

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD IN  
MEETING ROOM 3, GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON WEDNESDAY, 5 JULY 2017**

**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 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor I David Bithell.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS, IF ANY**

Community Councillor Geoff Edwards gave notice of his intention to declare a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 10.

**3 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

**RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2017 be signed as a correct record.**

**4 WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

As required by the Council's Whistleblowing Policy the Monitoring Officer submitted an annual report (HCCS/42/17) 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 (June 2016) only two concerns had been reported both in different departments. None of the concerns reported had resulted in a full investigation and had not given rise to any significant corporate concerns.

The Committee noted that the number of whistleblowing reports had declined steadily and it was suggested this could be due to fear of reprisals given recent local/national cases.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

**Reason for decision**

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

## **5 ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/36/17) informing Members of the publication of the Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report which covered the two year period 1 April 2014 – 31 March 2016.

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

- bringing Office/Authority into disrepute;
- failure to disclose an interest and/or withdraw; and
- failure to show respect/equality/bullying.

**RESOLVED – That the report be noted.**

**Reason for decision**

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

## **6 CODE OF CONDUCT TRAINING**

Members of the Committee who had attended the training for County Borough Councillors said it was well presented and informative with plenty of case studies.

The Committee agreed it would be useful to rollout similar training to Town and Community Councillors as not all of the Councils would have access to the training provided by One Voice Wales. It was thought that by providing training it would reinforce the Code and potentially help to avert any problems arising. It was suggested that two training sessions be held at the Guildhall, focusing mainly on declarations of interests, and all Community Councillors be invited to attend.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that the on line training was being developed and e-Learning modules would be available in the near future.

**RESOLVED - That similar training be offered to all Town and Community Councillors.**

## **7 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - SEPTEMBER 2017 TO JUNE 2018**

The Deputy Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/38/17) to enable consideration to be given to proposed items for inclusion in the Forward Work Programme for the period September 2017 to June 2018.

**RESOLVED – That the items identified, in report HCCS/38/17, 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.**

**8**      **FEEDBACK FROM THE NORTH WALES STANDARDS FORUM HELD ON 5 APRIL 2017**

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee had attended the Forum and the Vice-Chair reported back as follows:

Extended membership – it was agreed that the three Chairs from Ceredigion; Powys and West Wales Fire and Rescue Standards Committees be invited to attend the Forum. Meetings would continue to be held in North Wales for the current cycle of meetings over the next two years.

Model local resolution protocol – a draft protocol, produced by One Voice Wales, for Town and Community Councils had some discrepancies but the general approach of giving support to clerks and members at local level was seen as a good thing.

Code of Conduct training materials - E-learning package in development. Practical case studies were useful. The Deputy Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was compulsory for Wrexham County Councillors to have Code of Conduct training and that training records were kept and monitored by the Democratic Services Committee.

Town and Community Council web sites – issues experienced with some community councils to set up/maintain a web site. If no will/ability unlikely to happen. Is this something for consideration in Clerks appointments going forward.

Neighbouring standards committees to hear cases where conflicts arise (e.g. officer and Member) as a matter of course – it was agreed they be treated on a case by case basis.

Mediation - training officers across North Wales to produce a shared training document.

Next meeting to be hosted by Wrexham in November.

The Committee noted that the Minutes of the Forum meeting would be circulated when they were available.

**9**      **CONSULTATION UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE 2011 - DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS**

In accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the decision taken by Annual Council on 24 May 2017, Members were requested to review the proposed dates and timings of Standards Committee meetings with a view to reporting back to Council in September any adjustments they wished to make to the draft timetable.

**RESOLVED – That the dates of meetings be accepted without amendment**

**COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report (HCCS/47/17) to enable consideration to be given to the reappointment of the current Community Council member on the Standards Committee.

**RESOLVED – That consultation, on the reappointment of the current Community Council member on the Standards Committee, be carried out with Town and Community Councils and Community Associations during the summer of 2017**

**Reason for decision**

**To ensure the Standards Committee is constituted in accordance with the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.**

(Pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, Community Councillor Geoff Edwards declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter, being the current Community Council member on the Committee, and left the meeting, taking no part in the discussion or voting thereon).

Mr Michael Pugh  
Chair