

CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to:	Council
Date of meeting:	13 July 2023
Title:	Annual Report from the Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee 2022/23
Purpose of the report:	For Council to note the work of the Ethics and Standards Committee during 2022/23
For:	Information
Cabinet Portfolio and Cabinet Member:	Councillor Matthew Vaux, Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Housing, Legal and Governance and Public Protection

Background

An Annual Report of the Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee has been prepared and presented to Council since 2018.

Requirements-from May 2022

From May 2022, the Ethics and Standards Committee are required to make an annual report to the Authority as soon as practicable after the end of each financial year (meaning period of 12 months ending with 31 March) in respect of that year, pursuant to S63 **Local Government & Election (Wales) Act 2021**.

The annual report will have to describe how the committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year.

The Council must then consider the annual report made by its standards committee before the end of 3 months beginning with the day on which the authority receives the report.

Content

The report will have to include a summary of—

- a) what has been done to discharge the general and specific functions conferred on the committee by section 54 or 56 of the 2000 Act, namely its functions including:
 - promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the authority, and
 - assisting members and co-opted members of the authority to observe the authority's code of conduct.
 - advising the authority on the adoption or revision of a code of conduct,
 - monitoring the operation of the authority's code of conduct, and
 - advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members of the authority on matters relating to the authority's code of conduct.

- b) reports and recommendations made or referred to the committee under Chapter 3 of the 2000 Act. This will include:
 - PSOW references to Monitoring Officer
- c) action taken by the committee following its consideration of such reports and recommendations;
- d) notices given to the committee under Chapter 4 of the 2000 Act, This will include Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) recommendations.

In addition, the annual report now includes the committee's **assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups of the Council have complied with their duties** under section 52A(1) of the 2000 Act (as inserted by S62 of the 2021 Act), during the financial year.

These are to:

- 1)(a) must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group, and
- (b) co-operate with the council's standards committee (and any sub-committee of the committee) in the exercise of the standards committee's functions.
- 2) have regard to any guidance about their functions issued by the Welsh Ministers.

The annual report should also make reference to the way the committee has discharged its new functions (set out in S62):
of—

- (a) monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups on the council with their duties under section 52A(1), and
- (b) advising, training or arranging to train leaders of political groups on the council about matters relating to those duties."

The annual report may also include recommendations to the authority about any matter in respect of which the committee has functions.

Current Position

The Annual Report from the Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee for 2022/23 has been prepared and is attached (Appendix A).

Council is requested to note the Annual Report as presented, which outlines the work of the Ethics and Standards Committee during 2022/23.

The Annual Report will be published on the Council website.

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why	N/A This report is not related to a new Policy or change in service
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Wellbeing of Future Generations:

Summary:	
Long term:	N/A
Collaboration:	N/A
Involvement:	N/A
Prevention:	N/A
Integration:	N/A

Recommendation(s):	That Council: 1)notes the contents of the report, and 2) considers the contents of the Annual Report from the Chairman of the Ethics and Standards Committee 2022/23 (Appendix A).
Reasons for decision:	To inform the Council of the work of the Ethics and Standards Committee during 2022/23
Overview and Scrutiny:	Not applicable. The Ethics and Standards Committee endorsed the report at its meeting on the 05 June 2023
Policy Framework:	Not applicable
Corporate Priorities:	Not applicable
Financial implications:	None
Statutory Powers:	Local Government Act 2000 Local Government & Election (Wales) Act 2021.
Background Papers:	Code of Conduct Guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Appendices:	Appendix A – Ethics and Standards Committee Annual Report 2022/23
Corporate Lead Officer:	Corporate Lead Officer: Legal and Governance & Monitoring Officer
Reporting Officer:	Elin Pryor
Date:	20 June 2023

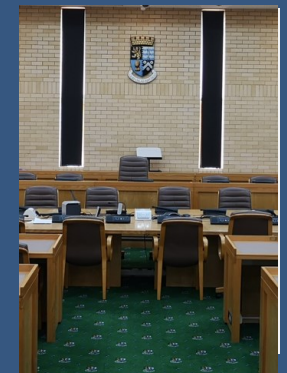
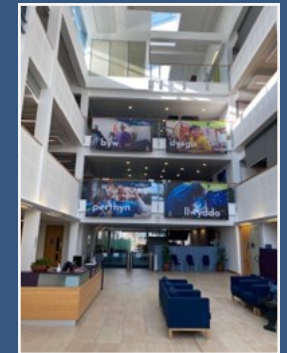
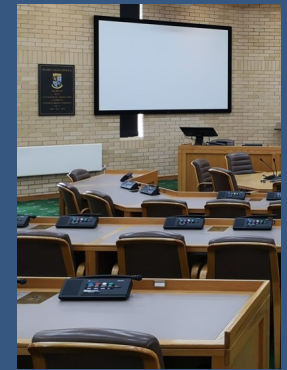


Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn y Gymraeg



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THE TEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

Selflessness – Members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.	Personal judgement – Members may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.
Honesty and integrity – Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly, and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.	Respect for others – Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.
Objectivity – Members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefit.	Duty to uphold the law – Members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.
Accountability – Members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.	Stewardship – Members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently, and in accordance with the law.
Openness – Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.	Leadership – Members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

“Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life”



1. FOREWARD FROM THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

I am pleased to present this annual Ceredigion Ethics and Standards Committee report which provides an overview of its work during the period of 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

Following the Local Elections (May 2022), we welcomed County Councillors Caryl Roberts and Gwyn Wigley Evans and Community Councillors Jan Culley and Delyth James, as the four new members.

The Local Elections involved significant training opportunities to develop Councillors' understanding of the Code of Conduct. We welcomed the positive reactions to training sessions from Town and Community Council Clerks, new and returning County Councillors and the new Group Leaders. The Committee also benefited from refresher training and from detailed consideration of how to deal with complaints referred to

the Ethics and Standards Committee.

There have been Ethics and Standards Committee Meetings for the consideration of Councillors applications to engage in discussions where they have a prejudicial interest. The Committee has appreciated the time given by a number of those Councillors who attended, in person or remotely, to provide additional information and answer questions regarding their applications.

This is the first year that the report includes formal reference to the Group Leaders' work on promoting high standards within the groups. We thank them for their work in this area and for their engagement with the new

reflective practice requirements.

As ever, the Committee's work relies heavily on the support it receives, particularly from the Monitoring Officer, the Scrutiny and Standards Officer and supporting staff. This year, this has involved additional work related to the Local Elections, new requirements on the Group Leaders and with the hybrid meeting arrangements. The Committee wishes to record its thanks for all of the support it has received. As I complete my tenth, and final year, as an Independent Member of this Committee I thank my fellow Committee members for their high level of commitment to the Committee's work. I wish Miss Caryl Davies well in her role as Chair.

Caroline White
2022/23 Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee,



Ms Caroline White
Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee 2022/23



Mr John Weston

Vice Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee 2022/23

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE & VISION STATEMENT

The Council has established an Ethics and Standards Committee in accordance with the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 (2001/2283) (as amended (2006/1849), 2007/951).

COMPOSITION

Membership

The Ethics and Standards Committee is composed of nine members. Its membership comprises of: Five 'independent' members, who are not Councillors or Officers or the spouse of a Councillor or an officer of this Council or any other relevant authority as defined by The Regulations, appointed in accordance with the procedure set out in the Regulations; Two County Councillors [other than the Leader of the Council and any member of the Cabinet]; Two members of Town and Community Councils wholly

or mainly in the Council's area ('Community Committee members')

Term of Office

Independent members are appointed for a term of not less than four nor more than six years. They may be re-appointed for one further consecutive term not exceeding four years. Two Independent Members were appointed and took up office in 2021/22.

Members of the Council who are members of the Ethics and Standards Committee have a term of office until the start of the next local government election following their appointment.

A Community Committee member would have a term of office until the next ordinary local government election following their appointment.

Quorum - A meeting of the Ethics and Standards Committee shall

only be quorate when: at least three members are present, and; at least half the members present (including the Chairperson) are Independent Members.

Community Committee

Members - A Town/Community Committee member shall not take part in the proceedings of the Ethics and Standards Committee when any matter relating to their Community Council is being considered;

Chairing the Committee

An Independent Member must chair the Ethics and Standards Committee.

The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected by the Members of the Ethics and Standards Committee for whichever is the shorter of the following periods:- a period of not less than four nor more than six years, or

until the term of office of that person as an Independent member of the Ethics and Standards Committee comes to an end

If the Chair is absent from a meeting of the Ethics and Standards Committee then the Vice Chair of the Committee, if present, shall preside. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee are absent from a meeting of that Committee, such Independent member of the Ethics and Standards Committee as the members of the Committee present shall choose shall preside.

VISION STATEMENT

"Our Vision is that the people of Ceredigion will have trust and confidence that all those elected to office in Local Government in our county will work to the highest ethical and moral standards in serving their community"

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

01 April 2022– 06 May 2022

Committee Member	Term of Office	Term as Chair & Vice Chair
Mrs Caroline White Chair Independent Member	01/08/13-30/7/23	Chair 19/05/21-30/07/23
Mr John Weston Independent Member	22/02/18-21/02/24	Vice Chair 19/05/21-30/07/23
Ms Carol Edwards Independent Member	22/02/18-21/02/24	
Mr Alan Davies Independent Member	26/09/21-26/09/27	
Miss Caryl Davies Independent Member	26/09/21-26/09/27	
Councillor Dai Mason Ceredigion County Council	05/05/17- Local Government elections May 2022	
Councillor Odwyn Davies Ceredigion County Council	05/05/17- Local Government elections May 2022.	
Councillor Julian Evans (Community Council Representative)	05/05/17- Local Government elections May 2022	
Councillor Gill Hopley (Community Council Representative)	05/05/17- Local Government elections May 2022	

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

06 May 2022– 31 March 2023

Committee Member	Term of Office	Term as Chair & Vice Chair
Mrs Caroline White Chair Independent Member	01/08/13-30/7/23	Chair 19/05/21-30/07/23
Mr John Weston Independent Member	22/02/18-21/02/24	Vice Chair 19/05/21-30/07/23
Ms Carol Edwards Independent Member	22/02/18-21/02/24	
Mr Alan Davies Independent Member	26/09/21-26/09/27	
Miss Caryl Davies Independent Member	26/09/21-26/09/27	
Councillor Caryl Roberts Ceredigion County Council	Local Government elections May 2022	
Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans	Local Government elections May 2022	
Councillor Jan Culley (Community Council Representative)	Local Government elections May 2022	
Councillor Delyth James (Community Council Representative)	Local Government elections May 2022	

MEMBERS OF THE ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Chair



Caroline White is a retired teacher. Caroline's 26-year teaching career included many whole school management responsibilities, latterly as Assistant Head. She now works as a Study Skills Tutor at Aberystwyth University.

Caroline was appointed as an Independent Member of the Ethics and Standards Committee in August 2013 and was elected as Vice-Chair, from February 2018, and then as Chair, from May 2021.

Vice-Chair



John Weston was a Town Planner, and was then employed by the WAO as a performance auditor, retiring in 2013; undertaking audits within Councils in Wales and also with Welsh Police and Fire and Rescue services.

John was appointed as an Independent Member of the Ethics & Standards Committee from February 2018 and was elected as Vice-Chair from May 2021



Independent Member as from
the 26/09/21

Caryl Davies is a former Director of Student Support Services and Head of Careers at Aberystwyth University. A Welsh speaker, Caryl is also a member of the Carmarthenshire Standards Committee; a fitness to practice lay panel member and chair for Social Care Wales; and a lay representative for Health Education Improvement Wales.



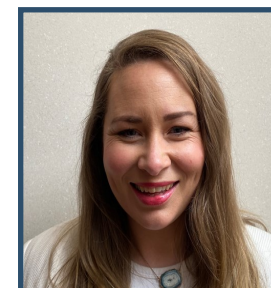
Independent Member as from
the 01/02/18

Carol Edwards qualified as a Chartered Librarian from the Librarian College in Aberystwyth. worked for Clwyd County Council, Ysbyty Llwynhelyg (as a medical librarian) and then back to Aberystwyth at the National Library for Wales for over 20 years, and as Head of Department from 2010-2013. Carol is currently a Governance Manager and Clerk of the Board of Trustees for the National Library for Wales.



Independent Member as from
the 26/09/21

Alan Davies is originally from London, with parental roots in Ceredigion, he is married, with 2 sons and lives in Aberaeron. He is a fluent Welsh speaker and regularly comments for TV and radio on military, defence, peace and security matters. He is currently active in developing the Space Sector in Wales and has led many significant business growth and change initiatives. His early career was in the Army, retiring as a Major after 18 years of service, where he was responsible for strategic military planning for global intervention operations and rescues.



Councillor Caryl Roberts

Caryl Gruffydd Roberts was elected as County Councillor for the Trefeurig Ward in 2022. She was elected Chair of the Healthier Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Since her election she has established the Penrhyn-coch Youth Club for young people aged 11-15, and the club is going from strength to strength.

Caryl graduated in Law and Politics from Cardiff University. Caryl is currently a Senior Business Development Manager for the Farmers' Union of Wales in Penrhyn-coch and is a former presenter of the S4C television programme 'Fferm Ffactor'. Caryl is a soloist with a local choir in Aberystwyth called Sgarmes and enjoys performing on stage and television.



Councillor Gwyn Wigley Evans has developed his career over 50 years in textiles supplying the high street with garment, curtain and upholstery fabrics world-wide, today manufacturing work and promotion wear in North Macedonia and farming in Llanddeiniol

A Cruse Bereavement voluntary counsellor of 23 years, school governor and community councillor at Llanrhystud and Llangwryfon

Elected County Councillor for Llanrhystud Ward in May 2022, at the same time elected Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Thriving Community Committee and member of the Ethics and Standards Committee.



Community Council representative)

Councillor Delyth James is a Senior Statistician working in the Welsh Government Office for Science.

Trefeurig Community Councillor since 2017.

Appointed to the Ethics & Standards Committee in 2022

Photo to follow

Community Council representative)

Councillor Jan Culley

Llangoedmor Community Councillors since 2022

Appointed to the Ethics & Standards Committee in 2022

4. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Ethics and Standards Committee had the following roles and functions:

- promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors,
- assisting the Councillors, Co-opted Members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;
- advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;
- 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;
- Granting dispensations to Councillors, Co-opted Members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to

interests, as set out in the **Members' Code of Conduct 2016 edition; Section (81(4) & (5) of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001 (2001/2279).**

- 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; as set out in (section 73(1) **Local Government Act 2000, Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001 (2001/2281) (as amended; 2009/2578), and the Local Government (Standards Committee, Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (2016/85).**

- the exercise of the above in relation to the Community Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those Community Councils; (Section 56(1) Local Government Act 2000) to appoint an appeals panel of three, with a majority of independent members, one of whom would act as Chairperson, with regard to complaints made by members of the public under the Council's complaints procedure
- Monitoring compliance by political group leaders of duty to promote high standards of conduct by councillors in their group and co-operate with Committee in exercise of its functions

Examples of the type of work carried out by the Ethics and Standards Committee may include

- Involvement in developing training materials on the Code
- attendance at and

participation in training sessions on the Code for both the County Council and Community Councils

- attendance at Council and Committee meetings to observe proceedings
- Engage in national debate on Standards and Procedures

5. THE COMMITTEE'S WORK IN 2022/23

1. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION

Dispensations) (Wales) Regulations 2001 (Reg. 2)

Year	Number of applications received	County Council applications	Town Council Applications
2017/18	23	10	13
2018/19	21	9	13
2019/20	15	13	12
2020/21	17	11	6
2021/22	18	10	8
2022/23	13	4	9

The most common grounds for which the Committee granted dispensations were:
d) the nature of the member's interest is such that the member's participation in the business to which the interest relates would not damage public confidence in the

conduct of the relevant authority's business

f) the participation of the member in the business to which the interests relates is justified by the member's particular role or expertise.

Of the 7 dispensations granted:
0 were granted to speak only
7 were granted to speak and vote

Of the dispensations granted:

7 were granted for a term of up to 12 months
0 were granted for a term of up to 6 months
0 were granted for a specific meeting

2022/23

The Committee had considered 13 applications from County and Community and Town Councillors during the year.

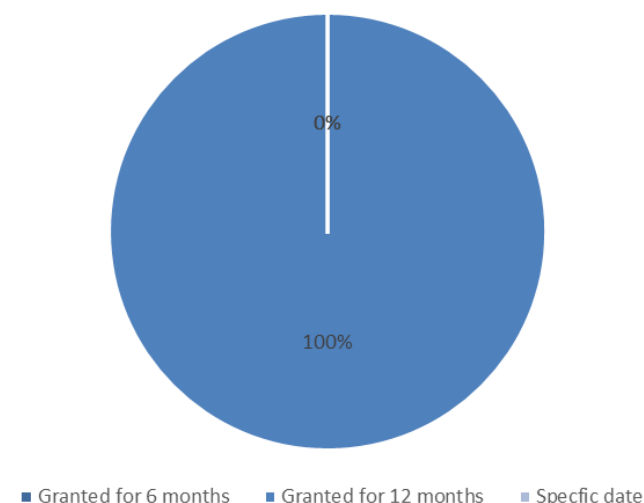
7 were granted
6 were deferred
0 were refused
0 were withdrawn

Of these:

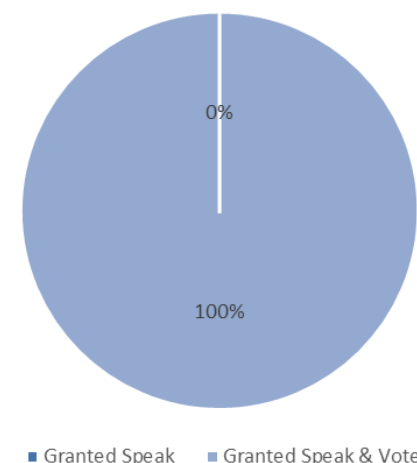
- County Councillors: 4
- Town & Community Councillors 9

The grounds upon which the Committee may grant a dispensation are set out in the Standards Committee (Grant of

Overview of Applications granted 2022/23



Overview of Applications granted to Speak only & Granted Speak & Vote



DISPENSATIONS (continued)

Dispensations lapse automatically at the end of the fixed term. Any applications for extensions of time are treated as new applications in order to ensure that Members properly review the need and grounds for dispensation

The Committee approaches each application on its merits.

Details of the applications dealt with by the Committee can be viewed as part of the agenda/minutes of the meetings of the Committee which are accessible on Ceredigion County Council's website:

<http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees/committees/ethics-and-standards/>

Applicants were encouraged to attend Committee meetings to present their case.

During 2017/18 2 Members attended Committee in person

During 2018/19 2 Members attended Committee in person

During 2019/20 2 Members attended Committee in person.

During 2020/21 1 Member attended the Committee (via video conferencing)

During 2021/22 5 Members attended the Committee (via video conferencing)

During 2022/23 2 Members attended the Committee

2. ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES

The Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) is an independent tribunal that has been set up to determine alleged breaches against an authority's statutory Code of Conduct by elected and co-opted members of Welsh County, County Borough and Community Councils, Fire and National Park Authorities.

At the meeting held 25 May 2022, was AGREED to note the decision that had been circulated on email as follows on the decision for Councillors Bishop, P Morgan, W Owen and D Poole

It was AGREED at the meeting of the 13 October 2022 to note the decisions of former Councillor Paul Dowson, Pembrokeshire CC, Former Councillor Gordon Lewis, Pencoed Town Council, Former Councillor Caryl Vaughan, Llansantffraed Community Council.

3. UPDATE ON THE PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN

It was AGREED to note the Code of Conduct decisions presented since the publication of the last Casebook at the 25 May 2022 meeting. Members agreed with the new format of presenting this information. This information would also be circulated to Group Leaders and used as training material.

At the 13 October 2022 meeting, it was AGREED to note the content of the report for information and that the report would also be circulated to the Clerks of the Town and Community Councils for information.

It was AGREED at the 25 January 2023 meeting to note the decisions to Duty to uphold the law : Llandovery Town Council and promotion of equality & respect : Ceredigion County Council.

4. ETHICS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

At the 25 May 2022 meeting consideration was given to the revised Hearing Procedure document. Following discussion, it was AGREED to the document for approval by Council on 07 July 2022 subject to amending the numbering. The flow chart in relation to the Hearing Procedures would also be circulated to Members.

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

It was AGREED to note the Forward Work Programme as presented at the 25 May 2022 meeting. The Chair reported that a meeting should be held prior to the 02 November 2022. The Monitoring Officer highlighted the resource implications of arranging urgent meetings and the need for Members to arrange their work accordingly to ascertain if they require a dispensation. It was reported that this meeting was due to be held in July but was brought forward. A meeting in September or October would be requested instead of the November meeting.

It was agreed that the MO Trends, Self-Evaluation and the Training plans for Town and Community Councils be added to the next meeting.

It was also agreed that the Action Log of today's meeting would be presented at the next meeting; as was recommended by the Governance and Audit Committee.

At the 13 October 2022 meeting, it was AGREED to note the content of the Forward Work Programme subject to:-

- Further consideration be given to Political Group Leaders attending all meetings of the committee, and for a mechanism that the Monitoring Officer could report on their behalf presenting evidence of the work they had done in relation to promoting standards.

- Flintshire County Council had provided its template for Group Leaders to complete. This could be adapted and reported to the committee accordingly.

- Review of the Vision statement

- Training Programme for Town and Community Councils would be requested from Clerks to ascertain if Code of Conduct training would be mandated

- That the Chair and Vice Chair together with Officers would be considering the Committee's Self-evaluation as the guidance had not yet been received

At the 25/1/23 meeting it was AGREED to note the content of the Forward Work Programme .

6. OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2021/22

It was AGREED at the 13 October 2022 meeting to note the content of the report. A request would be made by the Monitoring Officer for the Ombudsman to add an additional column where a case had been referred but not been investigated.

7. S 62-63 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021

At the meeting of the 25 January 2023 political group leaders were invited to the meeting to:

- discuss the methods of promoting and maintaining high standards by conduct by Members of Ceredigion County Council to include the duties required under S 62-63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021
- to exchange views on promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in Ceredigion.

It was reported that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 placed new duties on leaders of political groups and standards committees and contains the relevant sections, namely s62 and s63.

S.52A Local Government Act 2000) states that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council in Wales must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group; and must co-operate with the council's standards committee.

In section 54 Local Government Act 2000 (functions of standards committees), a standards committee of a county council or county

borough council in Wales also has the specific functions of—

- (a) monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups on the council with their duties under section 52A(1), and
- (b) advising, training or arranging to train leaders of political groups on the council about matters relating to those duties

It was reported that the political group leaders of Ceredigion County Council were invited annually to the Ethics and Standards Committee to discuss the methods of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of Ceredigion County Council.

The political group leaders stated that they welcomed this guidance, as it was a reference for them to confirm that the standards were being adhered to.

The political group leaders emphasised the importance of the Committee's work in promoting high standards of conduct and reported on their group meetings in which issues of standards were discussed; and the need to respect Council officers and vice versa.

7. S 62-63 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ELECTIONS (WALES) ACT 2021 (cont)

It was also noted that advice was always available to Members from the Monitoring Officer and Standards Officers on email and in person.

It was agreed to provide refresher Code training

8. RECRUITMENT

At the 25 May 2022 meeting, the following was agreed:-

Succession planning-lay member

Consideration was given to the Report upon the Succession planning-lay member. Following discussion, it was AGREED to recommend to Council to approve:

(i) the role description, person specification and criteria (as set out in Appendix)

(ii) Membership of the Selection Panel as follows:

- Chair of the Council(in absence Vice Chair);
- Independent/Lay Panel member (nominated by the Monitoring Officer)
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Ethics and Standards Committee (or other

independent members nominated by the Monitoring Officer as necessary)

- Town and Community Council representative nominated by One Voice Wales; and

(iii) change the title of job description to role description in the Appendix

Town/Community Council Councillor recruitment-update

It was AGREED to note the update provided and during the process that gender balance of the committee be considered, if possible during appointment.

The two new Town and Community Council representatives, Councillors Delyth James and Jan Culley attend their first meeting on the 13 October 2022.

9. COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT OF GROUP LEADER'S COMPLIANCE

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.

2The 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 within 6 months

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.

10. TRAINING

Town and Community Clerk training had been held on the 27 April 2022 with 30 Clerks in attendance. WLGA notes had been provided to the Clerks in order for them to facilitate training to their respective Town/Community Council

Members of the Ethics and Standards Committee had been trained on the Role and Responsibilities of the Committee on the 24 May 2022

Training on the Hearing Procedure was held on the 30 September 2022

Training for Group Leaders was held on the 06 June 2022

Training for Aberystwyth Town Council and Borth Community Council had been requested, Members of the Committee were encouraged to assist with this training once arranged.

To note that One Voice Wales had Code of Conduct training available to all Town and Community Councillors

That new training modules were available for Independent Members on the new E-Learning Platform, however, confirmation was required if this training was available to Town and Community Council Clerks and Councillors, once the content of the training material is known.

The need to possibly minimise the amount of train-

ing on the Code of Conduct over a period of time in order for Town and Community Councillors to absorb the complex information presented.

Clerks would be contacted to ascertain if they preferred online or face to face training.

It was also noted that many Clerks did not feel comfortable in providing this training to their respective Councils.

The Monitoring Officer had requested a copy of Town and Community Councils Training Programme in order to ascertain if the Code of Conduct training had been provided. It was noted that the Standing Orders and the Local Resolution Process had previously been requested. It was noted that as all County Councillors attend Town and Community Councils to promote the training available.

11. COUNCILLOR COMPLAINT TRENDS

2021/22

Consideration was given to the Councillor Complaint Trends 2021/22 at the 25 May 2022 meeting. It was AGREED to note the report for information; and in future a report of trends would be presented, possibly with more general detail if the Monitoring Officer found this acceptable. Also; Group Leaders would be involved on the outset of any complaints of their Councillors in the future; due to their new responsibility of appraising trends and improving standards during the new administration.

12. CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEES (GENERAL) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2021

At the 13 October 2022 meeting, the Monitoring Officer reported that it had been confirmed in the Full Council meeting in July that Councillor Gwyn Evans would become a member of the Corporate Joint Committee Standards Sub Committee. A second County Councillor will be appointed in the 20 October meeting.

At the 25 January 2023 meeting it was reported that at the Council meeting the following day, confirming the approval the appointment of Gail Storr as independent / lay person of the Ethics and Standards Committee with effect from 30 July 2023 up to 27th July 2029.

13. HEARING PROCEDURE

A Hearing Procedure workshop had been held on the 30 September 2022

14. UPDATE ON CODE OF CONDUCT MATTERS

At the 13 October 2022 meeting, it was AGREED to note the content of the report for information subject to the committee being informed in future reports of any trends that had increased/decreased. The Committee noted the increase in recent years of trends relating to social media and online abuse.

15. OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL LETTER 2021/22

It was AGREED to note the content of the report at the 13 October 2022 meeting. A request would be made by the Monitoring Officer for the Ombudsman to add an additional column where a case had been referred but not been investigated.

An update was provided at the 13 January 2023 meeting, the request for an additional column in the table within the Ombudsman Annual Letter where a case had been referred but not been investigated had been sent to the Ombudsman office. They had reported that they would consider this in their next Annual letter.

16. ALL WALES CHAIR STANDARDS FORUM

It was reported at the 13 October 2022 that a meeting may be held prior to the Christmas period. The terms of reference was currently being reviewed and the Powys and Ceredigion MOs would attend alternately at the meeting. The Chair, or Vice-Chair, will also attend the meeting.

The All Wales Chair Standards Forum was held on 27/1/23. Ceredigion CC and Powys CC Monitoring Officers are providing alternative support to the Committee.

The next meeting would be held on the 30 June 2023 and the WLGA were proposing that Chairs and Vice-Chairs would be provided training. The Penn consultation had been discussed with an opportunity to respond formally to it.

17. HARMONISATION OF GIFTS HOSPITALITY THRESHOLDS ACROSS ALL WELSH AUTHORITIES

Harmonisation of gifts/hospitality thresholds across all Welsh Authorities

It was reported that consideration was being given amongst Monitoring Officers in Wales whether it was appropriate to seek the views of Standards Committees upon agreeing a common threshold figure amongst all Welsh authorities for consistency. Many authorities had shown an interest in a unified approach. The views of Standards Committee was being sought as to whether there was any support for such a move, and what the common value should be. As the Ceredigion County Council level (£21) was currently less than the common denominator (£25), the views of the Committee was sought as to the merits in agreeing an in-principle view on increasing the Ceredigion County Council threshold from £21 to £25.

The committee voted:

1 Against

2 Against

3 Against

4 Against

Following discussion, it was also AGREED that:

Whilst consistency agreed in principle, local variation was acceptable.

The Committee discussed whether any gifts should be accepted by Members as well as the cumulative impact of gifts which individually fall below the threshold. The threshold for acceptance of gifts by Council Members and Officers should be in-line with each other.

Further consideration would be given to this proposal by the Committee and would also be placed on the Forward Work Programme for consideration. Also potentially by the Democratic Services Committee as necessary. Changes to the Code could only be made by Council.

18. MONITORING OFFICER CODE OF CONDUCT UPDATE Q3 (SEP-DEC 2022)

An update was provided to the Committee on the 25 January 2023 regarding complaints activity and recent trends. It was AGREED to note the content of the report.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT – MONITORING OFFICER'S REPORT

All County Councillors, Town/Community Councillors and Co-opted Members are required to abide by the Code of Conduct for Councillors adopted by the Council which conforms to the mandatory requirements of the Model Code of Conduct issued by the National Assembly for Wales.

Complaints relating to an allegation that a County Councillor had breached the Code should be sent to the Ombudsman directly and/or to the Council's Monitoring Officer (MO)

The Ombudsman publishes a guidance on the PSOW website on how to make a complaint about an elected member on a Factsheet.

The WLGA has e-learning training modules available for Councillors on the All Wales Academy, including Ethics and Standards (Councillor Development), and Social Media Guidance.

The Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) published a Sanctions Guidance during 2019

The PSOW may decide that the MO should investigate a complaint, or may ask the Council's Ethics & Standards (ES) Committee to make a determination. Options available to the ES Committee include no further action, censure and

suspension for up to 6 months.

If the Ombudsman investigates an allegation of a breach of the Code and concludes that a breach has occurred The Ombudsman will forward a report of his findings to the Monitoring officer and to the Councillor concerned.

If the Ombudsman considers that the breach is serious it may be forwarded to the Adjudication Panel for Wales who has the power to disqualify a councillor for up to 5 years.

The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 received Royal Assent during 2020/21. S62 of the Act sets out additional duties for political group leaders, to uphold standards of conduct, effective from May 2022.

It should be noted that complaints by Officers against Members are not always made directly by the Officer concerned, who may not wish to pursue a formal complaint. Where concerns are drawn to the attention of the Monitoring Officer/Chief Executive, those cases will be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer (and if appropriate the Chief Executive) who may make enquiries and provide advice/action as appropriate. The Monitoring Officer will investigate as necessary.

1.Complaints received

PREVIOUS YEARS -The table below shows an analysis of complaints received between 2018-2022:

County Councillors	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Member on Member	0	0	1	1
Public on Member	9	3	11	4
Officer on Member	4	8	4	5
Self-referrals to PSOW	0	0	0	0
Total	13	11	16	10
Town/ Community Councillors				
Member on Member	0	2	1	4
Public on Member	4	2	4	1
Officer on Member	0	0	0	1
Total	4	4	5	6

Code of Conduct – Monitoring Officer's Report

CURRENT YEAR: 2022/23

Brought forward: 3

The Monitoring Officer considered 27 complaints against Members in relation to the Code of Conduct.

Of these:

18 were against County Councillors

9 were against Town/ Community Councillors.

MO recommended sanctions:

apology

training

advice/reminder of Councillor obligations under Code

County Councillors	Number of complaints received
Member on Member	0
Public on Member	7
Officer on Member	10
Members self-referral	1
Clerk of Town and	0
Community Council	
Monitoring Officer referral	0
Sub-total	18
Town and Community Councillors	
Member on Member	3
Public on Member	3
Officer	0
Clerk	2
Monitoring Officer referral	1
Sub-total	9
TOTAL	27

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Reports issued by PSOW		7	6	4	8	Matters brought forward =3 New:2
County Council	Of these:	4	5	0	4	2-lack of evidence
	Declined to Investigate/					
	Closed after initial consideration:	2	5	0	0	0
	Decision Notice New power 22/23	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Decision Notices-1. not to investigate
	Investigation:	0	0	Data not available	0	3
	Discontinued:	1	0		0	0
	Outcomes:	3	1	Data not available		0
	No evidence of breach	1				
	Technical breach	0				1:4(b) breach but no action as no longer a Councillor
	Breach	0				
Referral to APW		0	0	0	1	1 x Interim powers
Ongoing				Data not available	3	2

		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Town/Community Council	Of these:	3	No data available	No data available	1	0
	Declined to Investigate/Closed after initial consideration:					0
		3				
	Investigation: Discontinued:	0			0	0
	No Evidence of breach:	0			1	0
	No Further Action	0				0
	Of those investigated resulted in sanctions					0
	Resulted in no sanction	0				Referral to APW x1
		0				
	Sanctions/actions included: advice given to member to modify behaviour					
	Outcomes:					
	No evidence of breach				1	0
	Technical breach					0
	Breach					1-
					1	1
	Referral to APW					
	Referral by Monitoring Officer to PSOW				1	1

3. Nature of complaints

	County Council	Town and Community Councils
2017/18-2019	<p>The majority of complaints against County Councillors related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bullying •Lack of respect/ consideration/ courtesy for others •Lack of impartiality •Improper use of delegated powers •Conflict of interest •Standards of Conduct, including inappropriate parking, delay in paying Council Tax •Using position to gain an advantage •Disclosure of confidential information •Failure to reply to an enquiry •Acting without authority •Improper use of delegated power •Failure to disclose personal/prejudicial interests •Standards of conduct eg inappropriate parking, comments made in meetings and inappropriate communication •Attempting to compromise officers impartiality •Social Media postings by Councillors eg complaints about officers and services. •Development Control Committee decisions. 	<p>Complaints included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •perception of lack of transparency in Council meetings, •improper meeting procedures eg voting, quorum, failure to adequately record decisions, failure to publish minutes and register of interests •failure to disclose personal/prejudicial interests •discrimination <p>Some of the complaints above were attributable to acts/omissions of clerks.</p>
2019/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social Media postings •Failure to declare an interest •Improper use of delegated powers •Lack of respect/ consideration/ courtesy for officers – including Development Control Committee/Scrutiny meetings •Lack of respect for the Chair of a public meeting-Scrutiny Committee •inappropriate comment regarding Officers. 	No data available

County Councils		Town and Community Councils
2020/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social Media postings •Inappropriate behaviour •Lack of respect/consideration/attitude •Planning decision •swearing •Bringing Council into disrepute •Poor culture •Failure to declare interest •Nuisance/harrassment •Physical assault •failure to disclose prejudicial interests •disclosure of confidential information •failure to take action 	No data available
2021/22	<p>Social media postings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poor culture/attitude •Swearing •Lack of respect/consideration-officers/clerk •Bullying •Spreading false information •Threatening behaviour •Lack of respect/ consideration/ courtesy for officers •Inappropriate conduct •Discrimination-of minority group •disrespectful, impolite or offensive language by Councillors n public meetings has increased-more swearing. •Overstepping role •Unrealistic demands on officers •Demanding behaviour •Perceived failure to declare interest •Inappropriate sexual conduct •Harassment •Bringing office or authority into disrepute •Perceived failure to act •Disclosure of confidential information-social media/public meeting •Criminal conviction •Failure to hear advice 	No data available

County Councils

Town and Community Councils

	<p>Lack of impartiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Inappropriate use of Council resources •Democratic process deficit •Subject to Safeguarding process •Racist comments •Negative relationships 	No data available
2022/23	<p>Social media postings-inappropriate comments</p> <p>Breach of confidentiality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poor culture/attitude •Swearing <p>Aggressive demeanour towards member of public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of respect/ consideration/ courtesy for officers •Inappropriate conduct <p>Failure to declare interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discrimination-of minority group •disrespectful, impolite or offensive language by Councillors in public meetings •Overstepping role •Unrealistic demands on officers •Demanding behaviour •Perceived failure to declare interest •Inappropriate sexual conduct •Harassment <p>Stalking</p> <p>Intimidation of officers</p> <p>Using role of councillor to advantage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Bringing office or authority into disrepute •Perceived failure to act •Disclosure of confidential information-social media/public meeting •Criminal conviction •Failure to heed advice •Lack of impartiality •Inappropriate use of Council resources 	<p>Poor relationship with clerk</p> <p>Intimidation of clerk</p> <p>Lack of respect /consideration towards clerk</p> <p>Poor relationship with fellow councillors</p> <p>Subject to criminal /police investigation</p> <p>Social media-inappropriate postings/comments</p> <p>Criminal conviction</p> <p>Lack of consideration and respect in meetings</p> <p>Swearing</p> <p>Spreading false information about fellow councillors or clerk</p> <p>Failure to declare interests</p> <p>Failure to act in accordance with Code following declaration of interests</p>

County Councils

Town and Community Councils

- Subject to Safeguarding process
- Subject to criminal/police investigation
- Racist comments
- Negative relationships
- Criticising authority in press
- Criticising officers in public meetings
- Inappropriate comments in email to officers
- Failure to amend Register of Interests within time limit
- Failure to disclose Trustee or Directorships

No data available

4. Monitoring Officer Advice

The Monitoring Officer regularly provides informal advice orally, or in writing to County Councillors on various issues within the Code of conduct including personal/ prejudicial interests. This advice is given orally, or in writing.

Advice can be a preventative measure, or in anticipation of a potential breach, or following a breach in consideration of mitigation.

Town/Community Councillors

Occasionally advice may be given to Town/Community Councillors as necessary.

There is an expectation that Town/Community Councillors consult their clerk in first instance.

The Monitoring Officer will provide advice to Clerks and Town/community Councillors as necessary

Queries include advice on:

- meeting process/procedure
- conflicts of interest
- breach of Code of Conduct
- complaint process
- declarations of interest
- Councillors committing criminal offences/being convicted

Advice may be given to clerks to Town/community Councils, by telephone,

email or face to face.

In 2022/23 the Monitoring Officer gave advice to :

- Clerks x 3: (x 4 matters)
- Councillors x 3 (x3 matters)

Most of Town/Community Councils within the Ceredigion area are subscribed to One Voice Wales and may therefore seek advice from that source.

	Formal Advice	Informal Warning/ advice	Formal Warnings (e-mail/ letter)	Face to Face / remote meetings with members of public	Face to face meeting was undertaken with a Town/ community clerk	Nature of Advice	Sanctions	Local Resolution Procedure
2018-19 County Councillors	5	0	1					
2018-19 Town & Community Council	5	0	0	1	1			
2019-20 County Councillors	3	Numerous/ Varied	1			Some issues considered by the Monitoring officer relate to pre-emptive advice by the Monitoring officer in relation to disclosures of interest: X 6.	member apology in writing to the officer or member member apology to the officer or member in public meeting	
2019-20 Town & Community Councils		2					Queries include advice on: Public meeting process/ procedure conflicts of interest conduct of a councillor meetings with members of the public: 0	

2020-21 County Council	4	1 informal advice- numerous/ varied. Some issues considered by the Monitoring officer relate to pre-emptive ad- vice by the Moni- toring Officer in relation to disclo- sures of interest	1					1
2021-22 Town and Community Councils						Advice was also given to clerks of Town/ Community Councils, and mem- bers of the public.		
2022-2023 County Councils	8	Various/ numerous	2	0	n/a	Refrain from action	Training	0
2022-2023 Town and Community Councils	0	2	0	0	2	Self-referral Declaration of interest PSOW proce- dure		0

2022-2023

County Council

- informal advice- numerous/varied.

Some issues considered by the Monitoring officer relate to pre-emptive advice by the Monitoring Officer in relation to disclosures of interest

- formal advice : 3
- informal warnings: numerous
- formal warnings (e-mail/letter): 2
- Local Resolution Procedure:0

Sanctions included:

- member apology in writing to the officer or member
- member apology to the officer or member in public meeting

Advice/reminder of Councillor obligations under Code

Training eg safeguarding, social media, diversity

Town/Community Council

informal advice- numerous/varied.

Some issues considered by the Monitoring officer relate to pre-emptive advice by the Monitoring Officer in relation to disclosures of interest

- Local Resolution Procedure referrals :0

There was x1 Town/Community Council case referred by the Monitoring Officer to the PSOW during 2022/23.

5.The Ethics & Standards Committee -Hearing Panels

There were no Ceredigion County Council Councillor cases referred by the PSOW to the Ethics & Standards Committee during 2022/23.

There were no Town/Community Council case referred by the PSOW to the Ethics & Standards during 2022/23.

6.Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW)

There was no Ceredigion County Council case referred by the PSOW to the APW during 2022/23.

This was an Interim Powers report.

Outcome: ongoing

There was x1 Ceredigion Town/Community Council case referred to the APW during 2022/23.

Outcome: 15m disqualification and Code training within 3m

7. PSOW referrals to the Monitoring Officer for investigation 2022/23

There were no cases referred to the Monitoring Officer by the Public Service Ombudsman Wales for investigation by the Monitoring Officer during 2022/23

Summary

The standard of conduct by Ceredigion County Council Members generally is to be commended. Complaints were mainly by member of the public and officers against Members

Whilst lack of respect/courtesy continues to be an issue, the relationship between Ceredigion County Council Officers and Members has improved, with less instances of bullying, intimidation and/or lack of respect/courtesy than previously.

Examples of disrespectful, impolite or offensive language by Councillors in public (or private) meetings has increased-more swearing.

More councillors have been subject to criminal investigation

Two councillors have been subject to Safeguarding / Professional Concerns Strategy procedures

Councillors need to be particularly careful of use of language during remote meetings, with increased use of microphones and less awareness of comments being overheard

Councillors are largely aware of the need to declare interests, and do so in a timely and appropriate way. Advice is sought from the Monitoring Officer at appropriate times.

The use of social media as a forum for Councillors making representations/expressing views is continuing to increase. This has occasionally brought the Council into disrepute.

Poor culture/relationships is a continuing issue in some Town/Community Councils.

The Monitoring Officer recommendation :

- that all new Members receive refresher training on the Code of Conduct
- that some members would benefit from additional training on social media, data protection (including the responsibility of Councillors as data controllers) and safeguarding
- Members continue to be more cognisant of the need to consider whether they have an interest, and declare any interest in communication/correspondence with officers.

8. Correspondence with Group Leaders
Group Leaders received copies of relevant cases and information.
Group Leaders attend the

Committee at least once annually.
The Monitoring Officer meets with the Group
· leaders quarterly

9. Annual update on the Register of Interest

An email dated the 01 April 2022 from the Monitoring Officer was circulated to Members requesting them to carry out an annual review of their Register of Interests Booklet , at the end of the financial year. Members were therefore requested to review the online version of their Register of Interests for the entire year 2022/23 (1/4/22-31/3/223

If there were no new interest/changes , Members emailed to confirm “No changes.”
If there were new interests/changes, Members emailed to confirm that there were changes, and provided details of these changes.

The original booklets were re-signed and re-dated and each reply, and booklet were reviewed by the Monitoring Officer .
As part of its Statement of Accounts work, Audit Wales sought clarification as to whether Members were Trustees or Directors of organisations in relation to related-party interests.

Some Councillors took many months to reply to requests for information or to return amended Registers .

These arrangements are inspected regularly by external auditors.

10. Hospitality Register

During 2022/23 there were no declarations of hospitality from Councillors.

7. LOCAL RESOLUTION PROCESS

The Local Resolution Procedure is intended to sit alongside the Code, enabling behaviour which may not reach the threshold of referral to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has indicated, in her Guidance for Members on the Code of Conduct, that she expects local authorities across Wales to implement local resolution procedures to deal with low level complaints which are made by a member against a fellow member.

Complaints which will be considered under such a procedure will typically concern alleged failures to show respect and consideration for others (paragraph 4(b) of the Code) or the duty not to make vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints against other members (paragraph 6(1)(d) of the Code).

Members may still complain directly to the Ombudsman about a fellow member, but complaints relating to

the above paragraphs of the Code of Conduct are likely to be referred to the Authority for consideration under a local resolution procedure.

The Ombudsman believes that informal and local resolution of such complaints will:-

- speed up the complaints process
- ensure that resources are devoted to the investigation of serious complaints

- resolve matters at an early stage so as to avoid the unnecessary escalation of the situation which may damage personal relationships within an authority and an authority's reputation

The Welsh Government has expressed the view that there is scope for a more local approach to the resolution of low level complaints and that such processes might be implemented by all local authorities in their codes as adopted

The Chair contacted One Voice Wales (OVW) regarding the statement in their guidance in relation to the issues that must be directed to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales include "Vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints"; as PSOW had been informing Councils that he did not wish to see an increase in these sort of cases.

The Monitoring Officer also contacted PSOW on the issue.

The outcome was the OVW amended their Model Local Resolution Protocol.

The process involves a referral to the relevant Group Leaders (or to the Chair of the Council in the event of a complaint against a Group Leader or unaffiliated member), who would try and resolve the issue in the first instance.

The following is the link to the

Members' Local Resolution Procedure :

<https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees/ethics-and-standards/ethics-and-standards-code-of-conduct/>

Operation

During 2022-2023 there were no referrals to the Local Resolution procedure . As such its operation cannot be assessed.

Impact:

During 2022-2023 there were no referrals to the Local Resolution procedure . As such its impact cannot be assessed.



8. POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places new duties on leaders of political groups and standards committees, namely s62 and s63.

With regard to the duties of leaders of political groups in relation to standards of conduct, (S.52A Local Government Act 2000) states that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council in Wales must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group; and must co-operate with the council's standards committee.

In section 54 Local Government Act 2000 (functions of standards committees), a standards committee of a county council or county borough council in Wales also has the specific functions of—

- (a) monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups on the council with their duties under section 52A(1), and
- (b) advising, training or

arranging to train leaders of political groups on the council about matters relating to those duties.

S.63 inserts the requirements for the standards committee annual report. As well as describing how the committee's functions have been discharged the report must also include what has been done to discharge the general and specific functions conferred on the committee by section 54 or 56. An annual report by a standards committee of a county council or county borough council in Wales must include the committee's assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the council have complied with their duties under section 52A(1). The annual report may also include recommendations to the authority about any matter in respect of which the committee has functions.

The political leaders of Ceredigion County Council were invited annually to the Ethics and Standards Committee to discuss

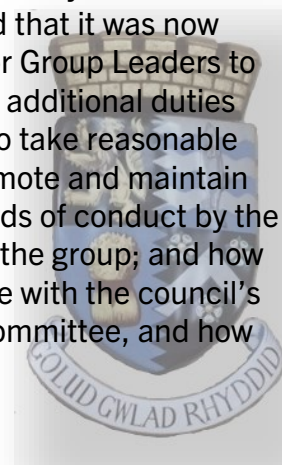
the methods of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of Ceredigion County Council.

It was reported that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 placed new duties on leaders of political groups and standards committees and contains the relevant sections, namely s62 and s63.

With regard to the duties of leaders of political groups in relation to standards of conduct, (S.52A Local Government Act 2000) states that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council in Wales must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group; and must co-operate with the council's standards committee. In section 54 Local Government Act 2000 (functions of standards committees), a standards committee of a county council or county

borough council in Wales also has the specific functions of—
(a) monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups on the council with their duties under section 52A(1), and
(b) advising, training or arranging to train leaders of political groups on the council about matters relating to those duties

It was reported that the political leaders of Ceredigion County Council were invited annually to the Ethics and Standards Committee to discuss the methods of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members of Ceredigion County Council. It was reported that it was now necessary for Group Leaders to consider the additional duties upon them to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group; and how to co-operate with the council's standards committee, and how



POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS

this can be evidenced.

The political leaders stated that they welcomed this guidance, as it was a reference for them to confirm that the standards were being adhered to.

All the Leaders of the Council's Political Groups emphasised the importance of the Committee's work in promoting high standards of conduct and reported on their group meetings in which issues of standards were discussed; and the need to respect Council officers and vice versa.

It was also agreed that arrangements be given to providing refresher training on the Code soon, as the amount of training provided on all aspects of the Council following the election was vast.

It was also noted that advice was always available to Members from the Monitoring Officer and Standards Officers on email and in person.

It was reported that Political group leaders were subject to two new statutory duties under the Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021:

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

The Ethics & Standards Committee is also under a duty to:

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

these new duties.



FUTURE PRIORITIES

The priority areas the Ethics and Standards Committee to consider in 2023/24:

- Code of Conduct Training Refresher for clerks of Town and Community Councillors
- Code of Conduct Training Refresher for County Councillors
- Annual meeting with Political Group Leaders
- Update Members Register of Interest on the new Democratic Services System, Modern.gov
- Proactive approach to working collaboratively with other relevant standards organisations and keeping up with best practice
- Committee Members attend other Committee meetings of the Council to observe and familiarise themselves With proceedings and conduct.
- Implement changes set out in Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 relevant to the Ethics and Standards Committee:
Part 4 sections S62 Conduct of members imposed additional duties on political group leaders, to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members, effective from May 2022.
- Consider Statutory Guidance
- Succession Planning-new independent /lay members

ATTENDING THE COMMITTEE

The Council is keen to see Members of the public attend Ethics and Standards meetings

With the exception of confidential items, all business is held in public.

All of the public agenda papers are published online 3 working days in advance of the meeting <http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-committees/committees/>

CONTACT US

If you wish to find out more about the Ethics and Standards Committee or make a comment or suggestion, please contact us:

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