
STANDARDS COMMITTEE, 17/02/25

Present:-

Elected Members:- Councillors Anne Lloyd Jones and Dewi Owen.

Independent Members: Mr Hywel Eifion Jones (Chair), Mr Aled Jones and Mr Dave Wareing.

Political Group Leaders: Councillor Menna Trenholme (Deputy Leader of the Council)

Community Committee Member: Mr Richard Parry Hughes

Also in Attendance: Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Sion Huws (Propriety and Elections Manager), Sioned Mai Jones and Iwan Edwards (Democracy Services Officers).

As four elected members and three independent members were present at the beginning of the meeting, Councillor Beth Lawton withdrew from the meeting to ensure a quorum.

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Mr Mark Jones

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

None to note.

3. URGENT ITEMS

The Monitoring Officer provided an update on the arrangements to appoint new members to the vacant seats on the Committee. It was noted that there were now two vacant seats on the committee and that these had been regularly advertised on the authority's website for some time, but unfortunately, they were struggling to fill the vacancies. It was mentioned that efforts to increase the speed and intensity of the work continued, to try to fill the seats with the intention of appointing new members at the full Council meeting in May.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 4 November 2024 as a true record.

5. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021 ("THE ACT") DUTIES OF POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS AND THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Submitted - a report by the Monitoring Officer detailing the two main duties that the act imposed on Leaders of Political Groups and the standards of conduct of Group Members. It was noted that the intention of presenting this report was to provide the Committee with the opportunity to formally meet with group leaders to have a discussion surrounding the protocol and its implementation. In addition, an opportunity was given to set out a stall (?) on how the committee would proceed with the implementation of this duty.

The Monitoring Officer noted that the objective of the protocol was to respond to a statutory duty that the group leaders had in relation to promoting good conduct among members. It was explained that this involved collaboration between the Standards Committee and the Leaders, which would be a positive step to support members' conduct and resolve issues early.

It was mentioned that some members had not attended the core training courses, such as the code of conduct course and the well-being course. This point was acknowledged, and it was noted that item 5 of the Criteria required the Group Leaders to support attendance at training events. The Monitoring Officer was asked to allow the group Leaders to have a list of the members who had not attended the training courses, and it was hoped that the Leaders could encourage those who had not. In response, the Monitoring Officer stated that this was an intention and to reinforce the point, it was explained that a full course had been conducted on the code in December of last year. It was noted that a recording of the course was available for members to view.

DECISION

To review the implementation of the duty and confirm reporting arrangements when moving forward.

6. PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2025-26

Submitted - a report by the Monitoring Officer proposing a draft programme for the work of the Committee in 2025-26. It was noted that a review of the training arrangements had been included on the work programme, not only the courses that were required now but also any new ones. Also, the Monitoring Officer mentioned that he wanted to look at the registers of interests to see if any adjustments needed to be made.

DECISION

To note and accept the Proposed Work Programme

7. ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES ANNUAL REPORT

Submitted - the report of the Propriety and Elections Manager, enclosing the annual report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales 2023-2024. It was noted that there were no underlying themes to be discussed and that only a minority of members reached the panel, with most members complying with the code.

The Monitoring Officer noted that a new Chair had been appointed to the adjudication panel, namely Meleri Tudur, a lawyer from Gwynedd.

The Propriety and Elections Manager was thanked for his work on the appeals process, noting that the Standards Committee's reasons had been listed as good enough for the President to decide that there were no grounds for an appeal. This was reiterated by the Monitoring Officer who noted that it was being used as a model on how to draft a decision and as a template by other standards committees.

DECISION

To accept and note the information in the report.

8. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS

Submitted - the report of the Propriety and Elections Manager presenting information to the committee about the Ombudsman's decisions on formal complaints against members.

It was noted that no decision notices had been received from the Ombudsman since the previous report.

DECISION

To note the information

9. TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY COUNCILS

Submitted – the report of the Propriety and Elections Manager on training for community councils. It was noted that training community councillors on issues relating to the Code of Conduct was part of the Standards Committee's role and the Committee had identified the need to conduct such training.

It was mentioned that a session had already been prepared and piloted for community councils with the objective of enabling members and clerks to gain an understanding of the fundamentals of the Code of Conduct, equipping members to operate within the framework and highlighting where to get further guidance and information. The sessions would be held virtually via Zoom and two dates had been scheduled so far. It was also noted that the sessions would be recorded and posted on the Council website and therefore they could be watched at any time.

A member expressed concern about the timetable, specifically how much advance notice you could give to be able to attend the sessions. This was acknowledged, explaining that these were the first sessions and if there was more demand for the sessions then more of them could be held.

DECISION

To note the information

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 11:20am