

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday, 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2017
<b>Report Subject</b>	North Wales Standards Forum
<b>Report Author</b>	Vice Chair

On your behalf, I attended the North Wales Standards Committee Forum on November 24<sup>th</sup> in Wrexham.

The meeting was well attended with Powys and Ceredigion committees represented for the first time.

### **New member Induction**

Representatives described the training processes that they had undertaken with new Members after the elections. Some had used the WLGA presentations as a basis but had found them too long and had shortened them to about an hour/ninety minutes. Part of the WLGA included a video by the Ombudsman which was not thought to be very effective. However some had used interactive sessions which required people to problem solve for themselves which was thought to be a good thing. *I think this would be worth considering in the future.*

The Ombudsman's case book was mentioned as providing real life examples.

One authority tries to visit every town/community council to undertake an audit of declarations of interest that had been made. They have a schedule and do this on a rolling 3 year programme. *I get the impression that in Flintshire some CCs rarely attend our sessions and this might be a worthwhile way of involving them. It was widely agreed that training was generally being given to those whole least needed it.*

### **WLGA "Five years to make a difference"**

The WLGA held a very useful regional event in Llandudno with some excellent presentations. This was primarily aimed at new councillors but was not very well attended. *I was not aware of this but it sounded an excellent session with excellent speakers.*

One feature mentioned was the concern about Members' safety in the current climate of concerns about bullying and/or inappropriate behaviour. For example, Members can be invited into people's homes on their own without any independent witness to support them. Training could be 'sold' on the basis of it being members' own best interests to avoid future allegations. *It was thought that Members routinely visit people without recognising the danger that allegations could be made against them.*

There was a discussion about how/whether members' training records should be recorded. Powys and Wrexham put the record on the website as part of the member's profile. *I am not sure how our members can be satisfied (and perhaps could satisfy an ombudsman) that they have attended all the training relevant to their role in the Council.*

### **Procedures of dealing with claims against members**

Concerns were expressed about how claims against members for inappropriate behaviour are handled. It is not entirely clear to many how such claims should be handled (NB compare problems in the Welsh Assembly recently). The Leader of the Council can appoint or remove a member of the Executive/Cabinet. There is no power for him or the Council to suspend him/her as a councillor. There is a need for a Member/officer protocol so that it is clear how a claim will be handled. We owe a duty of care to the staff but cannot suspend or sack a councillor as a precaution if a complaint has been lodged. Only the ombudsman can suspend/sack a councillor. That would be a long process with a member continuing to have access to the premises in the meantime.

Agreed a letter will be drafted (by WCBC) and circulated to Monitoring Officers to send to the Ombudsman raising this issue.

### **Any Other Business**

Noted the presence of Wrexham Councillors at the meeting. It was explained that it is acceptable for members of the host authority to attend but not others.

Standards Conference will be in Aberystwyth probably mid September (?14<sup>th</sup>).

Next meeting May – venue unknown ?Flintshire?