

Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

REPORT TO: Ethics & Standards Committee

DATE: 05 June 2023

TITLE: Political Group Leaders Compliance Assessment

PURPOSE OF REPORT: For information

BACKGROUND

Group leaders are subject to two new statutory duties:

- i. To take reasonable steps to promote and maintain good standards of behaviour amongst their group members
- ii. To co-operate with the Standards Committee in the exercise of the standards committee's functions.

Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021: S62

Group leaders could be deemed to be bringing their office into disrepute under the councillors' code of conduct by not fulfilling the duties; duty does not make group leaders accountable for behaviour of their members.

The Ethics & Standards Committee is under a duty to:

- a) monitor compliance by leaders of political groups on the council with their duties, and
- b) to advise, train or arrange to train leaders of political groups on the council about matters relating to those duties.

Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021: S63

The Ethics & Standards Committee is also under a duty to prepare an annual report which:

- a) must include the committee's assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the council have complied with their duties, and
- b) may include recommendations or comment on levels of compliance with these new duties

The Ethics & Standards Committee retains independence from operational matters and will ask Group Leaders to report once per year. The Committee thereafter meet with each group leader informally to explore their report.

The Ethics & Standards Committee Chair' annual report will contain:

- a) short summary of steps taken by group leaders to fulfill the duty,
- b) its opinion on whether sufficient has been done,

- c) any recommendations as to what may be done by group leaders to fulfill their duties,
- d) any recommendations as to what may be done to evidence the group leaders' actions,
- e) any recommendations as to what may be done to improve the reporting mechanism,
- f) what additional training if any is required,
- g) any future pieces of work that might be undertaken etc.

CURRENT POSITION:

Group leaders completed their reports by 30/4/23. A workshop took place with each group leader individually on 15/5/23 with:

- Cllr Bryan Davies (Plaid Cymru)
- Cllr Elizabeth Evans (Liberal democrats)
- Cllr Gareth Lloyd (Independent group)

The Committee assessed the extent to which whether political group leaders had :

1. taken reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by group members
2. co-operated with the Committee in exercise of its functions
3. any training needs

The Committee' assessment was that:

1. The group leaders had taken reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by group members , and had done so in a meaningful way, albeit that there was a lack of supporting evidence and metrics within the reports.

Whilst the PGLs thought they had done enough to promote and maintain good standards of behaviour amongst their group members, this was not evidenced adequately. The responses subjective and vague, and did not focus on the Code of conduct.

2. The group leaders had complied with their duty to co-operate with the Committee in exercise of its functions
3. All Group Leaders should ensure that their group members complete the on-line social media training.

Recommendations or comment on levels of compliance with these new duties:

- All Group Leaders should ensure that their group members complete the on-line social media training.
- That additional training should be provided for 2023/2024 to ensure Group leaders completed the templates adequately, with more metrics and evidence.
- Continue to engage with the Ethics and Standards Committee, Monitoring Officer in proactive way.

- Continue to engage with other group leaders to learn from and support each other in promoting positive behaviours.
- Continue to use group meetings to provide opportunities for informal mentoring.
- Continue to use group meetings to share cases and lessons learned and consider including APW/PSOW cases as a standing item.
- Recommend to members that they should not sign petitions.

RECOMMENDATION (S): To note the current position that will be included in the Ethics and Standards Annual Report

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):

The recommendations are necessary to ensure compliance with the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021

Contact Name: Elin Prysor
Designation: Monitoring Officer
Date of Report: 19 May 2023
Acronyms: