

**Extract from Standards Committee: 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2015**

918 WHITE PAPER – REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: POWER TO LOCAL PEOPLE (MO) –

Committee was invited to consider that part of the consultation document published by the Welsh Government entitled “Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People” which related to the Standards Committee.

The White Paper Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People was the Welsh Government’s statement of intent about the future of Local Government in Wales. The White Paper set out the changes the Welsh Government wanted to make to the law so people could give their opinion before it happened.

The White Paper set out the Welsh Government’s proposals for reform in the following fields:

- Local Democracy
- The Roles and Remuneration of Elected Members and Senior Officers
- Community Governance and Community Councils
- Community Rights
- Corporate Improvement
- Service Performance
- Scrutiny, Audit, Inspection and Regulation
- Finance.

Committee considered that part of the Consultation Survey that related to the Standards Committee and which was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

Six main areas had been highlighted and Committee was requested to comment on these areas:

- The powers of Standards Committees should be enhanced to enable them to consider cases where there is an allegation of a Councillor failing to fulfil their duties satisfactorily.
  - Committee strongly agreed with this statement.
- If you agree, how should their powers be enhanced?
  - The powers of Standards Committees should be enhanced by granting the power to disqualify Councillors, in line with the powers granted to the Adjudication Panel for Wales.
- What sanctions might there be for Councillors failing to fulfil their duties satisfactorily?
  - The powers should be enhanced by the grant of powers to suspend and disqualify in addition to the existing power to suspend.

- Where internal processes have failed to operate satisfactorily should there be a role for an independent body?
  - Yes.
- If yes, in what circumstances should they be involved?
  - Standards Committee felt that this question was too vague and that further information would be required, including guidance on performance standards to be required of Councillors.
- Who do you think would be best placed to undertake this role?
  - It was felt that the powers of the Adjudication Panel for Wales should be extended to deal with these cases.

Members noted the contents of Paragraph 3.12 of the Consultation Document, headed “Electoral Qualification”. Although not specifically a question for Standards Committees as part of the consultation process, comments had been requested on whether it should be easier for employees of a Local Authority to stand for election to their employee Council, and whether there should be restrictions preventing Elected Members of Local Authorities also serving as either Assembly Members or Community Councillors.

The proposal as contained in the Consultation Document was that Local Authority officers – other than those holding politically restricted posts – should be entitled to stand for election to their own Authority. Only if elected should they be required to resign their paid employment with the Authority. This was intended to widen the pool of potential candidates whilst ensuring there was no conflict of interest once the candidate was elected.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the Standards Committee’s response to the Consultation Document published by the Welsh Government entitled “Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People” be as outlined above.

(2) T H A T the Standards Committee’s decisions be incorporated into the Council’s response to the White Paper.

Reason for decisions

(1&2) To be considered as part of the Council’s proposed response to the Consultation Document.