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## NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

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Monday, 20 May 2013 at 2.00 pm  
Bodlondeb, Conwy

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<b>PRESENT:</b>	Gwilym Ellis Evans	Vice-Chair, in the Chair (Chair - Gwynedd Standards Committee)
	Trevor Coxon	Monitoring Officer - Wrexham
	Sion Huws	Propriety Officer - Gwynedd
	Delyth E. Jones	Monitoring Officer - Conwy
	Islwyn Jones	Vice-Chair - Isle of Anglesey Standards Committee
	Patricia Jones	Vice-Chair - Flintshire Standards Committee
	Peter Rowland	Chair - Snowdonia National Park Standards Committee
	Michael B. Wilson	Chair - Isle of Anglesey Standards Committee
<b>In attendance:</b>	Caren Lewis	Isle of Anglesey
<b>Officers:</b>	Sian Harland	Committee Services Officer
	Ifan Prys	Translator

### 1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Gwilym Ellis Evans (Gwynedd) be nominated as Vice-Chair of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum.

#### **RESOLVED-**

**That Councillor Gwilym Ellis Evans (Gwynedd) be appointed as Vice-Chair of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum.**

*(The appointment of a Vice-Chair was required as the previous Vice-Chair was no longer a Member of the North Wales Standards Committees)*

### 2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Lynn Ball (Anglesey), Sioned Wyn Davies (Wrexham), Rob Dawson (Wrexham), Jane Eyton-Jones (North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority), Lisa Jones (Denbighshire), Robyn Jones (Anglesey), Ceri Nash (Wrexham), Gareth Owens (Flintshire), Dilys Ann Phillips (Gwynedd), Howie Roberts (Conwy), Rev. Wayne Roberts (Denbighshire), Ceri Williams (Conwy) and Gary Williams (Denbighshire).

### 3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum held on 7 January 2013 were submitted for approval.

**RESOLVED-**

**That the minutes of the meeting of the North Wales Standards Committees Forum held on 7 January 2013 be approved as a correct record.**

**4. STANDARDS CONFERENCE 2013 - FEEDBACK**

Members considered the feedback collated from the Standards Conference 2013 and made the following comments:-

- The event was well organised and the food was good
- There was something for everybody during the day
- It was noted that the main hall was not an ideal location, but the smaller room was not available on that day
- Although the literature was excellent, for ease of use, the documents would have benefited from being page numbered with an index
- It was suggested that the documents could be posted on the website with the link to the site e-mailed to the attendees
- More time could have been given to the interactive workshops
- The next Standards Conference would be organised by another Local Authority
- The frequency of the Standards Conference would be discussed at the next meeting of the Local Government Lawyers

Members agreed that the co-ordinators of the Standards Conference 2013 should be congratulated on organising such a successful event.

**RESOLVED-**

**That the co-ordinators of the Standards Conference 2013 should be congratulated on organising such a successful event.**

**5. ANY OTHER ITEMS**

Future of the Forum

The Monitoring Officer (Conwy) advised that there had been discussions between the Monitoring Officers in North Wales on the future of the Forum.

Comments were made as follows:-

- Each meeting could have a small agenda followed by a Training Session
- Speakers from the Ombudsman's Office, Adjudication Panel for Wales and Welsh Government could address the Forum on their work
- The frequency of meetings would be discussed at the next meeting of the Forum
- Meetings could rotate between Local Authorities
- Only the Monitoring Officer of the host Local Authority would be in attendance to offer advice and facilitate the Training Session
- Monitoring Officers would decide on a Forward Work Programme for the Forum

- Conwy would still take ownership of the organisation of the Forum and production of agendas, with the host Local Authority providing an Officer to take the minutes
- The next meeting would be held in the autumn of 2013

### Indemnities for Members and Local Resolution

The Monitoring Officer (Conwy) advised that the Local Resolution for Member on Member Protocol would be presented to a meeting of Conwy's Council on 4 July 2013. However, at the last Council meeting on 16 May 2013, it was agreed to set the indemnity for Councillors at £20,000.

Wrexham had not yet formulated a Local Resolution Protocol, as the Monitoring Officer wanted to ensure that the protocol would be robust. The Protocol would be presented to Wrexham's Council in September 2013. Indemnities for Councillors would be presented to Council meeting in the near future.

The Isle of Anglesey had adopted a Local Resolution protocol 3 years previously, which had only been used once in those 3 years. Upon reviewing the protocol, it was found to be cumbersome and it was therefore proposed to simplify the process as follows:-

- Complainant had 7 days to report a complaint to the Monitoring Officer
- The Monitoring Officer then sends the complaint to the Councillor, who had been complained about
- Councillor then has 7 days to respond to the complaint
- Councillor is then invited to present their case to two Independent Members of the Standards Committee
- Councillor is able to bring witnesses and a representative

The following responses were made to queries regarding the protocol:-

- The two Independent Members would be used on a rotational basis
- The two Independent Members involved in the original Local Resolution Process would not participate in any subsequent Standards Hearing
- The objective of a Local Resolution Protocol would be to promote mediation and resolution, in order to build an environment where Councillors were more likely to work together
- Officers could also use the Local Resolution Protocol, but this would not undermine their ability to make a complaint to the Ombudsman
- If the Independent Members considered that a breach of the Code of Conduct had been made, they could recommend to the Group Leaders that the complained of Councillor apologises to the complainant or that they be removed from a Committee

Discussion ensued on whether the Local Resolution Protocol could be used to deal with complaints relating to Town and Community Councils. Members were advised that it was not the role of Monitoring Officers to become embroiled in complaints between Town and Community Councillors; this was the role of the Town and Community Clerks. However, the Chair of Isle of Anglesey Standards Committee advised that he had attended certain Town and Community Council meetings in his capacity as an Independent Member of the Standards Committee, to try and stop problems from escalating.

#### Monitoring Officer Feedback

It was suggested that the Monitoring Officer of the host Local Authority would give a verbal feedback at each meeting on any standards or ethical issues that had arisen since the last meeting of the Forum.

(The meeting ended at 3.00 pm)

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