

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
9 APRIL 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee of Flintshire County Council held at County Hall, Mold on Monday, 9 April 2018

PRESENT: Edward Hughes (Chairman)

Councillors:

Patrick Heesom, Paul Johnson and Arnold Woolley

Co-opted members:

Rob Dewey, Julia Hughes and Ken Molyneux

APOLOGIES:

Jonathan Duggan-Keen and Phillipa Earlam

IN ATTENDANCE:

Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Officer

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

69. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2018 were submitted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

70. DISPENSATIONS

None were received.

71. VISITS TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS

The Monitoring Officer presented a report on the practical and financial arrangements for visiting Town and Community Councils, following discussion at the previous meeting.

Whilst the proposed visits did not meet criteria for the rules of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) in respect of payments for independent members, the Council was able to pay travelling expenses. An expenses claim form was appended to the report, together with a suggested toolkit to ensure consistency in undertaking the visits and providing feedback to the Committee.

An attendance allowance claim form was also provided which independent members were advised to use for attendance at meetings of the Committee and relevant events. The report also detailed a change to the agreed preparation times for attending Committee meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Members undertaking observational visits to Town and Community Councils be able to claim travel expenses for doing so; and
- (b) That Members note the suggested 'toolkit' for undertaking such visits.

72. COUNCILLORS' ANNUAL REPORTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented a report on arrangements for the publication of annual reports by Council Members, in accordance with guidance issued under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. This provided an update on the matter which was previously reported in February 2016.

As a point of accuracy, it was noted that paragraph 1.07 should refer to annual reports and not returns.

Whilst Council Members were not obliged to produce annual reports, the legislation placed a duty on councils to have arrangements available to publish annual reports for those who opted to do so. Due to the number of new Council Members, it was suggested that a reminder be given that such arrangements were in place and to ask those Members who chose to produce their own newsletter to confirm the frequency over the past 12 months. It was recommended that this communication be made to Members on an annual basis.

Mr. Rob Dewey commented on the low number of Members who chose to produce an annual report. The Monitoring Officer explained that the results of a previous survey indicated that the majority preferred to produce their own newsletter.

Mrs. Julia Hughes suggested that the wording in the recommendation be revised to clarify that it was for each Member to decide whether or not they chose to produce an annual report or newsletter, and that neither was mandatory.

Councillor Johnson referred to more effective means of communication, such as social media, used by some Members to engage with constituents.

The Committee agreed to a change in the wording for Recommendation 2 to reflect these comments.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To remind Members of the Council of the arrangements for publication of annual reports by circulating, by email, the template (attached as appendix A) to this report to Members, and referring them to the Guidance;

- (b) To request those Members who choose not to produce an annual report to confirm whether they choose to communicate through other channels, for example newsletter, social media etc, and to inform the Monitoring Officer of the frequency of such communications within the past twelve months; and
- (c) To carry out the reminder and request set out at paragraphs (a) and (b) of this recommendation on an annual basis.

73. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Monitoring Officer referred to the next meeting on 14 May where the main item was to discuss training for Town and Community Councils. He advised that he had been asked to deliver such a training session at Northop Community Council. The Committee agreed that if there was no other business for 14 May (including dispensation requests), then the meeting would be cancelled and the training item moved to the June meeting.

The Monitoring Officer had not yet been notified of the meeting date for the North Wales Standards Forum in May but would advise independent members once it had been confirmed. The topic previously suggested by Mrs. Phillipa Earlam would be submitted for the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be noted.

74. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

There were two members of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 6.50pm)

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Chairman