



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Standards Committee**

Multi-Location Meeting - Gloucester Room, Guildhall / MS

Teams

Friday, 22 March 2024 at 10.00 am

Present: Mike Lewis (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

M B Lewis

Councillor(s)

L G Thomas

Co-opted Member(s)

Carlo Rabaiotti
Michaela Jones

Co-opted Member(s)

Janet Pardue-Wood
Mark Rees

Co-opted Member(s)

Margaret Williams

Officer(s)

Huw Evans
Allison Lowe
Adrian Jeremiah

Head of Democratic Services
Democratic Services Officer
Lead Lawyer

Also present

Councillor Chris Holley
Councillor Peter May
Councillor Lyndon Jones

Liberal Democrat & Independent Group Leader
Uplands Group Leader
Conservative Group Leader

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): O James
Independent Member(s): N/A

16 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct adopted by the City & County of Swansea, no interests were declared.

17 Minutes.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 19 January 2024 be approved and signed as a correct record.

18 Group Leader Duty.

As part of the new duties for Group Leaders as part of the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Standards Committee agreed to meet with political

Group Leaders to continue discussions how they maintain high standards of behaviour within their group.

Group Leaders were provided with the themes for discussion in advance of the meeting as outlined in Appendix A.

Due to unavailability, Councillor Rob Stewart, (Labour) would be invited to attend the first meeting of the Standards Committee in the 2024-2025 Municipal Year.

Councillors May, Jones and Holley provided the following supporting information during discussions:

Councillor Peter May

Councillor May commenced by stating that all members of his group were aware of the Code of Conduct document and the Nolan Principles and they discussed any potential issues in weekly meetings. At present there weren't any Code of Conduct issues but hypothetically, an early resolution rather than escalation would always be sought.

He went on to provide an example of listening to all residents' views in relation to a consultation for a large scheme in their ward by representing the greater electorate and putting their own personal opinions aside by acting as listeners during the consultation process.

In relation to training, Councillors had recently undertaken on-line Safeguarding training. The Head of Democratic Services had provided guidance to all Councillors on utilising the new "Oracle Fusion" platform to complete the training and had sent reminders to Group Leaders in respect of any Councillor who had not completed the mandatory training. In addition, non mandatory Scrutiny training had been completed and all training was seen as valuable and welcomed.

Councillor May had recently suggested to the Democratic Services Committee that a system be adopted whereby Group Leaders could be provided with a document outlining a list of training each of his group members had completed as currently the process was quite onerous. It was hoped that the new Oracle system would be able to provide a report of this nature in the near future.

Councillor Lyndon Jones

Councillor Jones commenced by stating that he believed his group always met the highest standards and should always treat others as you would expect to be treated and that was the same for officers, other councillors and residents. However, if anyone had any issues they would speak to him about it as there was that 2-way flow within the Group.

He went on to say that he would like to think he was someone that people could trust. He held the roles of Parliamentary Assessor and member of the Disciplinary & Parliamentary Committee which he felt would assist him in order to advise group members accordingly.

He commented that in the Council Chamber there were political boundaries but as councillors they ensure that they do the best in the interests of the residents of Swansea.

Councillor Jones currently Chaired the Education Scrutiny Performance Panel and whilst challenging the Cabinet also acted as a "Critical Friend". The Panel worked closely with both the Director of Education and Cabinet Member for Education & Learning, which had been supported in a recent Estyn report.

He stated there were currently no code of conduct issues within his group and there hadn't been since he had been Group Leader. The group met regularly, were professional, hard working and always maintained the highest standards.

In relation to training Councillor Jones stated that he was in constant contact and had a good relationship with the Head of Democratic Services. He confirmed that training was very important for everyone and stated that he learnt something new with each training session undertaken.

He confirmed that there was sufficient support from the Standards Committee and was able to call on the Monitoring Officer for advice and guidance when required.

Councillor Chris Holley

Councillor Holley commenced by explaining that his group were made up of both Liberal Democrats and Independent Group Members. A buddy system had been utilised when Councillors had been elected at the last Local Government Election, whereby a new Councillor would "shadow" a more experienced Councillor. The learning process could take a considerable amount of time due to the varied nature of the role and could often be quite different to what had been expected by the successful candidate.

In terms of behaviour, Group members were aware of the rules and what was expected of them. The group met regularly and understood there was a hierarchy within the group.

Councillor Holley ensured he liaised individually with members of his group in respect of code of conduct issues and confirmed that everyone should be treated with respect. As a result, no code of conduct issues had arisen over the last few years.

In respect of training, Councillor Holley was in contact with the Head of Democratic Services regarding any outstanding training. Some members had found the new Oracle system difficult to navigate, however guidance notes had been provided. He felt the training programme was sufficient, however the induction training programme for new Councillors was quite demanding, coupled with the training for new Governors.

He felt that some Councillors didn't fully understand the role of the Standards Committee, however the Monitoring Officer did cover this during the Code of

Conduct training, which had been recorded and was available for all Councillors to view.

The Chair, on behalf of the Standards Committee thanked the 3 Group Leaders for their attendance. The Committee would reflect on the comments over the next few weeks.

19 Review of Community & Town Council Training Plans.

The Head of Democratic Services provided a report in order to review the publication of Community & Town Council Training Plans.

Resolved that the update be noted.

20 Breach of Code of Conduct - Complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW). (For Information)

The Head of Democratic Services provided a "For Information" report to update the Standards Committee on decisions made by the PSOW in relation to allegations that Local Authority and Community / Town Councillors had breached the Code of Conduct.

The meeting ended at 10.50 am

Chair