

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD IN MEETING ROOM 2, GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON
THURSDAY, 3 MARCH 2016**

MEMBERS

Mrs Ceri Nash, Vice-Chair

Councillor Anne Evans
*Councillor O Arfon Jones
Councillor Paul H Pemberton

*Ms J E Adams
*Ms J M Cotter
Mr M W Pugh
Mr Neil Benson
*Community Councillor Geoff Edwards

*Absent

22 APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY CHAIR AND VARIATION IN ORDER OF AGENDA

The Monitoring Officer reported that the current Vice-Chair of the Committee had been delayed in traffic and was running late.

The Committee appointed Mr M W Pugh to temporarily Chair meeting and agreed that Agenda Item 1 – Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee be deferred to a later point in the meeting, pending the arrival of the Vice-Chair.

23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Ms J E Adams, Ms J M Cotter and Community Councillor Geoff Edwards.

24 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS IF ANY

There were no declarations of personal interest.

25 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

26 REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS - CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR MEMBERS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/35/16) to enable the Committee to review the Code of Conduct for Members (the Code) and also consider, for approval, a Confidential Reporting Procedure for Members.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that following an investigation into a Member concern that the Council's procedures lacked clarity in the proper manner for them to raise concerns and complaints relating to Council services and/or officers a

recommendation was made that this gap be addressed. A confidential reporting procedure had been prepared, as referred to in paragraph 6(1)(b) of the Model Code, which set out a clear process for Members to raise concerns themselves and the Committee was invited to consider the procedure for recommendation to Council to supplement the Code of Conduct for Members. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Constitution Working Group, the previous day, had considered and agreed the procedure.

Members welcomed the confidential reporting procedure and in response to a query it was confirmed that this procedure could be used by Members if there were no other mechanisms available for them to raise concerns.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer then informed Members that at the time of preparing the report there have been no further legislative changes requiring amendments to the Code, however, following despatch of the Agenda the Welsh Government had issued The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2016 which amended the Model Code of Conduct as follows:

- The Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 transferred responsibility for maintaining the register of interests of members of community councils from the monitoring officer of the principal local authority for the area to the 'proper officer' of each community council, with effect from 1 May 2015. A number of consequential amendments are made to the Model Code to reflect this change, so that, in relation to a community council, a reference to a monitoring officer is replaced with a reference to the proper officer of the community council.
- Paragraph 15 of the Model Code, dealing with the register of member's interests, is amended to clarify that any interest disclosed for the first time must be entered in the register. This is not a change of policy, but clarifies the original intention. The exemption for community councillors from the requirement to register certain financial and other interests upfront is maintained.
- The obligation on a member to report a potential breach of the Code of Conduct to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales was omitted from the Code.
- Paragraph 10(2)(b) of the Model Code was omitted .

The Welsh Government had indicated that authorities had until 26 July 2016 in which to adopt a revised Code but had suggested it would be sensible for authorities to adopt revised codes no later than their annual meetings.

Members considered the amendments and agreed that the Council's Code of Conduct for Members be revised accordingly.

The Committee noted that the Welsh Government had also issued The Local Government (Standards Committees, Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016.

RESOLVED –

- (i) **That the Confidential Reporting Procedure for Members be recommended to the Council for approval.**
- (ii) **That the Council be recommended to revise the Council’s Code of Conduct for Members in accordance with the latest amendments to the schedule to the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) Order 2008.**

Reason for decisions

- (i) **To ensure clarity on the process for Members to raise concerns internally which fall within the ambit of paragraph 6(1)(b) of the Code of Conduct for Members.**
- (ii) **To ensure the Council adopts a revised code of conduct prior to 26 July 2016.**

As the Vice Chair had arrived during consideration of the above item it was agreed that Agenda Item 1 – Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee be taken at this time.

27 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED –

- (i) **That Mrs C Nash be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee**
- (ii) **That Mr M W Pugh be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee**

28 RECRUITMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/36/16) to enable the Committee to consider the process for the recruitment of two new independent members on the Standards Committee.

It was noted that prior to a Member sitting on a Selection Panel, the Council required them to have undergone interview training. It was agreed that a training session be arranged immediately prior to the next meeting of the Committee, at 2.00pm, on 2 June to which all Members of the Committee would be invited. At that time the specific membership of the Selection Panel would also be agreed.

RESOLVED -

- (i) **That the report be noted and the suggested recruitment process endorsed.**
- (ii) **That the specific membership of the Selection Panel for the current recruitment process comprise of the following:**

**Mr Graham Binnie, Lay Panel Member
Community Councillor Geoff Edwards
Two independent members and one County Borough Member of the
Standards Committee (to be selected at the training event immediately
prior to the next Committee meeting on 2 June).**

Reason for decision

**To ensure the Standards Committee is constituted in accordance with the
Council's Constitution.**

Mrs Ceri Nash
Chair