

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

REPORT FOR: Discussion and Decision

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>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>b. Enhance the Annual Report by including a summary of actions outlined by the Group Leaders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To provide greater clarity and support to Group Leaders. ▪ To improve consistency of reporting. ▪ To develop the Standard’s Committee – Annual Report.

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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