

**Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 4 March 2015 at  
Fire and Rescue Headquarters, St Asaph Business Park**

**Present**

Jane A Eyton-Jones (Chair)  
David Morris (Deputy Chair)  
Celia Blomeley  
Antony P Young

Gareth Owens, Deputy Clerk  
Alwen Davies, Member Liaison Officer

**Apologies**

Cllr Jim Evans, Anglesey County Council  
Cllr Brian Dunn, Flintshire County Council

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

1.1 None.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2014 were approved as a correct record.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The Deputy Clerk confirmed that all protocols and procedures discussed at the meeting on 29 January 2014 had been adopted by the Authority at its meeting in March 2014.

4 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

4.1 As a matter of good corporate governance the Standards Committee provides the Fire and Rescue Authority with an annual report on its activities during each financial year. Members were asked to approve the report for 2014-15.

4.2 **RESOLVED to approve the Standards Committee's annual report to be presented to the Authority at its March meeting.**

5 UPDATE ON ETHICAL ISSUES

5.1 The Deputy Clerk presented a report which updated members about recent case law relating to the code of conduct and the new guidance issued by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

5.2 Members were informed about the case of Heesom v PSOW [2014] EWHC 1504 which gave important guidance on the interaction between the code of conduct and the right to political expression.

- 5.3 Following the conclusion of the case, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales had consulted the Lawyers in Local Government Group on draft revised guidance on the code of conduct. The final guidance was shared with the members and the paragraph that had been inserted under the heading '**Treating others with respect and consideration**' reads as follows:

"However, I do expect members to afford colleagues, opponents and officers the same courtesy and consideration as they show to others in their everyday lives. Whilst I recognise that political debate can, at times, become heated, the right to freedom of expression should not be used as an excuse for poor conduct generally. Such poor conduct can only discredit the role of councillor in the eyes of the public."

- 5.4 It was noted that incidences of poor behaviour that come close to breaching this part of the code are few in number. In conjunction, with the local resolution procedure adopted by the FRA last year it is hoped that any issues could be resolved however it must be noted that the law now provides a very low "safety net" in terms of poor behaviour.

- 5.5 **RESOLVED to note the update and that officers report back should action be needed to address any unacceptable behaviour.**

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 Prior to closing the meeting, the Chair informed members that she had attended a meeting of the North Wales Standard Forum, and the main topics of discussion were around town and community councils.

- 6.2 An all-Wales Standards Conference will be held on 20 October in Cardiff and the new Ombudsman, Nick Bennett, will be speaking at the conference.