

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Standards Committee
27th April 2011

REPORT BY: Strategic Director – Law and Governance

SUBJECT: Matters appertaining to Standards Issues

REPORT FOR: Decision, Information and Discussion

A. General Training for Members

A1. Training of County Council Members – Member Development Strategy/Programme

A1.1 Copies of notes of the last meeting of the Member Development Working Group held on the 13th January 2011 and 11th March 2011 are attached to this report as **Appendix 1** for information.

B. Referral of Councillors to Public Services Ombudsman

B1. County Councillor Referrals

B1.1 The Ombudsman has advised that he has received a Code of Conduct complaint against one Member of Powys County Council (ref 1/11CC)

C. Other Standards Issues

C1.1 Use of laptops and electronic media during Council meetings

This will be included in the work on revisions to the Constitution when the proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure comes into force in April/May.

C1.2 Social Networking

The Member Development Working Group has considered an initial draft of this Protocol, which following further revision will be considered by this Committee.

D. Minutes of Meetings

D1. Meeting of Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny, Audit and Standards Committees

Notes of the meeting held on the 28th January 2011 are attached as **Appendix 2**.

D.2 Joint Meeting of Powys County Council and Brecon Beacons National Park Standards Committee.

Notes of the joint meeting held on 1st December 2010 are attached at **Appendix 3**.

E Dispensations

E1. Applications - County Councillors

E1.1 No applications for dispensation have been received.

E1.2 Scottish Power Energy Networks proposal to Connect Windfarms to the National Grid.

Scottish Power and the National Grid are currently undertaking a consultation exercise in relation to the connection of windfarms in Powys to the National Grid, which will involve the installation of an electricity hub together with associated pylons. This project will predominantly affect Montgomeryshire but will also have an impact on Radnorshire.

Following conversations with the clerk to one Town and Community Council in Montgomeryshire regarding the issue of Members' interests, the impact this could have on councillors' individual and collective ability to discuss these issues became apparent. Due to the scale of the proposal, it is also apparent that a large number of Town and Community Councils could be affected, and therefore the Standards Sub-Committee's view is being sought separately as to whether a blanket dispensation should be granted to Town and Community Councillors to speak and / or vote on these proposals.

In addition this matter has raised questions in relation to the position of County Councillors as local members discussing these issues at County Council meetings, and / or are also members of Town and Community Councils, and / or are members of the County Council's Planning Committee (who it is understood will be the decision making body in relation to the electricity hub).

The County Council's Planning Protocol will apply to meetings of the Planning Committee where members with Personal and Prejudicial Interests can, subject to those provisions, act as "Local Members" and make representations to the Committee.

The Standards Committee's views are sought as to whether a blanket dispensation to speak and / or vote should be granted to County Councillors and under which circumstances.

F. Raising the profile of the Standards Committee/Sub-Committee

F1. Standards in Local Government

A copy of the document Powys County Council – Standards in Local Government is attached at **Appendix 4**. Approval is sought to publish this document on the Powys County Council website.

G. Standards Conference

The Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells has been booked as a venue for the Standards Conference on 5th October 2011. The key speakers have confirmed attendance and the programme has been agreed with ACSeS and is attached at **Appendix 5**. The Chairman will introduce the Panel and volunteers are sought from the Standards Committee to facilitate the workshop debate on 'What changes would you make to the existing Members' Code of Conduct?'.

H Observing other Committees

Standards Committee Members have been receiving agendas of meetings that they have indicated they wished to attend and will be invited to report back at the meeting. Please note that from the Annual Meeting in May there will be a change to the Council's political management structure with a Leader and 9 Councillor Cabinet replacing the current 15 Councillor Board. There will continue to be 4 Scrutiny Committees but their remit and titles will change as indicated below. Other committees remain unaltered save that there will be two area committees for Montgomeryshire in place of the existing single Shire Committee. The dates of the new Scrutiny Committee meetings are taken from the diary dates of the old committees as follows:-

Modernisation and Improvement Scrutiny Committee (takes Corporate Scrutiny Committee dates)

13th May 2011
8th July 2011
2nd Sept 2011
10th Nov 2011

Children, Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee (takes People Scrutiny Committee dates)

27th May 2011
7th July 2011
8th Sept 2011
2nd Dec 2011

Learning and Leisure Scrutiny Committee (takes Principal Scrutiny Committee dates)

19th May 2011
28th July 2011
6th Oct 2011
8th Dec 2011

Environment, Crime and Disorder Committee (takes Regeneration and Environment Scrutiny Committee dates)

20th May 2011
29th July 2011
16th Sept 2011
17th Nov 2011

I. Standards Committee meeting room.

To view Committee Room B as a potential meeting room for the Standards Committee.

K1 Whistleblowing

At a recent meeting of the Audit Committee on 31st March 2011 (which considered a WAO review) it was agreed that the revised Whistleblowing policy will be sent to the WAO for comments and considered by the Audit Committee following which it will come to this Committee for consideration.

L. Meeting Dates.

L.1 To note dates of future meetings as follows:

29th June, 2011
7th September, 2011
30th November, 2011

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

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