



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Standards Committee**

Remotely via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday, 9 March 2022 at 3.30 pm

Present: Jill Burgess (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

M B Lewis

Councillor(s)

O G James

Co-opted Member(s)

Philip Crayford

Michaela Jones

Co-opted Member(s)

Mike Lewis

Margaret Williams

Officer(s)

Tracey Meredith

Huw Evans

Allison Lowe

Chief Legal Officer / Monitoring Officer

Head of Democratic Services

Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): L G Thomas

18 **Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

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

19 **Minutes.**

Resolved that the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 15 October 2021 and 21 January 2022 be approved and signed as correct records.

20 **Annual Meeting with Political Group Leaders. (Verbal)**

The Standards Committee invite the Political Group Leaders annually to the Standards Committee to discuss relevant legislation in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The themes for discussion, which had been circulated in advance were as follows:

Question 1 – The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act provides that Leaders of political groups must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their group. We are interested to hear as to what actions you take now in terms of maintaining standards within your own group and how are you proposing to meet the new duty going forward?

Question 2 – The Standards Committee also has new functions under the Act to ensure that group leaders have access to advice and training to support their new duties and to monitor group leaders' compliance with those duties. Is there any support that you feel would be beneficial either from the Standards Committee/Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer in carrying out your duty and whether we can assist you in any way.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Peter May, Leader of the Uplands Group to the Committee who responded as follows:

He stated that the main focus was to commit to the 6 values that they uphold in respect of Openness, Transparency, Honesty, Integrity, Tolerance & Respect, Equality & Fairness, Appreciation of Cultural Differences and Sustainability.

He explained that the Uplands Group was a small group of only 2 members therefore any relevant issues and the way forward would be discussed via a 1-2-1 meeting. Any advice on the interpretation of the standards would be sought from the Monitoring Officer.

Councillor May stated that the Uplands Group hoped to expand its numbers to 4 following the Local Government Election scheduled for 5 May 2022 and he would ensure that the prospective candidates were appraised of the standards in advance of the Election.

In terms of support, Councillor May asked if he could seek relevant advice from the Committee and officers following the Local Government Election, should any issues arise and once Group Leaders had been able to "road-test" their responsibilities outlined in the Act.

21 Standards of Conduct - Draft Statutory Guidance.

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to update the Committee on the Welsh Government draft statutory guidance which related to the new duties of the Standards Committee and Group Leaders.

The draft statutory guidance was attached at Appendix A which also outlined the key questions for the Committee:

Question 1 - Does the draft guidance make it clear what is expected of leaders of political groups in principal councils as set out in the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 in a way that can be understood by leaders of political groups in principal councils?

Question 2 - Does the draft guidance make it clear what is expected of Standards Committees in principal councils as set out in the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 in a way that can be understood by Standards Committees?

Resolved that a response from the Standards Committee to the consultation be submitted to Welsh Government by the Monitoring Officer confirming their understanding to the 2 key questions outlined above.

22 Review of Standards Committee Terms of Reference.

The Monitoring Officer presented a report to update the Committee on proposed changes to the Terms of Reference following new duties under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

The proposed changes were outlined in Appendix A, with the current Terms of Reference outlined at Appendix B.

She outlined the additional responsibilities in Paragraphs 2.2-2.4 of the report.

Councillor Phil Crayford suggested adding the Term of Office for the Community / Town Council representative in section 7.2.

Resolved that the Standards Committee recommend the changes to the Terms of Reference, subject to the above amendment, which would be reported to the Constitution Working Group and then Council for approval.

23 Code of Conduct Casebook.

The Monitoring Officer presented a "For Information" report outlining the latest Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Code of Conduct Casebook.

In particular she highlighted details of the case in relation to Knighton Town Council and the case referred to the Adjudication Panel for Wales in respect of Caerphilly County Borough Council, the result of which was awaited.

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

The Monitoring Officer presented a "For Information" report to update the Committee on decisions made by the PSOW in relation to allegations that Local Authority and Community and Town Councillors had breached the Code of Conduct.

25 Workplan 2022- 2023. (Verbal)

The Monitoring Officer suggested the following topics be considered for the Standards Committee Work Plan for 2022-2023:

- How the Committee will deal with their duty under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 in terms of monitoring group leaders and their requirement to complete an Annual Report;
- Review of Officer / Member Relations Protocol;
- Review of Member –v- Member Local Dispute Resolution Protocol;
- Update report regarding Community / Town Councils training, particularly financial training;

- Social Media guidance for Councillors;
- Update Dispensation form;
- Whistleblowing Policy (Head of HR to provide background information to Committee);
- Indemnity Scheme.

26 Thanks.

On behalf of the Standards Committee, the Chair conveyed their thanks and best wishes to Councillor Phil Crayford on his last meeting as the Community / Town Council representative on the Standards Committee. Councillor Crayford's term of office would cease at the Local Government Elections on 5 May 2022.

Councillor Crayford responded by thanking the Committee for all of their help and assistance over the years. He had thoroughly enjoyed assisting the Committee in all the work they had undertaken since joining the Committee in October 2012 and offered any assistance to his replacement once appointed.

The meeting ended at 4.11 pm

Chair