

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 18th March, 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillors: D. Evans, J. Pratt

Independent Representatives: T. Auld (Chair)
R Williams-Flew, P. Easy, R. McGonigle, R. Stow

Community Representative: I. Cameron

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Matthew Phillips	Head of Law/ Monitoring Officer
Nicola Perry	Senior Democracy Officer
Sally Thomas	HR Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors S. Woodhouse

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th December 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

In doing so, a typographical error was noted at item 2, and the date should read 18th June 2018.

3. Whistleblowing Cases

The HR Manager presented this annual report to provide Standards Committee with information in relation to the number of whistleblowing cases in Monmouthshire County Council.

The Whistleblowing Policy was last updated in 2017, and the responsibility lies with HR and legal departments to make sure the policy is transparent and robust.

A log of all cases is kept centrally in a secure location. In the last three years MCC has dealt with 7 cases of whistleblowing.

We were unable to receive further information on the cases due to their confidential nature.

Members questioned the connection between whistleblowing and staff sickness levels. The HR Manager did not believe these to be connected as whistleblowing is around improper behaviour, malpractice and potential fraud. Typically across councils whistleblowing cases are low in number.

In terms of reassuring staff, the policy is very clear and open, providing plenty of information.

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Training for managers is in place to differentiate between the Dignity at Work, Fairness at Work and Whistleblowing Policies. Also Managers Induction appraises the key elements.

The HR Manager would be happy to arrange a short training session for Standards Members.

Assurance was given that feedback was provided to those who raised the concerns via the policy.

Standards Committee would be added as a consultee on the policy.

4. Welcome new members

The Chair welcomed new Independent Members of the Committee, Peter Easy and Rhian Williams-Flew, and the Committee took the opportunity to introduce themselves.

5. Feedback from training event 11th January 2019

Standards Committee reflected on a training event held in January. Members considered the training effective to avoid complacency.

Those who missed the training welcomed future opportunities to attend, and reference was made to the annual Standards Conference held in September.

6. Review of APW Annual Report 2017-18

Members were presented with the Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report 2017-18 for review.

Points raised by the Committee centred on case studies being anonymous within the report, yet information being readily available on the APW website. It was agreed to question this.

7. Review of the APW Sanctions Guidance

Members received for review, the Adjudication Panel for Wales Sanctions Guidance. In doing so we heard that one area for question is that disqualification only refers to the area the person is related to, and therefore would be able to seek election in a different location. The Monitoring Officer agreed to seek clarity on this matter.

Members reflected that the document is an improvement on that of last year.

8. Council of Clerks - Invitation to Standards Committee Members

The Monitoring Officer explained that he has invited Community Clerks to attend County Hall for a meeting, with the intention being to create a forum to deliver training, reinforcing the importance of the role of the Clerk. He requested that the Committee submit agenda items and a Member attend to explain the role of the Standards Committee.

A Member suggested it would be helpful for all Committee Members to attend.

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9. Standards Committee Forward Programme

Items for work programme:

1. Annual Governance Statement 2018/19
2. Protocol for Self-Regulation Member Conduct – useful to receive comments from Group Leaders prior to meeting.
3. Dispensations
4. Customer Complaints Report – Annette Evans

10. Date of next meeting 17th June 2019 at 10am - Conference Room

Noted.

The meeting ended at 11.50 am