

Public Document Pack

Standards Committee
24th February 2016

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT COMMITTEE ROOM A - COUNTY HALL, LLANDRINDOD WELLS, POWYS ON WEDNESDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2016

PRESENT

County Councillor H Rhydderch-Roberts (Chair)

County Councillors J Evans, Hays, C Jackson, S Jarman, MC Mackenzie,
P J Medicott and K M Roberts-Jones

1.	MINUTES	S16-2016
-----------	----------------	-----------------

The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th November 2015 as a correct record.

2.	ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR	S17-2016
-----------	-------------------------------	-----------------

Resolved that Independent Member C Jackson be appointed as Vice-Chair.

3.	APOLOGIES	S18-2016
-----------	------------------	-----------------

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor G Williams.

4.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	S19-2016
-----------	---------------------------------	-----------------

No declarations of interest were received.

5.	REPORT OF THE SOLICITOR TO THE COUNCIL	S20-2016
-----------	---	-----------------

The Committee received the report of the Solicitor to the Council. (Copy filed with signed minutes).

A. General Standards Issues for County Councillors and Co-opted Members

A1 Code of Conduct Training

Arrangements are being made for the remaining four Members to receive this refresher training by means of the Members providing written responses to 3 or 4 questions considered at the refresher training sessions. The scenarios have been sent to the four Members and responses are awaited.

The new Independent Member of Standards Committee received Code of Conduct training on 22nd February 2016.

A2 Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill

The Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill has proposed a number of new responsibilities for Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees as follows:

- Complaints about a Member's non-compliance with duties (attendance at meetings, holding surgeries, answering correspondence, training) will be made to the Council's Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee will decide if the complaint is to be investigated.
- Duty of County Councillors to make annual reports – if the Head of Democratic Services is also the Monitoring Officer, any breaches of this provision can be investigated by the Monitoring Officer in the exercise of his / her responsibilities, but as above has to discuss this with the Chair of the Standards Committee.
- Following an investigation the Monitoring Officer must provide a report to the Standards Committee on the investigation making recommendations which the Monitoring Officer considers appropriate.
- The Standards Committee will consider the report and recommendations and consider if there has been a breach and will have powers to censure or suspend / partially suspend a Member or take no action.
- Leaders of political groups will have a duty to maintain high standards by members of their political group. Standards Committees will have the responsibility of monitoring compliance by political group leaders of their duties.
- Standards Committees will have a duty to make an annual report to the County Council describing how it discharged its functions during the financial year.

The consultation exercise ended on 15th February, 2016 and the Council will need to await the outcome to see if the proposed provisions become enacted in the final Act.

B. Referral of Councillors to Public Services Ombudsman

B1. County Councillor Referrals

B1.1 The following matters are with the Ombudsman:

6/15/CC	Ombudsman investigating
8/15/CC	Ombudsman investigating
9/15//CC	Ombudsman investigating
10/15/CC	Not investigating
11/15/CC	Not investigating
12/15/CC	Not investigating
13/15/CC	Not investigating

01/16/CC	Awaiting a decision of whether or not to investigate
02/16/CC	Awaiting a decision of whether or not to investigate
03/16/CC	Awaiting a decision of whether or not to investigate
04/16/CC	Awaiting a decision of whether or not to investigate

C. Other Standards Issues

None.

D Dispensations

D1. Applications - County Councillors

No applications for dispensation have been received.

E. Attendance

E.1 Member attendance

Attendance for Members at main Committees for the period 13th May 2015 to 30th November 2015 had been calculated.

Four Councillors had attendance below 60% namely:

Cllr A Holloway (57%)
Cllr D Bailey (57%)
Cllr P Harris (53%)
Cllr G Ratcliffe (50%)

It is known that Cllr Miss Holloway has had a period of ill-health.

Cllr Harris requested further investigation on his attendance that revealed it should be properly recorded as 60% and therefore no further detail was required.

Cllr Bailey provided information regarding those meetings that she had missed and the Committee thanked Cllr Bailey for providing such a detailed response and accepted the reasons given.

Cllr Ratcliffe had spoken to the Scrutiny Officer regarding his attendance but no written response was available. A written response from Cllr Ratcliffe was requested.

E.2 Calculating attendance

A new system for recording attendance had been introduced and there may be an opportunity to revisit how attendance is reported. County Council Members commented that the current system takes no account of the quite heavy workload of some members attending working groups, acting as observers or as Member Champions none of which are credited by simply looking at attendance at main committees. Independent

Members noted a concern that on occasion Members had been observed signing in for a meeting but leaving soon after.

Recommended that the options for calculating attendance using the new recording system be considered at the next meeting, and

Recommended that Democratic Services consider proposing amendments to the constitution to require the time and reason for leaving a meeting to be recorded.

F. Meeting Dates

To note dates of future meetings as follows:

Wednesday 29th June 2016

Wednesday 5th October 2016

All meetings to commence at 10.00am with the option of training available afterwards.

County Councillor H Rhydderch-Roberts (Chair)