

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held at Council Chamber - Council Chamber on Monday, 12th June, 2017 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillors: D. Evans, J.Pratt and S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Robert Tranter
Nicola Perry

Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Senior Democracy Officer

APOLOGIES:

None Received

1. Election of Chair

Mr. Trevor Auld was elected as Chairman of Standards Committee.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

We appointed Mr. R. Stow as Vice-Chair of Standards Committee.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

4. To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Monitoring Officer added that the training package had proved a worthwhile exercise and had been used in the induction of the newly elected councillors. An extra decision would be held in due course for those who had missed the first session.

5. Granting Dispensation to Members

We received a report in order for the Committee to consider a discussion paper prepared by Trevor Auld, Independent Member of the Standards Committee, on the process of granting dispensations to members. Members were asked to decide whether the current process in granting dispensations needs to be adapted or amended.

During discussion we noted that the dispensation takes into account the one scenario, and Members must declare an interest at the start of the meeting and state that a dispensation has been granted.

It was recognised that there may be issues with timelines in terms of agenda despatch, which officers would aim to resolve in order for the dispensation to be granted. Where necessary an extra meeting of Standards Committee could be arranged.

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Members resolved to accept the recommendation, adding that:
Councillors who apply for dispensations are required to report back, in writing, to Standards Committee, following use of the dispensation.

6. Whistleblowing Policy

We received a report in order for Standards Committee to consider the Council's latest version of its whistleblowing policy as one of the roles and functions of the Standards Committee is to ensure that the Council's whistle blowing procedure operates effectively.

We heard that the main changes to the policy were that it was now a global policy across the Council, rather than a separate policy for Schools and Council. The new policy is based on Welsh Government guidance.

The unions had been involved in the thorough consultation process and there had been no negative comments.

It was suggested there may be an issue where people felt unable to go to their line manager or senior officer and it was questioned if there were alternative options. The Monitoring Officer would investigate further.

We were advised that people at escalation points received appropriate training.

A Member added that that the policy should be extended to agency staff and sub-contractors.

7. To exclude the press and public from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information

8. Recent Decision of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales not to investigate

We received an exempt report consider a request from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ("Ombudsman") to consider whether further training is required in respect of the Community Council's general understanding of the application of the Code of Conduct and the Ombudsman's role in considering such complaints.

Following discussion the Committee resolved to accept the recommendation in the report:

To ask the Monitoring Officer to write to the Clerk to the Community Council to clarify the role of the Ombudsman in investigating alleged breaches of the code of conduct for members and offer any training as appropriate.

9. To note the date and time of next meeting as Monday 25th September 2017 at 10.00am

We agreed the date and time of next meeting as 25th September 2017 at 10am.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am