

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN
MEETING ROOM 2, GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON THURSDAY, 7 JUNE 2018**

MEMBERS

*Mr Michael Pugh, Chair
*Mr Neil Benson, Vice-Chair

Ms Julie Adams
*Mrs Claire Blanchard
Mrs Sandra Hunt

*Councillor Andrew Atkinson
Councillor I David Bithell, MBE
*Councillor Kevin Hughes
Mr Geoff Edwards - Community Councillor

*Absent

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Mrs Sandra Hunt be appointed to Chair the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr Neil Benson, Mrs Claire Blanchard, Mr Michael Pugh and Councillor Kevin Hughes. To achieve a quorum Councillor Andrew Atkinson was not required at the meeting.

3 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS, IF ANY

There were no declarations of interest

4 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2017 be signed as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - THE CODE OF CONDUCT CASEBOOK

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/21/18) to enable Members to consider the recent decisions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales published in the Code of Conduct Casebook. The latest editions covered the periods July – September 2017 and October – December 2017.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer drew Members attention to an interesting case in a neighbouring authority where the Ombudsman had considered that the potential breaches, of a former member of the County Council who had not sought re-election at the May 2017 election, were sufficiently serious for it to be in the public interest to pursue the matter further. The unanimous decision of a Case Tribunal, in October 2017, was that the former Councillor should be disqualified for a period of 14 months from being or becoming a member of that County Council or of any other relevant authority.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer referred to a second case which highlighted the need for County Councillors, Community Councillors and co-opted members to take care when expressing personal opinions on social media.

RESOLVED – That the decisions reported in the Code of Conduct Casebook be noted.

Reason for decision

To inform Members of the work undertaken by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

6 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

As required by the Council's Whistleblowing Policy the Monitoring Officer submitted an annual report (HCCS/39/18) on the operation of the Policy and any changes in practice introduced as a result of concerns raised under the Policy.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer reported that during the period since the Committee last received a report (July 2017) seven concerns had been reported. Two independent investigations had been carried out, but had not given rise to any significant corporate concerns.

It was noted that any concerns raised anonymously were always brought to the attention of the relevant Head of Department and any concerns which were found to be malicious were taken up through the necessary HR processes.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Reason for decision

To fulfil the Standards Committee function of overseeing the Council's Whistleblowing regime.

7 ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/36/18) informing Members of the publication of the Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report which covered the period April 2016 – March 2017.

It was noted that the most common breaches of the Code related to

- failure to show respect/equality/bullying
- bringing office/authority into disrepute
- failure to disclose an interest and/or withdraw

A summary of the cases determined during the relevant period was provided in the annual report and Members noted that in the case of two appeals by members of decisions by Local Authority Standards Committees, the Adjudication Panel had upheld the breaches of the Code of Conduct and in both cases recommended suspension from office for periods of 3 months.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

Reason for decision

To inform Members of the work undertaken by the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

8 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - SEPTEMBER 2018 TO JUNE 2019

The Deputy Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/35/18) to enable consideration to be given to proposed items for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme for the period September 2018 to June 2019.

RESOLVED – That the items identified, in report HCCS/35/18, for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme be approved.

Reason for decision

To approve the list of items for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme.

9 DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS

Members noted that the Quarterly Meetings of the Standards Committee in 2018/2019 would be held on:

1 September 2018 at 3.30pm
1 December 2018 at 2.00pm
2 March 2019 at 3.30pm
8 June 2019 at 3.30pm

All meetings will be held in the Guildhall, Wrexham.

10 PAYMENTS TO MEMBERS OF COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS

Community Councillor Geoff Edwards referred to the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales, in relation to Payments to Members of Community and Town Councils, and advised the Committee of Community Councillors concerns regarding public perception.

Mrs Sandra Hunt
Chair