards Committee be held at 10.00 a.m. on Friday, 6th June, 2008.*

Meeting ended at 11.25 a.m.
