

## Standards Committee

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Meeting Venue

**Hybrid meeting - Zoom - County Hall**

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Meeting date

**Wednesday, 12 February 2025**

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Meeting time

**2.00 pm**

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For further information please contact

**Carol Johnson**

carol.johnson@powys.gov.uk



County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

6 February 2025

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Mae croeso i chi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg yn y cyfarfod.

Rhowch wybod pa iaith rydych am ei defnyddio erbyn hanner dydd, ddau ddiwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod.

You are welcome to speak Welsh or English in the meeting.

Please inform us of which language you wish to use by noon, two working days before the meeting.

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### AGENDA

1.	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	<b>MINUTES</b>
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on 30 October 2024 as a correct record.

(Pages 3 - 6)

3.	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

4.	<b>REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND MONITORING OFFICER</b>
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To receive the report of the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer.

(Pages 7 - 12)

5.	<b>ANNUAL REVIEW OF ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY BY MEMBERS, 2 FEBRUARY 2024 - 5 FEBRUARY 2025</b>
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To consider the report.

(Pages 13 - 16)

6.	<b>ANNUAL REPORTING BY GROUP LEADERS RELATING TO COMPLIANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CONDUCT</b>
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To consider the report and draft documents.

(Pages 17 - 32)

7.	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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To note the Work Programme.

(Pages 33 - 36)

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT HYBRID MEETING - ZOOM - COUNTY HALL ON WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2024**

PRESENT: Mr S Hays (Chair)

Independent Members: Mr J Goolden, Mr R Stafford-Tolley and Mr N Steward

County Councillors: I McIntosh, WD Powell and L Rijnenberg

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies for absence were received from Mrs C Moore and County Councillor B Baynham.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2024 as a correct record.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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No declarations were received.

<b>4.</b>	<b>REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND MONITORING OFFICER</b>
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The Committee received the report of the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer (copy filed with signed minutes).

**A. General Standards Issues for County Councillors and Co-opted Members**

The Committee noted that all councillors and co-opted members had completed the refresher mandatory Code of Conduct training.

**B. Members Attendance**

The Committee noted the information provided by the one member, whose attendance level was less than 60% for the period 18 May 2023 to 15 May 2024. The Committee thanked the member for the information which they considered to be a reasonable explanation and which they accepted.

**C. Referral of Councillors to the Public Services Ombudsman**

The abbreviations used in the headings are as follows:  
 MO – Monitoring Officer  
 OW – Ombudsman Wales  
 Stds – Standards Committee  
 APW - Adjudication Panel for Wales

Ref	Date OW notified MO of complaint	Date OW advised investigating or not investigating	Date OW's decision	Date considered by Stds	Date considered by APW
03/CC/22		17/04/23 investigating			
05/CC/22		28/06/22 investigating	20/11/23 referred to Stds	07/02/24 referred to another Stds Committee. 23/08/24 considered by Ceredigion Ethics & Standards Committee – decision to censure Cllr Iain McIntosh	
02/CC/23		26/02/24 investigating			
03/CC/23		23/04/24 investigating			
01/CC/24		30/07/24 not investigating	N/A	N/A	N/A

The Committee noted the decision of Ceredigion Ethics & Standards Committee on 23 August 2024 to censure County Councillor I McIntosh.

As a result of discussions at the last meeting it was agreed that the Chair should write to the Ombudsman regarding the time taken for complaints to be investigated. The Committee noted the Chair's letter and the response from the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman advised it aims to complete investigations within 12 months and during 2023/24 increased staffing number to address this and the increasing caseload. The Chair and Ombudsman were thanked for their letters. It was noted that one complaint is still outstanding from 2022 and the increased staffing levels will take some time to have an impact on investigations completed.

Comment was made that members who are the subject of a complaint need support as the time it takes to complete an investigation takes a toll on the individual as they are advised by the Ombudsman that the complaint should be kept confidential. The Ombudsman should provide support to members. The mental wellbeing of councillors should be supported. The Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that the Ombudsman acknowledges the need to support members and it was an issue he could raise with other Monitoring Officers. The Committee agreed that he should raise the issue at the Wales Monitoring Officers'

Group meeting in December, where the Ombudsman's office is represented.

**D. Dispensations Applications - County Councillors**

No applications for dispensation have been received from County Councillors.

**E. Ombudsman Wales – Our Findings**

The Committee noted the [Ombudsman Wales - Our Findings](#)

**F. Adjudication Panel for Wales [APW]**

Details of cases considered by the APW are available via the following link: [Decisions | The Adjudication Panel for Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

**G. National Forum for Standards Committees**

The Committee noted the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2024, attended by the Vice Chair and she had advised that she had no comments to add.

The Adjudication Panel for Wales (APL) presentation was made by Judge Claire Sharp the outgoing president. Her address took into account the factors involved in considering whether or not to allow requests from members for appeals against the decisions of standards committees. Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive of One Voice Wales (OVW) advised the Forum of its role in supporting town and community councils and the training available to councillors. Michelle Morris – Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) spoke about the cases dealt with by the Ombudsman during 2023/24. The number of cases had risen by 16%, investigations had risen by 13% and 43% more cases were referred to standards committees compared to the previous year.

The Committee noted the 2025 meeting dates: 27 January and 23 June.

**H. Independent review of investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales into Code of Conduct complaints**

The Committee received the Independent Review report of investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales into Code of Conduct complaints. The Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer referred the Committee to Review Summary, Recommendations and Lessons Learned. The Committee noted that the Review found that the PSOW's Code of Conduct processes and delegations were fair and free from political bias. The review found no evidence of politically biased decision-making in the cases which were reviewed.

It was noted that the PSOW's response to the recommendations was awaited. In response to comments about the methods of the investigation and access to the Review Panel and the Head of Legal and Monitoring

Officer advised that any concerns should be forwarded to the Ombudsman.

#### **I. Meeting dates**

The Committee noted the meeting dates for 2025. Meetings to start at 2pm.

12 February

9 April – annual meeting with Group Leaders

18 June

13 October

<b>5.</b>	<b>OBSERVING COUNTY COUNCIL MEETINGS BY STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBER</b>
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The Committee received the observation report of the Council meeting held on 11 July 2024. Mr Golden thanked Mrs Moore for taking his place as observer at this meeting.

In response to a question the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that the Chair of Council receives the general training provided for other committee chairs. In respect of access to translation for the public attending the meeting in County Hall, he stated that this facility was not available. He advised however, they could access the meeting on their phones but would need to use earphones so that there was no feedback in the Chamber. In response to a comment about members using their mobile phones in meetings and the public perception that they were not engaged in the meeting the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer advised that some members access agendas on their mobile phones and so it was difficult to restrict their use. He advised that it was not in the remit of the Committee to prevent use but the use of phones should be moderated.

**Mr S Hays (Chair)**

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**Standards Committee**  
**12 February 2025**

**REPORT BY:** Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer

**SUBJECT:** Standards Issues

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision, Information and Discussion

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**A. General Standards Issues for County Councillors and Co-opted Members**

Nothing to report.

**B. Referral of County Councillors to the Ombudsman Wales**

The abbreviations used in the headings are as follows:

MO – Monitoring Officer

OW – Ombudsman Wales

Stds – Standards Committee

APW - Adjudication Panel for Wales

The column titled “Date OW notified MO of complaint” has been deleted as such notifications are no longer received.

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Date OW advised investigating or not investigating</b>	<b>Date OW’s decision</b>	<b>Date considered by Stds</b>	<b>Date considered by APW</b>
03/CC/22	17/04/23 investigating			
02/CC/23	26/02/24 investigating			
03/CC/23	23/04/24 investigating			
02/CC/24	14/08/24 investigating			
03/CC/24	08/11/24 not investigating	---	---	---
04/CC/24	08/11/24 not investigating	---	---	---
05/CC/24	08/11/24 not investigating	---	---	---
06/CC/24	07/12/24 not investigating	---	---	---
07/CC/24	07/12/24 not investigating	---	---	---
08/CC/24	16/01/25 investigating			
09/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
10/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
11/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
12/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
13/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
14/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
15CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
16/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
17/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
18/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---

19/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---
20/CC/24	14/01/25 not investigating	---	---	---

**C. Dispensations Applications - County Councillors**

There are no requests for dispensations.

**D. Ombudsman Wales – Our Findings**

Details of cases are available in [Ombudsman Wales - Our Findings](#)  
It should be noted that “Our Findings” covers all matters investigated by the Ombudsman and not just Code of Conduct matters. “Our Findings” is updated on a monthly basis.

‘Our Findings’ contains a search facility, which includes “Subject”. Under the “Subject” heading the following categories of the Code are listed:

- Integrity
- Promotion of equality and respect
- Disclosure and registration of interest
- Duty to uphold the law
- Selflessness and Stewardship

**E. Adjudication Panel for Wales**

Details of cases considered by the APW are available via the following link:  
[Decisions | The Adjudication Panel for Wales \(gov.wales\)](#)

**F. National Forum for Standards Committees**

The last meeting was held on 27 January 2025. The Chair attended and his notes are attached in Appendix 1.

The next meeting is on 23 June 2025.

**G. Independent review of investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales [PSOW] into Code of Conduct complaints**

The Committee is advised that the PSOW has accepted all the recommendations from the Independent Review and the lessons learned will be used to further strengthen internal policies and practices, recruitment, and training.

**H. Meeting Dates**

To note the meeting dates for 2025. Meetings to start at 2pm.  
9 April – annual meeting with Group Leaders  
18 June  
13 October



Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Clive Pinney – Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer	01597 826746	01597 826220	<a href="mailto:clive.pinney@powys.gov.uk">clive.pinney@powys.gov. uk</a>

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## **National Standards Committee Chairs Forum - Wales**

**Monday 27 January 2025, 14.00 – 16.00 (Online)**

### **NOTES**

#### **Pamela Lucas – Local Government Policy Development**

Response to report.

Legal say immediate action can be taken on

Removing the restriction on ex employees becoming members of the SC. Some discussions on any grace period, and if working in a restricted posting to 2-5 years

Removing restrictions on former councilors joining SCs. Period of grace between the two still to be discussed.

Some concern expressed that the balance of the committee should be in favour of the Independents.

Legal says more work is needed in these areas.

More work is needed on APW reforms.

Investigations where a Councillor may be going under

Safeguards around suspension for complainant and councillor

Permissions to appeal to APW

Sanctioning powers

APW/SC to summon witnesses

Express power to maintain the anonymity of witnesses

Considering is being given as to whether the range of sanctions should be changed. WG have been working with UK gov. A consultation on this finished yesterday. Some consideration is being given to withholding access to services and withholding allowances.

Implementation of anything will be at least 8 months away.

**Michelle Morris – PSOW**

Independent Review –

High level of Code of Conduct work continues. Trying to keep to a minimum those that go over 12 months. There are 12 left over from the previous year. Currently it looks to be the same.

Currently there are some 100 cases, 20 of these from two councils. She has written to chair of SC to advise them and see what action can be taken.

More cases referred to APW or SC, the most in recent times. About 20 referrals this year.

Some appeals this year. If reasons are not made clear then it is very difficult for the judge to refuse an appeal.

Gave evidence to government committee. Training needed for all councillors, especially Town & Community Councillors. In particular in relation to their clerks.

Dr McCullough asked the PSOW to give further consideration as to when the those investigated should be notified. Currently this is only done if there is an investigation. Only 15% investigated. Around the UK there is no consistency on this point. There was some discussion on this point.

### **Monitoring Officer Group**

Any T&C group that has not signed up to the civility and respect programme should be written to, to sign up.

Justine's report on cases was useful and should continue.

Consideration is being given to a National Standards Conference in S Wales. However, there is no finance to support an in person meeting.

The Local Government Democratic Conference is due on the 5th March. Only small part will be devoted to standards so unlikely to be worth SC attending.

## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

## Standards Committee

12 February 2025

**REPORT BY:** Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer

**SUBJECT:** Annual review of acceptance of gifts and hospitality by Members, 2 February 2024 – 5 February 2025

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The Committee is asked to complete the annual review.

**2. Background**

2.1 Section 18 – Code of Conduct for Members states in Paragraph 9

“You must –

(b) avoid accepting from anyone gifts, hospitality (other than official hospitality, such as a civic reception or a working lunch duly authorised by your authority), material benefits or services for yourself or any person which might place you, or reasonably appear to place you, under an improper obligation.”

2.2 Paragraph 17 states members must, within 28 days of receiving any gift, hospitality, material benefit or advantage above a value specified in a resolution of your authority, provide written notification to the monitoring officer, of the existence and nature of that gift, hospitality, material benefit or advantage. Paragraph 18.5.6.1 states:

“Where you accept any gift or hospitality which you estimate to have a market value or cost of provision of £25 or greater, (or where you accept a working lunch of the type described in paragraph 3.1 (vi) above where the cost or value exceeds £10) you must, as soon as possible after receipt of the gift or hospitality, make a declaration in writing to the Monitoring Officer officer...”.

**3 Record of gifts and hospitality**

3.1 Appendix 1 is a link to the records for the 10 Members who have declared receipts of gifts and /or hospitality for the period 2 February 2024 – 5 February 2025. These records are available to the public on the members’ pages on the Council website.

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Reason for Recommendation:</b>
<b>1. To note the report.</b>	<b>To ensure the Committee undertakes an annual review of the acceptance of</b>

	<b>gifts and hospitality by Members as part of its work programme.</b>
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<b>Relevant Policy (ies):</b>			
<b>Within Policy:</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Within Budget:</b>	<b>Y</b>

<b>Relevant Local Member(s):</b>	<b>N/A</b>
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<b>Person(s) To Implement Decision:</b>	<b>Clive Pinney</b>
<b>Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:</b>	

<b>Contact Officer Name:</b>	<b>Tel:</b>	<b>Fax:</b>	<b>Email:</b>
Clive Pinney – Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer	01597 826746	01597 826220	<a href="mailto:clive.pinney@powys.gov.uk">clive.pinney@powys.gov.uk</a>

**Gifts and hospitality recorded on website 2 February 2024 – 5 February 2025:**

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Baynham, Beverley, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Charlton, Jackie, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Davies, Angela, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Dorrance, Matthew, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Hall, Claire, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Jones, Joy, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Lewington, Pete, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Mitchell, Gary, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Powell, William, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

[Cyngor Sir Powys County Council - Gifts and hospitalities - Wilkinson, Jonathan, 2 February 2024 - 5 February 2025](#)

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## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

Standards Committee 12 February 2025

**REPORT BY:** Nigel Steward, Independent (Lay) Member**SUBJECT:** Annual reporting by Group Leaders relating to compliance with the Council's Code of Conduct

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**REPORT FOR:** Discussion and Decision

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 The Committee is asked to consider undertaking a trial of an alternative set of documentation to support Group Leaders when they undertake their personal annual review of compliance with the Council's Code of Conduct.

**2. Background**

2.1 The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (The Act) imposes requirements upon Political Group Leaders to promote compliance with the Code of Conduct amongst its members, and to report the steps taken to the Standards Committee.

2.2 The Standards Committee has worked with the Group Leaders for the last two years to fulfil the requirements of the new Act and in 2024 it was considered that it was an appropriate time to review the initial set of documentation and associated process which fed into the Committee's Annual Report. The initial set of documentation was based upon one prepared by the Chair and one used by other Welsh Local Authorities.

2.3 A meeting on 30 October 2024 between the Standards Committee and Group Leaders concluded that there was scope to improve the clarity and consistency of the information being shared by Group Leaders. It was also agreed that there could be clearer guidance to encourage the ongoing development of compliance with the Code of Conduct.

**3. Proposed Changes to information gathering and annual reporting**

3.1 Since that meeting a new style "*Health Check Form*" (Appendix A), together with a set of "*Guidance Notes*" (Appendix B) has been created and subsequently shared with members of the Committee and Group Leaders, all of whom have all been given the opportunity to contribute to the proposed design.

3.2 The proposed documentation:

- Has simplified the look and style of the template.
- Has been redrafted to replace open styled questions with prescriptive "expectations" of behaviours.

- Provides each Group Leader with the opportunity to undertake a personal self-assessment and to simply state whether their Group: “Meets, Partly Meets or Does Not Meet” the requirement of the “expectation” – This, in turn, will provide members of the Standards Committee with an immediate “flag” as to the health of the “expectation”.
- The remaining elements of the proposed form now encourage the Group Leader to provide evidence to substantiate their “Personal Grading” and to consider how they would develop the particular aspect of compliance with the Code of Conduct, within their Group.
- Finally, the new form enables Group Leaders to indicate a level of priority that the action would have alongside the other pressure and workload within their respective Group.

#### 4. Annual Report

4.1 The review also considered how actions arising from the Group Leader’s “Health Check” could be summarised and then followed up by the Standards Committee.

4.2 There is a view that the Committee should not be seen to be interfering with the day to day tasks of the Group Leaders, however, there could be some benefit to all if the Committee’s Annual Report was enhanced to include an overview of the proposed actions by Group Leaders and for any follow up to be embedded into the Committee’s Annual Work Plan.

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
<p>1. To note the report.</p> <p>2. To require the Monitoring Officer to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Implement the trial documentation, for one year only in order to support Group Leaders undertake their Annual Review on compliance with the Code of Conduct and to arrange to review the process at a meeting later in the year.</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. Enhance the Annual Report by including a summary of actions outlined by the Group Leaders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide greater clarity and support to Group Leaders.</li> <li>▪ To improve consistency of reporting.</li> <li>▪ To develop the Standard’s Committee – Annual Report.</li> </ul>

Relevant Policy (ies):	Code of Conduct
Within Policy: Yes	Within Budget: Yes

Relevant Local Member(s):	N/A
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Clive Pinney
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Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	9 April 2025
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<b>Contact Member Name:</b> Nigel Steward	<b>Tel: c/o</b> 01597 826206	<b>Fax:</b> -	<b>Email: c/o</b> carol.johnson@powys.gov.uk
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# **Powys County Council**

## **Standards Committee**

### **Group Leaders' Code of Conduct Health Check**

#### **Promoting compliance with the Council's Code of Conduct**

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**Political Group:** [Insert Group Name Here]

**Dated:** 9 April 2025



## Statistical Summary of Code of Conduct Training Undertaken (To be completed by officers)

Total number of members in the Group:	0
Total number of members who have completed the annual training:	0
Date of last Group meeting when the Register of interests of members was last reviewed:	[Date to be inserted by Group Leader]

## Statistical Summary of the Source and Level of Complaints:

	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW (*)
		1	2	3	
<b>Public</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Officers</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Councillors</b>	0	0	0	0	0

(\*) Public Service Ombudsman Wales

# Key Steps taken by the Group Leader to promote compliance with the Council’s Code of Conduct and the Seven Nolan principles

(\* ) The Actions in Column E are to be prioritised (High | Medium | Low) in Column F to indicate the level of importance over the next year.

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A Reference	B Key Control / Expected Activity	C Adequate steps in place  (Delete as appropriate)	D You are encouraged to describe what you have personally done and what you <u>actually</u> achieved during the past 12 months to substantiate your “self-assessment grading” in Column C	E You are encouraged to outline the actions to be considered to over the next 12 months to continue the ongoing development of your Group relating to the Code of Conduct (If appropriate)	F Priority (*) to be given to future actions outlined in Column E (If appropriate)
<b>A.</b>	<b>All Group members are encouraged to attend relevant development and training relating to equalities and standards including the Council’s Code of Conduct and where appropriate, received the recommended training for that Committee.</b>				
001	The Group Leader actively demonstrates personal commitment to and attends relevant development or training relating to equalities and standards including on the Code of Conduct.	Yes No Partial N/A		<b>Who</b> will be responsible <b>What</b> is being proposed? and <b>When</b> will it be completed?  e.g. The Group Leader will ensure that ????? is implemented no later than dd/mm/yyyy.	Low Medium High N/A
002	The Group Leader actively encourages group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards including in relation to the Code of Conduct.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A

A Reference	B Key Control / Expected Activity	C Adequate steps in place  (Delete as appropriate)	D You are encouraged to describe what you have personally done and what you <u>actually</u> achieved during the past 12 months to substantiate your “self-assessment grading” in Column C	E You are encouraged to outline the actions to be considered to over the next 12 months to continue the ongoing development of your Group relating to the Code of Conduct (If appropriate)	F Priority (*) to be given to future actions outlined in Column E  (If appropriate)
003	The Group Leader ensures nominees to a Committee all receive the recommended training for their role and the Committee.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A
<b>B. Group Leaders’ are to encourage a culture within the Group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity and reduces the risk of poor behaviour.</b>					
004	Group Leaders promote civility and respect which supports high standards of conduct and integrity within group communications, meetings and in formal Council meetings.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A
005	Group Leaders support informal resolution procedures in the Council, and work with the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer to achieve local resolution.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A
006	Group Leaders encourage a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A

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A Reference	B Key Control / Expected Activity	C Adequate steps in place  (Delete as appropriate)	D You are encouraged to describe what you have personally done and what you <u>actually</u> achieved during the past 12 months to substantiate your “self-assessment grading” in Column C	E You are encouraged to outline the actions to be considered to over the next 12 months to continue the ongoing development of your Group relating to the Code of Conduct (If appropriate)	F Priority (*) to be given to future actions outlined in Column E (If appropriate)
<b>C.</b>	<b>Group Leaders are to work with the Standards Committee and / or together to collectively support high standards of conduct within the Council.</b>				
007	Group Leaders should attend a meeting of the Council’s Standards Committee, if requested, to discuss Code of Conduct issues.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A
008	Group Leaders should drive forward work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee concerning improving standards.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A
009	Group Leaders should work with the Standards Committee to proactively identify, consider and tackle patterns of inappropriate behaviour.	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A
0010	Group Leaders should work together with other Group Leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the Council and where any issues identified involve more than one	Yes No Partial N/A			Low Medium High N/A

<b>A</b> Reference	<b>B</b> Key Control / Expected Activity	<b>C</b> Adequate steps in place  (Delete as appropriate)	<b>D</b> You are encouraged to describe what you have personally done and what you <u>actually</u> achieved during the past 12 months to substantiate your “self-assessment grading” in Column C	<b>E</b> You are encouraged to outline the actions to be considered to over the next 12 months to continue the ongoing development of your Group relating to the Code of Conduct (If appropriate)	<b>F</b> Priority (*) to be given to future actions outlined in Column E (If appropriate)
	political group.				

Reference	<b>Addition Information and evidence</b> (Only to be used in exceptional circumstances where it is deemed appropriate to provide further detail that would support the “Health Check” process)

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**Powys County Council**

**Standards Committee**

**Group Leaders' Code of Conduct Health Check**

**Promoting compliance with the Council's Code of Conduct**

**Support and Guidance  
for Group Leaders**

**Last Updated: February 2025**



# Section 1 | Items to consider

The purpose of this document is to assist Group Leaders in completing their annual Code of Conduct Health Check Return. Together with the Council's Code of Conduct, you are encouraged to use this guidance alongside, any documentation, rules and advice supplied by your own Party or support mechanism.

## Preparation

# 1

Group Leaders are advised to consider:

- What has gone well in their Group during the past 12 months.
- What has gone not so well during the past year.
- Any external factors and/or pressures that may have an impact on their members within the context of the Code of Conduct.
- Areas for improvement or ongoing development.

## Writing the report

Group Leaders are encouraged to keep to the parameters of the report:

# 2

- **Column C** asks you to provide a “one word” personal assessment as to whether you are meeting the particular Compliance.
- **Column D** then requests that you provide examples or evidence to substantiate your “one word” personal assessment.
- **Column E** is not mandatory, but provides the opportunity for the Group Leader to provide a SMART description of a task or area of improvement to be considered during the forthcoming year. i.e. **Who** will be responsible **What** is being proposed? and **When** will it be completed?
- **Column F** then asks you again for a “one word” response to indicate the level of priority to be given to the new idea or initiative.

## Meeting with the Standards Committee

Group Leaders are advised to consider:

- Who will attend with them such as their Group Whip.
- What will be the main points they wish to get across at the meeting.
- Whether it is best to attend in person or online.

# 3

Group Leaders are also encouraged to consider this meeting as:

- A time of mutual benefit
- An opportunity to share concerns, and
- How they and the Standards committee can work better together.

# Section 2 | Background Information

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (The Act) imposes requirements upon Political Group Leaders to promote compliance with the Code of Conduct amongst its members, and to report the steps taken to do so to the Standards Committee.

The guidance issued by Welsh Government in relation to the new duties outline the steps that could be taken by Group Leaders to fulfil these obligations. These can be summarised as follows:

## **The role of Group Leaders during this task**

Group Leaders are subject to two statutory duties under the Act

- To promote good standards of behaviour amongst their group members
- To co-operate with the Standards Committee

Group Leaders could be deemed to be bringing their office into disrepute under the councillors' Code of Conduct by not fulfilling the duties.

Group Leaders:

- Should prepare their report in time for the scheduled meeting in April/May of the Standards Committee;
- Already take some steps to prevent matters escalating. These are informal & confidential and so should not be publicly or individually reported.

Furthermore, the report should not mention specific cases and will only refer to the type of actions undertaken as set out in Section 1 of this Guidance Document.

## **The role of the Standards Committee during this task**

The Standards Committee is under a duty to prepare and submit an annual report to Full Council at the meeting following the AGM (typically in June or July) in which it must comment on levels of compliance as set out in the new Act.

The Standards Committee in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer and Group Leaders have developed a template to enable Group Leaders describe areas of good practice as well as those areas or areas of concern they consider to require further development.

To enable the Standards Committee to retain independence from operational matters it will ask Group Leaders to report once per year. However, if there are urgent matters during the year, these can be reported to the Monitoring Officer, who will liaise with the Committee Chair.

The Committee will meet with each Group Leader in private to consider their report. The Committee may also seek the view of the Monitoring Officer.

Group Leaders may consider it appropriate to include their Group Whip when preparing their return as well as inviting them to attend the meeting with the Standards Committee.

The Standards Committee's annual report will contain a short summary of the steps it has taken to fulfil its duty and will provide an opinion on whether sufficient action has been undertaken to meet the expectations of the new Act. Where appropriate, the Committee may recommend future tasks to be undertaken etc.

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## Standards Committee Work programme

### Standing items on agendas:

- Monitoring Officer report – Code of conduct training, Attendance, Referral of Councillors to Public Services Ombudsman, Dispensation requests.
- Other items – Ombudsman Wales – Our Findings reports and Committee's Work Programme and National Standards Forum.
- Code of Conduct, standards and ethical issues at Council meetings - On a rota basis, Independent Members to observe Council meetings and report back to Committee
- Guidance / briefing notes for Group Leaders on emerging topics - to highlight issues around any emerging topics to support Group Leaders in their role

### 12 February 2025

Topic	Objective	Who is responsible	Outcome
Monitor and review the acceptance of gifts and hospitality by Members	To review the register	Committee	Complete an annual review
Group Leaders duties	To agree the revised form and guidance to be used by Group Leaders in preparation for the for the 2025 meeting with the Committee	Committee and to consider feedback from Group Leaders and Monitoring Officer	Support the annual review process with Group Leaders

### 9 April 2025

Topic	Objective	Who is responsible	Outcome
Annual meeting with Group Leaders regarding duties	To monitor compliance by Group Leaders and assist them in their duties	Committee and Monitoring Officer	

### 18 June 2025

Topic	Objective	Who is responsible	Outcome
Annual report	Approval of Annual report for submission to Council	Committee	Presentation of Annual report at the Council meeting on 10 July 2025

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Monitor members' attendance at relevant meetings	To review members attendance at relevant meetings and consider any whose attendance is below 60%	Committee	Complete an annual review
Oversee the Register of Interest of Members, Co-opted members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives and Officers	To review the Register of Interest	Committee	Complete an annual review
General Dispensations	To review the use of General dispensations over the previous 12 months	Committee	Complete an annual review.
Whistleblowing Policy	To review an anonymised report on the number of whistleblowing cases and outcomes over the previous 12 months	Committee	Complete an annual review

### **13 October 2025**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Oversee the Council's rules and protocols on accountability of members	Review Section 21 [Protocol on Member / Officer Relations] and Section 25 [Local Resolution Process] of Constitution	Committee	Two yearly review [previous review October 2023]

### **Standards Community Sub-Committee Work programme**

**Standing items on agendas:**

- Monitoring Officer report – Referral of Councillors to Public Services Ombudsman, Dispensation requests.
- Other items – Ombudsman Wales – Our Findings reports and Committee’s Work Programme

**12 February 2025**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	<b>Outcome</b>

**18 June 2025**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	<b>Outcome</b>

**13 October 2025**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	<b>Outcome</b>

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