
NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

Friday, 10 June 2011 at 10.00 am
Conwy Business Centre

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--|
| PRESENT: | Howie Roberts (Chair) | Chair - Conwy |
| | Barry Davies | Monitoring Officer - Flintshire |
| | Iwan Davies | Monitoring Officer - Conwy |
| | Gwilym Ellis Evans | Vice-Chairman - Gwynedd |
| | Jenni Frost (In place of Paul Sturges) | Independent Member - Conwy |
| | Simon Fysh | Chair - Fire and Rescue Authority |
| | Clive B. Halliday | Chair - Denbighshire |
| | Sion Huws | Propriety Officer - Gwynedd |
| | Lisa Jones | Deputy Monitoring Officer - Denbighshire |
| | Meirion Jones (In place of Lynn Ball) | Isle of Anglesey |
| | Sue Morris | Vice-Chairman of Isle - Anglesey |
| | Geraint F. Roberts | Vice-Chairman - Denbighshire |
| | Merfyn Roberts | Chair - Flintshire |

6. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

It was proposed and seconded that Mr Howie Roberts be nominated as Chairman for the meeting.

For continuity it was agreed that Mr Howie Roberts be appointed as Chairman for a 12 months period.

AGREED-

That Mr Howie Roberts be appointed as Chairman of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum for 2011/2012.

7. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Lynn Ball (Isle of Anglesey), Jeff Cotterell (Isle of Anglesey), Trevor Coxon (Wrexham), Rob Dawson (Wrexham), Robyn Jones (Isle of Anglesey), Jane Kennedy (Denbighshire), Ceri Nash (Wrexham), Dilys Ann Phillips (Gwynedd), John Pollard (Gwynedd), Kevin Sibbons (Flintshire), Paul Sturges (Conwy) and Gary Williams (Wrexham).

8. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum held on 15 April 2011 were presented for approval.

With regard to the Whistleblowing Policy (Minute No. 4), it was reported that this was being taken forward by Wrexham and not Flintshire.

In addition, it was noted that Cerrigydrudion should read Cerridigion in Minute No. 4.

AGREED-

That, subject to the above amendments, the minutes of the meeting of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum held on 15 April 2011 be approved as a correct record.

9. **SETTING UP WORKSHOPS**

Although workshops will be undertaken at the Standards Conference – Wales 2011, Members felt that smaller workshops may be effectively run just on a North Wales basis.

It was suggested that workshops focusing on the various issues relating to the Code of Conduct could be held at the beginning of each meeting of the Forum. In addition, breaches of the Code of Conduct, as contained within reports from the Public Services Ombudsman could also be a topic for discussion.

It was further suggested that the workshops held at the Standards Conference could be re-run at a local level.

AGREED-

That Workshops be held at the beginning of each meeting of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum.

10. **ESTABLISHING A CONSISTENCY OF APPROACH**

In relation to information sharing the following comments and solutions were put forward:-

- The Monitoring Officer for Flintshire would investigate the possibility of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Standards Committee receiving the same information as the Monitoring Officers in relation to Standards issues
- All Local Authorities to publish their Standards Committee agendas and minutes on their websites
- In order for the public to be aware of the existence of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum, it was agreed that all Local Authorities would present the minutes of the Forum to their respective Standards Committees for information
- Monitoring Officers had a close working relationship across Wales and met through the Monitoring Officers' Network

AGREED-

(a) That the Monitoring Officer for Flintshire investigates the possibility of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Standards Committee being added to the circulation list for information relevant to Standards Committees.

(b) That all Local Authorities present the minutes of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum to their respective Standards Committees.

11. **IDENTIFYING AREAS OF WORK FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEES**

There were no further comments to add at this time.

12. **TRAINING ISSUES**

In relation to training issues, which were relevant to all Local Authorities, the following comments were put forward:-

- Denbighshire had delivered training to the Town and Community Councils via Code of Conduct Road Shows. A total of 9 sessions had been delivered in various locations across the County Borough, with 2 sessions in each area held in the afternoon and evening. Although over 100 Town and Community Councillors had been trained, it had taken a considerable amount of time and effort to organise and deliver the training
- Standards Members at Denbighshire also attended Town and Community Council meetings and provided feedback to the Standards Committee
- It was important that Standards Committee Members were provided with updated training on a regular basis, and a record should be kept of any training undertaken. This record could be used as evidence if they were ever challenged on their expertise and training undertaken
- Conwy were providing refresher Workshops for their Standards Members and these were included within the Forward Work Programme
- Cardiff City Council had apparently altered their Code of Conduct to ensure that it was compulsory for all County Councillors to attend Code of Conduct Training
- Conwy had ensured that all of their Councillors had been trained. This had, in part, been achieved by informing Group Leaders of the importance of training and naming those Councillors who had not attended any sessions
- Code of Conduct Training was part of the induction process for new Councillors in most Councils. However, ensuring that Councillors who had been elected for many years attended training sessions was problematic in some instances
- Isle of Anglesey had received funding from the WLGA to provide training sessions and even though Peter Keith Lucas had delivered training not all Councillors had attended

AGREED-

That the information be noted.

13. **ESTABLISHING BEST PRACTICE**

In relation to establishing best practice the following comments were made:-

- Denbighshire had produced a booklet on the Code of Conduct, which included a flowchart, and was designed for Councillors to bring to each meeting. It was suggested that this booklet could be circulated to members of the Forum

- Denbighshire circulated the booklet annually together with the Register of Interest Forms

AGREED-

That Denbighshire's Code of Conduct booklet be circulated to all Members of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum.

14. **WORKING WITH THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS**

This item had been discussed as part of Minute 12 – Training Issues.

15. **PROMOTION OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

In relation to the promotion of Standards Committees the following comments were made:-

- Conwy had published an article on the Standards Committee in the Conwy Bulletin, which was circulated to all households within the County Borough
- Gwynedd had produced a report on the Standards Committee, which included photographs, and was circulated to all County Councillors as well as to Town and Community Councils
- To ensure that the Ombudsman was aware of the existence of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum, it was agreed that a copy of the minutes be sent to the Ombudsman together with a covering letter

AGREED-

That the minutes of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum be sent to the Ombudsman together with a covering letter.

16. **NATIONAL POLICY RESPONSES AND REPRESENTATIONS**

It was understood that Standards Committees in England were undergoing a radical change. Although there is a prospect of less radical changes in Wales, a consultation on changes was expected in due course. The consultation document could form part of the agenda for future meetings of the Forum.

AGREED-

That any relevant Consultations be placed on future agendas of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum.

17. **MEMBER/MEMBER AND MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOLS**

With regard to Member/Member and Member/Officer Protocols the following comments were made:-

- As a result of the developments at the Isle of Anglesey Council protocols had been developed on Member Respect and on Appointment of Committee Chairs.
- Denbighshire would be introducing a Self Regulatory Protocol, especially to deal with informal complaints

- An Adjudication Panel was currently hearing cases involving Flintshire County Councillors
- Decisions from Adjudication Panels could be used as material for 'What We've Learnt' Workshops for future meetings of the Forum

AGREED-

That decisions from Adjudication Panels be used as a basis for Workshops for future meetings of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum.

18. **ANNUAL NORTH WALES STANDARDS CONFERENCE**

With regard to organising a North Wales Standards Conference, it was agreed to wait until the North Wales Standards Committee Forum had been established for 12 months.

In relation to the Standards Conference Wales being held in North Wales, it was noted that the decisions on the venue was made by the Monitoring Officers' Network.

AGREED-

That discussions on the possibility of an Annual North Wales Standards Conference be deferred for 12 months.

19. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Forum would be held on 22 September 2011 to discuss any issues in relation to the Standards Conference Wales 2011, which would be held on 5 October 2011.

A further meeting would be held in November to discuss any issues arising from the Standards Conference

It was suggested that if there were no issues the meeting on 22 September 2011 could be cancelled.

The Forum was advised that Mr Barry Davies the Monitoring Officer for Flintshire County Council, would be retiring at the end of July 2011 and all those present wished him well for the future.

AGREED-

That the next meeting of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum be held on 22 September 2011 at 10.00 am.

(The meeting ended at 11.30 am)
