

Appendix A

STANDARDS & ETHICS COMMITTEE – TASK AND FINISH MEETING – COMMUNITY COUNCILS CHARTER

21 October 2014

Present: Independent Members: Lizz Roe, Richard Tebboth
(Chairperson) and Hugh Thomas

Councillors: Georgina Phillips

Community Councillor John Hughes

Apologies: James Downe and Councillors Lloyd and Dianne Rees

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibilities under Part III of the Members' Code of Conduct, to declare any interests in general terms and complete 'personal interest' forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial Members would be asked to leave the meeting, and if the interest is personal, but not prejudicial, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote. The following declarations were made:

<i>Councillor</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Interest</i>
Community Councillor Hughes	Community Councils Charter	Personal: Community Councillor Hughes is a member of a community council.
Phillips	Community Councils Charter	Councillor Phillips husband is a member of a community council.

COMMUNITY COUNCILS CHARTER

The Chairperson welcomed Phil Williams, Operational Manager, Strategic Planning and Development Management.

On 8 March 2012, the then Executive adopted a Community Councils Charter following consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the six Community Councils within the Council's area and with the Standards and Ethics Committee. The aim of the Charter is to support structured, regular engagement and communication between the County Council and the six Community Councils in Cardiff. The Charter states that the Standards and Ethics Committee is to carry out regular reviews of the Charter and review progress made in achieving the

measures and actions set out in the Charter and Charter Action Plan. However, it was noted that this is not reflected in the S&E Committee's Terms of Reference.

As there have been concerns about the implementation and effectiveness of the Charter it was decided at the Standards and Ethics Committee's meeting on 21 October 2014 that a task and finish meeting should be arranged to consider these issues and arrive at way forward. A number of concerns relate to Community Councils and planning applications.

The Monitoring Officer advised the Committee of the following:

- At the time of its creation the intention was that the Charter would be reviewed every four years or when necessary. As the Charter was created under the previous administration a review should now take place, especially as complaints are being received from the Community Council clerks.
- There are particular concerns regarding planning issues, as the Charter gives the Councils additional rights in relation to attending site visits of the Planning Committee.

During discussion, the following points were made:

- The Charter has not been reviewed since its creation.
- There was to have been a Council liaison officer for the Community Councils but this has not happened. On this point, the Monitoring Officer advised the meeting that the post that was meant for this was transferred to another part of the Council.
- The Councils have not even been given a list of contact numbers. There have not been any quarterly meetings between the Councils and the local authority.
- This administration has developed a partnership strategy and the Councils have a seat on the area management committee, although these places have not been taken up.
- It seems as though the Standards and Ethics Committee is limited in terms of the action it can take regarding the Charter.
- There is no action plan in relation to the Charter.
- The Councils feel that they are a low priority for the local authority.
- The Committee should provide a report to the Cabinet and the Charter needs to be supported. The refreshed Charter needs to reflect where the local authority now is in relation to partnership working.
- The Council may not now have the resources to implement the Charter in the way it was originally envisaged. In the three years since the Charter

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was created the financial situation for the Council has changed a great deal and resources are stretched.

- The Monitoring Officer has tried to engage with the Community Council clerks and has offered training sessions. This was met with little response.
- That part of the Charter that relates to Land Use Planning is about 95% effective.
- Community Councillors should be kept as well informed about planning issues as ward councillors are.
- The numbers at partnership meetings are falling off dramatically.

The Chairperson invited Phil Williams to speak and he advised the meeting of the following:

- The relationship between the local authority and the Councils is important.
- Planning is under pressure. Staff numbers have been reduced by 40%. The number of planning applications has increased.
- There is a need to look at the interface between Planning and the Councils.
- When on site visits the Planning Committee is not in sub-committee mode. Visits are a fact gathering exercise and do not have to be advertised. Community Councils may attend but may not make representations.
- Case officers do sometimes change and even Elected Members do not always know when this has happened. It may be difficult to keep the Councils informed of these changes. Planning applications can be tracked online and information about planning meetings can also be found in this way.
- Phil Williams has had discussions with the Council's IT department regarding the creation of a specific part of the Council's website for use by Community Councils.
- There are approximately 60 or 70 site visits per year. If the online system were to be altered the Community Councils would not be so reliant on the Council to inform them of site visits etc.

When considering the way forward the following points were made:

- The Charter should go back to the appropriate Cabinet Members, Councillors Bradbury and De'Ath. The Charter should be reviewed and taken back to the Community Councils. The Charter should be implemented as is or be reduced in its scope.

- The Chairperson of the Committee and the Monitoring Officer could have annual meetings with the Councils but providing a liaison officer or holding quarterly meetings would be more problematic.
- It may be that the Charter should be something that is more specific but less ambitious.
- Community Councillor Hughes will speak to the six clerks and see what they think, ask them what would help them most.
- The Charter should go to the Senior Management Team (SMT) in order to determine what can and what can't be done, so that the clerks are not promised things that are undeliverable.
- In the Charter, the role of the ward councillor should be recognised.

The meeting noted the comments that had been received by Councillor Dianne Rees, who was unable to attend the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Monitoring Officer should take the issue of the Charter to SMT in January to see what can be implemented and what can't.
- 2) That Community Councillor Hughes consults the Community Council clerks about what improvements they would like to see.
- 3) That the aim is to reach agreement on a refreshed Charter by February so that it can be signed off by the Cabinet.
- 4) That the Standards and Ethics Committee should receive an update on this issue at its meeting on 27 January 2015.