

STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE

27 JANUARY 2009

Present: Independent Members: Akmal Hanuk (Chairperson),
Maureen Hedley-Clarke, Deirdre Jones, Anne Morgan
and Paul Stockton

County Councillors Bowen, Davies and Rowland-
James

Community Councillor John Hughes

S23 : MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of Paul Stockton in the list of apologies, the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Ethics Committee held on 18 November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

S24 : REGISTRATION OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY – REVIEW

Council at it's meeting on 18 October 2008 approved the recommendations of the Standard and Ethics Committee to reduce the threshold for registration of gifts and hospitality to £25.00 and the Council's guidance was amended accordingly. The Committee also agreed to receive 6 monthly reports summarising details of the registrations.

Following discussions, it was

RESOLVED – That the report detailing Members' registration of gifts and hospitality for the period 18 April 2008 to 17 October 2008 be noted.

S25 : EMPLOYEES CODE OF CONDUCT

The Committee at it's meeting on 5 October 2006 considered a report of the Monitoring Officer on the Council's Ethical Code which comprises the following:-

- (i) The Members' Code of Conduct (adopted 15 May 2008)
- (ii) The Code of Conduct for Employees (adopted 28 July 2001)
- (iii) The Protocol on Member/Officer Relations and

(iv) The Cardiff Undertaking.

The Committee has reviewed the Members' Code of Conduct' the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations and the Cardiff Undertaking.

The Committee was advised that the Code of Conduct for Employees is a statutory Code and as such comes under the National Assembly for Wales for any revisions or amendments. The Council is however responsible for implementing the Code, rules and guidance which were adopted on 28 July 2001.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Employee's Code of Conduct dated 28 July 2001 attached as Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- (2) A review of the procedural rules and guidance which support the Code be undertaken and the Monitoring Officer be instructed to report on the review to a future meeting;
- (3) The Monitoring Officer be requested to develop and implement a training programme for Staff on their responsibilities under the Employees' Code of Conduct including, if applicable, the revised guidance.

**S26 : COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE –
CONSULTATION ON LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC TRUST**

The Committee received a report advising about a Consultation exercise on Leadership and Public Trust instituted by the Committee on Standards in Public Life which is an independent public body which advises Government on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK.

The closing date for submissions and evidence is 25 February 2009. The Committee also intend to hold a number of public meetings including one in Cardiff on 26 March 2009.

The Committee discussed the questionnaire and agreed that it is appropriate to make a positive response to the consultation on behalf of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) Committee agree to put forward it's views for inclusion in the response to the consultation exercise; and
- (2) The following Members be delegated to sit on a Sub-Committee to construct a response to the Consultation paper:-

Akmal Hanuk (Chairperson), Maureen Hedley-Clarke and Councillor Tim Davies.

S27 : RELATIONSHIP WITH MEDIA AND PRESS

The Chairperson welcomed Kathryn Richards, Head of Communications Tourism and Events to the meeting.

The Committee was given a brief presentation on the role of the media in Cardiff Council.

An outline was given of the work undertaken by the Media Team together with an example of the challenges they face on a regular basis:-

- Headlines can often be deliberately provocative;
- Once mis-information is printed, it is difficult to counter;
- It is accepted that due to the political nature of the work of the Council; there might be conflicting agendas;
- The reputation of the Council is precious – once lost it is difficult to regain.

The media team are responsible for producing the Capital Times, a six weekly publication that is the highest circulating newspaper in Wales and delivered to every home in the city.

In conclusion the Committee was advised that the Council's Media Team work proactively to inform Cardiff citizens about Council business, they also run campaigns of interest to the public. The team also publishes press releases, deals with enquiries and monitors and evaluates media coverage.

The Team creates and deals with media coverage which would incur high costs per month to buy in advertising.

The Chairperson thanked Kath Richards for her presentation.

Resolved – That the presentation on the Council’s relationship with the media and press be noted.

S28 : MONITORING OFFICER’S VERBAL UPDATE

(i) Standards Committees Conference (Wales) 2009

The Monitoring Officer informed the Committee that the formal offer from Cardiff Council to WAG to host the All Wales Standards Committee’s Conference in the Autumn of 2009 had been accepted.

The Committee were advised that early planning for the event was needed and that this would be a good opportunity to showcase Cardiff to other Authorities in Wales.

It was suggested that Officers and Representatives of the Media and Events Team be involved in organising and promoting the event; City Hall was the proposed venue and, subject to availability the preferred date for the event should be in late September or early October 2009.

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The update regarding Cardiff hosting the Standards Committee’s Conference be noted with pleasure.
- (2) Subject to availability, City Hall be booked for a date in late September/early October as the preferred option to hold the conference.
- (3) A task and finish group be set up comprising the Monitoring Officer and Members of the Committee to plan for the event.

(ii) Wales Audit Office (WAO) Corporate Governance Audit

The Monitoring Officer updated the Committee on progress of the Wales Audit office “Good Governance Diagnostic” pilot and advised that since the last meeting, a team of six WAO Officers had met with the Chairperson and a number of Officers and will follow up by meeting with Customer Focus Groups and Partner Organisations.

The Council have been assessed against the Standard for the following:-

- Partnership working
- Probity
- Dealing with Staff
- Corporate Plan

Individual feedback has been positive, the general message being that improvements have been made. A report will be brought back to Committee in due course.

(iii) Format of Future Meetings with Party Whips

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members of discussion at the last meeting of the Committee regarding the format of future meetings with Party Whips. Arising from discussion, the Committee was of the view that it would be beneficial to both Committee Members and Party Whips to prepare an Agenda with topics for discussion and that there should be commitment on the part of Party Whips to ensure that either the Party Whip or representative would attend the meetings.

It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would write to the Party Whips on behalf of the Committee to outline the views of the Committee.

(iv) Community Council Charter

Community Councillor John Hughes advised that the feedback from Community Councils was that the meeting held between the Committee and representatives from the Community Councils to discuss the Charter had been successful and Community Councils accepted the fact there would be some differences agreed to sign up to the Charter.

(v) Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales will be visiting the 22 Welsh Authorities for the purpose of obtaining the views of the Leader, other Members, the Chief Executive and Senior Officers on the current Councillor allowance scheme and how it might be updated to reflect the roles and responsibilities of

Councillors.

The Panel have indicated that they would also like to meet with Independent Members of the Standards and Ethics Committee and co-opted members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

It was confirmed that the meeting would take place on 18 March 2009 at 3.15 pm a copy of the current scheme will be provided to the Committee for information.

S29 : WORK PROGRAMME

The work programme was noted and would be discussed fully at the next meeting of the Committee.