

## **Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council**

**REPORT TO:** Ethics & Standards Committee

**DATE:** 11 July 2024

**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 high standards of conduct by the members of their group
- 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 15/4/24. A workshop took place with each group leader individually on 29/4/24 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:

- 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;
- Political Group Leaders engage and co-work with the Ethics and Standards Committee;
- It is positive that there are not a high number of referrals to PSOW;
- Include mandatory training on the compliance template;
- Include additional training which the Ethics and Standards Committee has asked for on the compliance template;
- Members that have not already done social media training, should do so (if they use social media)
- Political Group Leaders are to share PSOW and APW reports with their group and discuss at group meetings;
- The Political Group Leaders found the monthly meetings with the Monitoring Officer very effective and gratefully received.

- The following amendments to the compliance template were proposed:
  - Amend the template to make it easier to use and for Political Group Leaders to provide the information that the Ethics and Standards Committee require;
  - reword headings;
  - make it more structured;
  - Yes/no comments evidence box;
  - Ensure the template is not too open ended;
  - Add previous year' recommendations to the template.

**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:** 17 May 2024  
**Acronyms:**