

Powys County Council

Standards in Local Government



Gwasanaethau effeithiol ar gyfer calon werdd Cymru
Efficient services for the green heart of Wales



Standards in Local Government

The County of Powys covers 2000 square miles – about a quarter of Wales. It is a sparsely populated upland area with a scattered population of 131,000 centred on a number of towns including Welshpool, Newtown, Llandrindod Wells, Brecon and Ystradgynlais.

Powys County Council is a unitary authority with 110 Town and Community Councils across the area and over 1,000 Town and Community Councillors.

What the Standards Committee does

Powys County Council has established a Standards Committee since 1999 following regulations from the then Welsh Office prior to the requirement to constitute such a Committee by the Local Government Act 2000.

The Standards Committee covers matters relating to Powys County Council and there is a Standards Community Sub-Committee which covers matters relating to the Town and Community Councils within Powys. Both Committees have 9 Members.



The role of the Committees is as follows:

- (a) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives.
- (b) Assisting the councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives; to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (c) Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (d) Monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (e) Advising, training or arranging to train councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (f) Granting dispensations to councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (g) Dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that officer by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.



Standards Committee only

- (h) Overseeing the Council's whistle-blowing regime.
- (i) Providing advice to individual councillors on such issues as the treatment of personal interest and on conduct matters generally.
- (j) Determining appropriate action on matters referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
- (k) Overseeing the Register of Interest of members, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives and officers.
- (l) Overseeing the Council's rules and protocols on accountability of members.
- (m) Overseeing the attendance of members and co-opted members at committees.
- (n) Overseeing the training of members serving on all committees of the Council.
- (o) Exercising an appellate role (independent members only) under the Habitual or Vexatious Complainants policy.



The Membership as at May 2010 is as follows:

Standards Committee

Independent Members



Peter Swanson (Chairman)

Term of office: Appointed 4th March 2002 for six years. Reappointed 3rd March 2008 for four years. Term expires 2nd March 2012.

Peter Swanson has been a Member of the Powys Standards Committee since 2002 and Chairman since July 2004. He is a serving magistrate having been appointed as a Justice of the Peace in 1983. In the past he has chaired the Powys Health Board, Coleg Powys and was a member of the Wales Agricultural Training Board. He has farmed in Montgomeryshire since 1970 before which he ran a chain of hotels and restaurants in Birmingham.

Ralph Miller (Vice-Chairman)

Term of office: Appointed 27th January 2006 for six years. Term expires 26th January 2012.

Ralph Miller has been a Member of the Powys Standards Committee since 2006 and Vice-Chairman since 2009. He is a Governor at Gwernyfed High School. He is a retired scientist who had a varied career in the public and private sector including posts in the Scientific Civil Service, Welsh Water, Royal Mail and the BBC.





Marian Harris

Term of office: Appointed 22nd June 2004 for six years. Reappointed 29th April 2010 for four years. Term expires 21st June 2014.

Marian Harris was appointed to the Powys Standards Committee in 2004. Now retired she worked as a secretary in a Solicitors' office in Abergavenny and Llanidloes, at Neville Hall Hospital, Abergavenny and as Deputy Practice Manager in Rhayader Surgery. She has served on the Rhayader Primary School and Llanidloes High School Governing Bodies. She believes that fair play and common sense are of utmost importance.

Susan Jarman

Term of office: Appointed 25th November 2007 for six years. Term expires 24th October 2013.

Susan Jarman was appointed to the Powys Standards Committee in 2007. She has worked in the Banking business and for the Post Office. In 1992 she became a magistrate on the Montgomeryshire Bench and has been Deputy Chairman since 2006. She served on the Dyfed Powys Magistrates Court Committee before Her Majesty's Courts Service undertook management of magistrates' courts.

Helen Rhydderch-Roberts

Term of office: Appointed 14th May 2009 for six years. Term expires 13th May 2015.

Helen Rhydderch-Roberts was appointed to the Powys Standards Committee in 2009 and had a career in human resources and executive search in the City before moving to Wales with her family. She is Chair of Governors at her local primary school and takes a keen interest in politics. She believes strongly in the democratic process and the importance of up-holding standards in public life as integral to the workings of democracy.

COUNTY COUNCILLORS

Fred Barker

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012.

Fred Barker has been a County Councillor since 1995 when elected onto the shadow Powys County Council. Prior to that he was a District Councillor at Radnor District Council.

He served as an elected member of Chester County Borough Council from May 1954 – 1974 including six years as an Alderman. He was appointed Sheriff of the City in 1964 and Mayor of the City in 1968 serving time as a member of the Investiture Committee. He was a Justice of the Peace between 1957 and 1984, and has been a member of the Supplementary Panel since that date. He was a member of the Liverpool Regional Hospital Board 1977 – 1983.

Kelvyn Curry

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012.

Kelvyn Curry has been a member of the Powys County Council Standards Committee for over ten years, firstly as a Community Council representative and since 2008 as a County Councillor. Formerly a teacher, he retired from his post with the University of Warwick in 2007. He has been a magistrate for ten years, served as Chair of Governors of a primary School for over ten years and a Chair of the East Wales Valuation Tribunal for over fifteen years. He is currently a member of the governing body of a primary and secondary school and is very involved in the local community which he represents as a County Councillor. Kelvyn believes that public confidence in local government requires a strong ethical approach, which also fosters better governance.

Viola Evans

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012.

Viola Evans was elected to Powys County Council in 1999 and has been a Member of Llanfair Caereinion Town Council since 1974. She has chaired numerous committees including Chair of Montgomeryshire and Chair of Powys County Council in 2008-09. Viola has also been a Member of the Mid Wales Film Commission. Before becoming a Councillor Viola had 30 year career working for the Wales Tourist Board becoming the Director of the Mid Wales Region.

Mike Hodges

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012.

Michael Hodges has been a Town Councillor since 2004, being elected a County Councillor in 2008 since when he has served on the Powys Standards Committee. He was appointed onto the Dyfed Powys Police Authority in June 2008 where he chairs the Audit Committee. Michael believes there should be a stronger role for Standards Committees enabling complaints to be dealt with faster. His main outside interest is St John Cymru Wales of which he is an elected Trustee. Michael is a well known figure in Llandrindod Wells running a Post Office and General Store.



Standards Community Sub-Committee

Independent Members

Peter Swanson (Chairman)
Ralph Miller (Vice-Chairman)
Marion Harris
Susan Jarman
Helen Rhydderch-Roberts

County Councillor

Kelvyn Curry

Community Councillors

In Powys elections are held to appoint Community Council representatives with the same four year term of office as for County Councillors. Community Councillors are eligible to stand for two consecutive terms of office.

Clare Evans – representing Radnorshire

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012

Clare Evans has worked in local government for urban and rural areas and was a former Head of European Affairs with Newport City Council before leaving to undertake various consultancy roles and to develop her own business. Clare has always been interested in local affairs and has been an independent member of Rhayader Town Council for over 10 years and was the first female mayor of that Council. Clare is an appointed member of the Wales Committee of the Consumer Council for Wales. Clare strongly believes that confidence in our representatives and institutions is a pre-requisite for an enabling local democracy.

Hywel Evans – representing Montgomeryshire

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012

Hywel Evans has served as Community Councillor for Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa since 1982 as past chairman and is the current chairman. He has served on the Powys Standards Committee since 2004.

Hywel holds a firm belief in maintaining high ethical standards and clarity in every level of life whether it be local government or business. He also believes in keeping things simple to understand and maintaining a commonsense approach.

Revd Alan Jevons – representing Brecknockshire

Term of office May 2008 – May 2012

Alan Jevons is a cleric in the Church in Wales, at present working in and around Llangorse. In the past he has worked in the rural parts of Herefordshire, as well as urban areas around Birmingham and Manchester. His interests have always veered away from church to community issues. At present he is Chair of a local Community Council and an Officer for the Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility.

Officers who support the Standards Committees

Clarence Meredith – Strategic Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

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Janet Kealey

Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

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Saira Tamboo – Solicitor

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Wyn Richards – Scrutiny Services Manager

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Liz Patterson - Committee Clerk

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These officers are able to provide legal and procedural advice on the Code of Conduct to members, co-optees, town and community councillors and clerks, and members of the public.



Training

All Councillors and co-opted Members of Powys County Council received training on the Members' Code of Conduct on taking office in 2008.

All Chairman and Clerks of Town and Community Councils or their representatives were offered training on the Members' Code of Conduct during 2008. These sessions covered compliance with the new Members' Code of Conduct and encouraged councillors where appropriate to apply to the Standards Committees for dispensations. Refresher training was provided mid term in the summer of 2010.

Future Training

Training is offered at the beginning of the term of office to enable new Members to receive prompt training on the Code of Conduct. Refresher training is offered.

The Standards Committees appreciate the time constraints of particularly voluntary town and community councillors but would stress the importance of all councillors understanding the ethical framework which governs their role as councillors. Attendance at training on the Members' Code of Conduct helps to guard against behaviour which could result in a complaint to the Ombudsman.

Dispensations

Any County Councillor, co-opted Member or town or community councillor who considers that they have a personal and prejudicial interest in a matter may apply to the Standards Committee (in the case of County Councillors or co-opted Members) or the Standards Community Sub-Committee (in the case of town and community councillors) for a dispensation to allow them to speak, or speak and vote on a matter which they would otherwise have to leave the room. The relevant committee will consider their application and advise the applicant and the clerk of the decision.

Applications for dispensation by Town and Community Councillors should be submitted by the Clerk. Application forms can be obtained from elizabeth.patterson@powys.gov.uk.



Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales receives complaints that Councillors or co-opted Members have broken the Code of Conduct. The Ombudsman decides whether or not there is a case to investigate and if so if the case were to be proved whether it would result in a sanction. If it is found that there is a case to investigate and it is proved then the case is either sent to the local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales to consider the case depending on the severity of the matter, and the likely sanction. The Standards Committees have the power to suspend a councillor for a period of up to six months. The Adjudication Panel has the power to disqualify a councillor for a period of up to five years.

**For further information see
www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk**

Annual Standards Conference

Powys send a delegation of Standards Committee Members and Officer/s to attend the Annual Standards Conference. The outcomes of the Conference are fed back to the Committees. In 2010 the conference was held in Cardiff and delegates were given the opportunity to network with Members and Officers from across Wales. The conference explored the current public perception of standards and ethics in the public arena and of the importance in maintaining openness and transparency in the work of Councils. The 2011 Standards Conference Wales will be held in Llandrindod Wells.

Register of Members' Interests

It is a requirement that all Councillors make a declaration of personal interests in a public register. They must also sign a declaration of acceptance of office in which they agree to abide by the Code of Conduct within 28 days of taking office. Any amendments to the declaration of personal interests must be notified within 28 days of a Member becoming aware of a change. The register for County Councillors is a public document available for inspection at County Hall during office hours.

**It is available for public inspection on-line at
<http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=7280&L=0>**

Councillors are also required to disclose personal and prejudicial interests at meetings which they attend, or when they are in discussions with other Members and Officers where they have such interests, as well as making the requisite written declarations, which are also available online as above.

For Town and Community Councils the registers of interests and declarations are held by the Clerk to the Council.



County Council Constitution

The County Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by the law, while others are a matter for the Council to determine based on local requirements.

Article 9 of the Constitution sets out the role, purpose and objectives of the Standards Committee together with its composition.

The Constitution also includes codes and protocols which provide guidance to both Members and Officers in undertaking their roles whilst meeting the high standards of conduct expected of public servants together with a copy of the Members' Code of Conduct. (See Parts 4 and 5 of the Constitution).

**Powys County Councils' Constitution can be found at
<http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=4108>**

Town and Community Councils have individual Standing Orders which govern their operation. For copies please refer to the relevant Town or Community Council Clerk.

