

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**Standards Committee  
23 June, 2021**

**REPORT BY:** Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**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**

**A1 Code of Conduct Training**

Mid-term mandatory Code of Conduct training was arranged for 5 June, 2020. However, due to the pandemic and the Council concentrating on business critical work, the session was cancelled.

A session was provided via Teams on 2 December, 2020 by Bethan Evans, Governance Training and Consultancy. The training was attended by Councillors, Independent Members of Standards Committee and Town and Community Council members of the Standards Community Sub-Committee and Independent Members on Scrutiny Committees. The session was recorded and was forwarded to the 16 Councillors who were unable to attend the session. One councillor is still required to complete this training.

**B. Members attendance**

Attendance for Members at main Committees for the period 14 May 2020 to 12 May 2021 has been calculated. No Councillors have attendance below 60%.

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

**C1. County Councillor Referrals**

The current position regarding matters with the Ombudsman is as follows:

04/CC/2019	Ombudsman deciding whether or not to investigate
05/CC/2019	Not investigating
06/CC/2019	Concluded not investigating
08/CC/2019	Not investigating
09/CC/2019	Not investigating
10/CC/2019	Not investigating
11/CC/2019	Not investigating
01/CC/2020	Not investigating

02/CC/2020 Ombudsman investigating  
03/CC/2020 Not investigating  
04/CC/2020 Not investigating  
05/CC/2020 Not investigating  
06/CC/2020 Not investigating

## **D. Dispensations**

### **D1 Applications - County Councillors**

An application for dispensation has been received from County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan on 4 March 2021 as follows:

“I would ask that the Standards Committee consider my request for special dispensation for all Cllrs who are farmers, or those closely related to the agricultural sector, to enable them to partake in any discussion surrounding my motion regarding wool.

The motion places emphasis on facilitating innovation, adding value and creating new enterprises using Welsh wool as done in New Zealand. Hence, whilst the overall aim is to boost the market and utilisation for wool, it does not directly relate or benefit any individual farmer and no direct link could be placed between the potential effects of this motion and the overall price of wool for any individual farmer, bearing in mind that wool is a international commodity and sold at open online auctions.

Also, if someone claimed that personal gain could be derived as a result of this motion, then likewise the argument could be made that those other Cllrs who are consumers have a vested interest in keeping the price of wool down. That would mean that nobody could partake in the discussion.

Whilst considering this motion, i suggest that the same principle is taken into consideration with other similar farming related matters. Should similar motions on eg adding value to crops or food products, diversification or environmental changes such as Rewilding or alike come forward, unless individuals have a clear direct benefit as result of that motion then that dispensation is automatically given. It makes a mockery for those that have a understanding of such matters not to be able to partake in a discussion although it's clear they don't benefit directly.

Hence, I ask you to consider giving a dispensation for this motion and the wider treatment of similar motions in future in order to facilitate a mature and open discussion.”

## **E. Late Payment of Expenses**

There are no late claims for expenses.

## **F. Independent lay Member on Standards Committee**

An independent member vacancy still exists on the Committee. Interviews had been arranged for February 2020 but as a result of two members of the shortlisting/interview panel advising that they knew some applicants, the shortlisting meeting was postponed and was to be rescheduled. However, due to Covid 19 and the Council moving into business critical work, this has not taken place.

The Council agreed the recruitment process at its meeting on 23 January, 2020 and a copy of the report and process is attached Appendix 1. A new timetable for the shortlisting/interview process is being developed.

Applications will be considered by an Appointments Panel of five members:

- two of the current Independent (Lay) Members of the Standards Committee,
- one of the four county councillors sitting on the Standards Committee,
- one Town/Community Councillor sitting on the Standards Community Sub-Committee

and one lay person [High Sheriff] who will act as Chair.

The Standards Committee is requested to nominate Members of the Committee to sit on the Appointments Panel.

#### **G. Ombudsman's Casebook**

The Ombudsman has published Code of Conduct Casebooks for the following periods:

- October – December 2019
- January – December 2020

A copy of the Casebooks are attached at Appendix 2.

Back copies of the casebooks can be accessed from the website of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at: [Casebooks](#)

#### **H. The North Wales Standards Committee Forum**

A meeting of the above is being held on 24 June, 2021. The main topic for discussion is the review of the Ethical Framework [including the code of conduct] which has been commissioned by the Welsh Government. Information regarding the review is attached at Appendix 3.

#### **I. Standards Conference Wales**

The Wales Standards Conference did not take place in October in 2020 due to the pandemic and will hopefully now take place in October 2021. Further details will be provided as soon as they are available.

**J. Monitoring of Complaints handling**

The Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 requires that in future the Council's Governance and Audit Committee must review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively. This was a function that the Standards Committee undertook but can no-longer undertake due to the 2021 Act.

The Council's Constitution was amended by full Council on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to reflect the requirements of the 2021 Act.

**K. Correspondence - None**

**L. Meeting dates**

To note the next meeting:  
Wednesday 13 October 2021 – 1400hrs

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