

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 24th June, 2014 at 3.30 p.m.

PRESENT

Independent Members	Mr.G.Smith (Chairman) M.Jehu Mrs.A.Jones
County Borough Councillors	C.Davies G.Stacey

Officers in Attendance

Mr.P.J.Lucas – Monitoring Officer
Ms.D.Hughes – Head of Organisational Development
Ms.K.May – Democratic Services Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Community Councillor R.Butler.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests in matters pertaining to the agenda.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED – to approve as an accurate record the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on the 25th April, 2014.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- (1) Minute No.36(3) – Standards Committee, 25th April, 2014 – Members were informed that the matter regarding the registration of gifts and hospitality including the guidance offered by the Ombudsman was being reported to the Council Meeting being held tomorrow evening (25th June, 2014).
- (2) Minute No.36(4) – Standards Committee, 25th April, 2014 – The Monitoring Officer reported that arrangements were in the process of being organised for an external provider to be commissioned to provide training to Members of the Standards Committee in respect of a `Mock Hearing` and that this was crucial as there was a possibility of one or two cases being referred to this Committee.

5 PROMOTION OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Members received Ms.D.Hughes, Head of Organisational Development (Human Resources) and Ms.K.May, Democratic Services Manager who provided information on the training provided to Members and the introduction of RCT Source.

The Democratic Services Manager commenced the presentation with an overview of the process for Member development and informed Members that Rhondda Cynon Taf was the only authority in Wales to achieve the three awards associated with the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.

In 2005, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) established a Wales Charter for Member Support and Development, which was introduced to develop, recognise and share good practice in the support and development of elected Members, provided by their authorities.

The three areas of achievement:

- The Charter (2007)
- The Advanced Charter (2010)
- The Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development (previously the excellence Award) (2014)

The award at the first two levels lapses after a period of three years and at this point, the Authority can re-apply for their current level award or for the next level.

In April of this year, the Authority applied for 'The Good Practice and Innovation Award' the submission to the WLGA sought to highlight the excellent and innovative practices that Rhondda Cynon Taf's Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit have undertaken with regard to elected Member support and it was evidenced that this ongoing practice was over and above that required for the Advanced level of the Charter. This award was being presented to the Leader at the meeting of Council tomorrow evening (25th June, 2014) by Mr.S.Thomas, Chief Executive of the WLGA.

The Democratic Manager reported that the Council has always endeavoured that elected Members are able to access the same services and support as its employees and this was reinforced during the Induction programme following the elections in 2012, where all Members were surveyed to ascertain what they wanted to see from the Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit and whether there were any specific interventions that they would like to see included in the services available to them.

The Democratic Services Manager informed Members that Officers were currently preparing its submission to the WLGA to maintain the Advanced Charter and it is hoped that this will be sustained during the coming years through Members and Officers commitment of working together to improve corporate governance, local democracy and local services, which will assist in the continued development for Members and which will be complimented through the continued monitoring by the Democratic Services Committee.

Following the observations made by the Democratic Services Manager, Members received Ms.D.Hughes, Head of Organisational Development who provided the Committee with a presentation on the RCTSource.

The RCTSource is the name that has been given to the learning pool product that was developed by the IDeA for local authorities. The product enables the development of e-learning modules by a local authority which can be deployed to staff and elected Members using the learning pool website. The product also allows the sharing of e-learning modules between local authorities who can then contextualise the module to their own needs. Learning Pool also produces learning which can be used at a local level.

The Head of Organisational Development outlined the benefits of this approach, such as:

- Learning can be accessed by all staff and members irrespective of whether they are on the Council ICT infrastructure (i.e staff and Members can log in at home from mobile devices such as i pads, smartphones and also pcs and laptops).
- Learning can be undertaken at learners own pace at a time that is most convenient to them.
- Learning modules can be developed quickly and deployed through the RCTSource to meet the needs of the organisation (the Managing my Future area was highlighted as an example of this which was developed to assist staff who may be impacted by service changes).
- Programmes of learning can be developed and modules made mandatory where necessary.
- Assessments can be built in to the learning to establish understanding
- Certificates can be printed for all learning undertaken.
- Management information on uptake, completion, compliance etc is built into the system.

Members were provided with a demonstration of the current site and it was reported that certain training events could also be recorded and screened on the site. It was proposed that the Monitoring Officer is to present the `Code of

Conduct` e-learning to screen and also Scrutiny Support Officers were to present a module on `Scrutiny` on the RCTSource, both of which would be useful, particularly for induction. An assessment of these two modules would be set to evidence understanding.

Further modules had been developed for Members by Learning Pool but had not yet been contextualised to accommodate differences within Wales.

A lengthy discussion ensued and it was **RESOLVED –**

1. To note the contents of the presentation.
2. That the Council be congratulated on being the only authority in Wales to achieve the three levels of the “Wales Charter for Member Support and Development”.
3. That Members of the Standards Committee be provided with user names and passwords so that they can explore the site further.
4. That an update on RCTSource be provided at the next meeting of this Committee.

**GUY SMITH
CHAIRMAN**

The meeting closed at 4.25 p.m.