

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin LL15 1YN on Friday, 6 March 2015 at 10.00 am.

### **PRESENT**

Independent Members, Mr Ian Trigger (Chair), Councillor David E. Jones, Mrs Paula White and County Councillor Bill Cowie.

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Deputy Monitoring Officer and Solicitor (LJ) and Committee Administrator (SLW)

**Also in Attendance** - Clerk to Rhyl Town Council (GN)

### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barry Mellor

The Chair welcomed Committee Members to the meeting and informed Members that Reverend Wayne Roberts had formally tendered his resignation. The Standards Committee expressed their gratitude to Reverend Roberts for his contribution to the Committee during the previous three years.

The Chair and the Deputy Monitoring Officer explained there would be an advertisement for the recruitment of two new independent Members to the Committee. A Selection Panel would be set up for interviews and a completely independent member of the public would be required to sit on the Panel.

### **2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest.

Councillor Bill Cowie requested guidance from the Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) regarding the distribution at every meeting of the Declaration of Interest Forms. The DMO confirmed it was done as a reminder for Councillors to complete the forms if necessary. Any disused forms were collected and re-used at future meetings.

Councillor David Jones asked that a copy of the form be sent to all City, Town and Community Council Clerks to ensure a standard Declaration of Interest form would be utilised throughout the county. The DMO confirmed a copy of the forms would be sent out.

### **3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR**

No urgent matters.

#### 4 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 23 January 2015 were submitted.

Councillor Barry Mellor had not submitted apologies for the meeting as he had been on holiday when he was informed he was the new member on the Committee. Therefore, Councillor Mellor's apologies to be removed from the record.

Matters arising:-

Councillor Bill Cowie had raised the question of a checklist of all City, Town and Community Councils to enable Standards Committee members to indicate their preference as to which meeting they would attend.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) confirmed she would be meeting with the Community Engagement Manager for him to confirm the dates of all the meetings and once this had been received then it would be circulated to all members of the Standards Committee.

Discussion ensued and the following points were raised:

- (i) It was requested that a copy of all City, Town and Community Council Clerk telephone numbers and email addresses be circulated for ease of contact.
- (ii) The name of the City, Town and Community Council be added to any Councillors names for ease of identification within any minutes / notes or communication.
- (iii) Clarification to be sent to all members of the Standards Committee regarding their attendance at meetings when a Part II item was to be discussed. The DMO explained their attendance would be as a member of the Standards Committee but also as a member of the public and, therefore, they should not be in attendance for the Part II items. The informal mechanism would be very much at the discretion of the Council.
- (iv) A response from the Monitoring Officer (MO) was awaited, regarding relaying the Standards Committee views to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales concerning the introduction of a public interest test.
- (v) Code of Conduct training for Clerks of the City, Town and Community Councils to take place between 2.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. on 19 May 2015 in County Hall, Ruthin. Members of Standards Committee also invited to attend. There have been a number of new Clerks and hopefully, they will attend, but also it would be considered a refresher training event for the long-standing Clerks. Feedback to be presented at the Standards Committee being held on 22 May 2015.
- (vi) Advertising of the City, Town and Community Councils had been found to be lacking. The Committee recommended that Notices be placed on the main streets close to the venues to encourage attendance by members of the general public. The Clerk to the Ruthin Town Council had emailed the DMO requesting feedback re: advertising of meeting and venue.

- (vii) E-learning. The previous training event held by the MO and the DMO had been filmed in the hope it could be used to deliver future training. Unfortunately, following the viewing of the footage, it had been agreed that the quality of the footage had not been of an adequate quality for training purposes.
- (vii) A trainer was being sought by the DMO to deliver training for Chairs and Vice Chairs and an update would be put forward at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED** that subject to the above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2015, be approved as a correct record.

## **5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) presented the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme for consideration.

Discussion took place and it was agreed that the following be added to the Forward Work Programme:

- (i) 22 May 2015 – Chairman’s Annual Report feedback from Council meeting and election of Vice-Chair to Standards Committee.
- (ii) 18 September – Feedback from the North Wales Standards Forum being held on 30 May 2015.

The DMO stated that a Standards Conference would be taking place in Cardiff on 20 October 2015. All details would be circulated once received.

**RESOLVED** that the Standards Committee agree the Forward Work Programme with the agreed inclusions.

## **6 CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) presented the Chair’s Annual Report (copy attached) to enable Standards Committee Members to contribute to the report in advance of the item being presented to Full Council. The Monitoring Officer at the last meeting had been particularly keen to take into consideration, the Chair and Committee’s views on the content.

It had been agreed by Members of the Standards Committee that an Annual Report should be presented on the work of the Committee and its findings and observations to all Council members as part of the Committee’s drive to increase standards of ethical behaviour and compliance with the Members Code of Conduct.

The Chair and Committee members offered their thanks to the DMO for her excellent work on the report.

**RESOLVED** that Members:

- (a) Note the contents of the report

- (b) Provided the Monitoring Officer with comments on its content in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the views of this Committee*
- (c) Recommend its presentation by the Chair to the Full Council.*

## **7 APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION BY MEMBERS OF RHYL TOWN COUNCIL**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) presented the Application for Dispensation by members of Rhyl Town Council Report (copy attached) to allow the Committee to consider the application, determine whether or not to grant a dispensation, the conditions to be attached to the dispensation.

The Clerk to Rhyl Town Council, Gareth Nicolls was in attendance.

An application had been received from Rhyl Town Council for dispensation for the elected members of the Town Council in respect of matters relating to the Rhyl in Bloom Committee.

Rhyl Town Council appoint one of its elected members to serve on the Committee, however, a majority of the members of the Town Council were also involved in the work of the organisation either by being on the Committee in their personal capacity or as members of the organisation.

The Clerk to Rhyl Town Council informed the Committee that the Rhyl in Bloom Committee were considering a name change and asked that to be taken into account with regard to the dispensation.

In-depth discussion took place and members agreed to grant the dispensation with conditions attached.

The Clerk to Rhyl Town Council was praised by the Committee in the way he had applied for the dispensation.

It was:

***RESOLVED that*** *Dispensation be granted to Members of Rhyl Town Council pursuant to Regulation 2(a) and (d) of the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensations)(Wales) Regulations 2001:*

- (i) the Dispensation applies only to matters considered by Rhyl Town Council relating to the Rhyl in Bloom Committee (or such other name it is replaced by);*
- (ii) the Members must still declare a personal interest at the meeting(s) at which such items are discussed. They may then speak and vote in so far as they are permitted to do so by this Dispensation;*
- (iii) the Dispensation will apply for 12 months from the date of this Standards Committee meeting (6 March 2015). Thereafter, the Clerk of Rhyl Town Council is to apply in writing to the Monitoring Officer for an extension to the Dispensation and setting the Rhyl in Bloom Committee (or such other name it is replaced by) activities;*

- (iv) *on election of a new Member, the Clerk of Rhyl Town Council to notify the Monitoring Officer in writing for the Dispensation to be applied to the new Member.*

At this juncture (11.30 a.m.) there was a break.

Meeting re-convened at 11.40 a.m.

## **8 TRAINING PROVISION FOR THE COUNCILLORS AND CLERKS OF THE CITY, TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) presented a verbal report to Committee regarding training provision.

A future training event for Clerks and Vice-Clerks of the City, Town and Community was to be arranged. A letter would be sent to all Clerks requesting their preference on times and dates. Once the responses had been received, the event would be booked, one in Rhyl and one in Ruthin at a time and date suitable for the majority of the Clerks.

The Chair expressed his and Committee's gratitude to both the Monitoring Officer and the DMO for providing such good work regarding training.

**RESOLVED** *that the verbal report be noted by members.*

## **9 COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE**

No Reports to receive.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

At this juncture, the Chair asked members if they had any other business.

Councillor Bill Cowie requested during training course run by officers that a Councillor be elected as Chair to run the meeting leaving the facilitator free to concentrate on the training issues.

Committee agreed to this request.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on Friday 22 May, 2015 at 10.00 a.m. in Conference Room 1a, County Hall, Ruthin.

## **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** – that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 12 and 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

## **PART II**

### **11 CODE OF CONDUCT - PART 3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) presented the Code of Conduct – Part 3 Local Government Act 2000 report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an overview of complaints lodged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

**RESOLVED** that the Standards Committee receive and note the contents of the report.

**End of meeting – 12 noon**