

**Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 22nd May 2012 at
Flintshire County Council, Shire Hall, Mold**

Present

Celia Blomeley
Jane A Eyton-Jones
David Morris
Antony P Young

Colin Everett, Clerk
Gareth Owens, Deputy Clerk
Alwen Davies, Member Liaison Officer

Apologies

None

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

1.1 The Clerk requested nominations for the office of Chair for the 2012/13 municipal year. Jane A Eyton-Jones was the sole nomination.

1.2 **RESOLVED that Jane A Eyton-Jones be elected as Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2012/13 municipal year.**

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR 2012/13

2.1 The Clerk then requested nominations for the office of Vice Chair for the 2012/13 municipal year. David Morris was the sole nomination.

2.2 **RESOLVED that David Morris be elected to serve as Vice Chair of the Standards Committee for the 2012/13 municipal year.**

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 None.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8TH JUNE 2011

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 8th June were approved as a correct record.

5 REVIEW OF ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

5.1 It was confirmed that the Authority's stage 3 complaints procedure will now have an independent member on the panel (as approved by the full Authority on the recommendation of this Committee).

5.2 Performance statistics 2010/11 - a copy had been sent to members on 16th June 2011. The latest performance information will be available in July 2012.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND CASE MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Training

- 6.1 The Clerk introduced this item and reminded members that they had previously discussed various training requirements in order to be able to deal with a complaint against an Authority member should one arise. He asked Gareth Owens to prepare a training session to include an assimilation of a conduct case based on a members' behaviour (as the most common and complex source of complaint elsewhere) and the procedure to be followed in order to enable members to feel prepared and confident. The Chair mentioned that she had attended the Wales Standards conference and had found a role play training exercise useful. **Alwen Davies to organise a date for end of June/early July; Gareth Owens to prepare the training material.**

Induction

- 6.2 Members had already been invited to attend the Induction for new and returning Authority members to be held on 14th June and also the annual meeting to be held on 18th June.
- 6.3 Members were informed that the Clerk will present at the Induction on Authority governance, constitution, roles and responsibilities, standing orders, code of conduct (emphasis on ward interests and behaviour) and meetings culture. A DVD on code of conduct will also be shown to members. The Clerk explained that it is expected that constituent authorities will provide mandatory training to all councillors and the presentation at the induction will give members some key reminders.

Model Complaints Policy

- 6.4 Gareth Owens informed members about the Ombudsman's model complaints policy and gave members an overview of the document. The aim is to have a more unified process across public bodies across Wales. It was noted that the Authority's complaints about members policy was largely compliant with the draft Ombudsman's model. **Colin Everett to ensure that the Authority's complaints about members policy is compliant with the final version of the guidance.**

Code of Conduct

- 6.5 The Ombudsman had recently issued The Code of Conduct for members of local authorities in Wales: Guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Gareth Owens talked through a presentation about the code of conduct. It explains to members what happens if a complaint is made against them and all the various stages of the process.
- 6.6 Members will follow the model statutory code of conduct that applies across North Wales Councils and the FRA Authority. If there's no code of conduct in place on 'outside bodies' members will follow their own council's code of conduct.

- 6.7 The code of conduct provisions are designed to follow the Nolan principles. Those principles underpin the code.
- 6.8 One of the most important parts of the code of conduct is personal/prejudicial interests. Members need to be aware of the difference between 'personal' and 'personal and prejudicial' interests, because failure to declare these interests could result in a complaint being made against the individual.
- 6.9 In terms of the Fire and Rescue Authority, objectivity is extremely important and the Clerk highlighted the issue of ward business that could influence judgement of public interest. The Committee considered this to be an important issue to be raised at the Induction.

Indemnity Insurance

- 6.10 Councils currently provide an uncapped indemnity to councillors and in recent cases QCs and barristers have been used and cases have been lengthy and expensive. A pre-formal statutory consultation has recently been issued and one of the questions asked is about the indemnity financial 'cap'. An extract from the pre-statutory consultation was distributed to members at the meeting.
- 6.11 The Fire and Rescue Authority currently does not have an indemnity policy and it will be a decision for the Authority whether or not one should be established. Members of the FRA would not be covered by a council indemnity policy unless a specific statutory duty was created.

7 NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 The next meeting of the Standards Committee will be held in September. Items for the agenda:
- Resolution system and experience of other councils
 - Exploring the benefits and elsewhere experience of FRA having an indemnity policy (recommendation to be made to FRA for FRA members to make decision).

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 Celia Blomeley had attended the North Wales Standards Committee Forum meeting in Llandudno on 23rd April. The date of the next meeting was yet to be confirmed.