

Ceredigion County Council

Ethics & Standards Committee

Guidance Notes

Group Leaders Reporting Duty

1. 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

2. 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.
3. 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

4. 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

Local Government & Elections Wales Act 2021: S63

5. The guidance issued by WG in relation to the new duties suggests the steps that could be taken by Group Leaders to fulfill these obligations;

4.24 of the Guidance states Reasonable steps the group leader may undertake include:

- demonstrating personal commitment to and attending and participating in relevant development or training around equalities and standards, including on the Code of Conduct;
- actively encouraging group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards including in relation to the Code of Conduct;
- ensuring nominees to a committee have received the recommended training for participating on that committee;
- promoting modelling civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal council meetings;
- supporting informal resolution procedures in the council, and working with the standards committee and monitoring officers to achieve local resolution;
- encouraging a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity;
- attend a meeting of the council's standards committee if requested to participate in discussions on Code of Conduct issues;
- drive forward work to implement any recommendations from the standards committee about improving standards;
- work with the standards committee to proactively identify, consider and tackle patterns of inappropriate behaviour;
- work together with other group leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the council and where any issues identified involve more than one political group.

6. Group leaders must take the WG Guidance into account:

[Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)

7. Group Leaders already take some steps to prevent matters escalating/nip issues in the bud. These are informal & confidential and so should not be publicly or individually reported;

8. The template below is based on examples in the WG Guidance to prompt group leaders on the matters to be covered in their reports;

9. So that the Ethics & Standards Committee retains independence from operational matters it will ask Group Leaders to report once per year. The Ethics

and Standards committee will meet with group leaders at the beginning of each council year to agree a number of issues.

4.36 of the guidance states At the beginning of each council year Political group leaders should meet with the standards committee to agree the following:

- How group leaders and the standards committee will work together to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour;
- Frequency of meetings between group leaders and the standards committee throughout the year;
- The threshold which the standards committee will use to establish whether it is content that political group leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act;
- • The mechanism for political group leaders to provide reports to the standards committee about the actions they have taken to comply with the duties within the 2021 Act.

10. The Ethics & Standards Committee Chair may wish to meet group leaders periodically to review behaviour generally. The Chair may also seek the views of the Monitoring Officer.
11. If additional matters of importance, or matters which might be raised by the Ethics & Standards Committee, such as seeking assurance from Group Leaders, arise during the year, these can be reported to the Monitoring Officer who will inform the Ethics & Standards Committee;
12. Group Leaders will prepare their report for the Ethics & Standards Committee after 1st April each year.
13. The report will not mention specific cases and will refer to the type of actions undertaken;
14. The Committee will thereafter meet with each group leader informally to explore their report. The Committee may also seek the view of the Monitoring Officer.
15. The Committee may give informal feedback to group leaders
16. 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.

17. The Ethics & Standards Committee Chair' annual report will be presented to Council at the next available meeting following consideration by the Ethics and Standards Committee.

<u>Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct</u>				
To be completed by Monitoring Officer				
Report by:				
Political Group:				
No. of members:		No. trained on Code:	(100%)	
		No. attended Social Media training:	(100%)	
For the period:				
<u>Number, Source and Level of Complaints</u>				
	Informal	Local Resolution		PSOW/APW
Public				
Officers				
Councillors				
Total:				

Steps taken to Promote Compliance

(To Be Completed by Group Leader)

Include matters such as:

- demonstrating personal commitment to and attending relevant development or training around equalities and standards;
- encouraging group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards;
- ensuring nominees to a Committee have received the recommended training for that Committee;
- setting an example
- using their influence to promote a positive culture

- promoting civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal Council meetings;
- address issues as soon as they arise
- promoting informal resolution procedures in the Council, and working with the Ethics & Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer to achieve local resolution;
- promoting a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity;
- attend a meeting of the Council's Ethics & Standards Committee if requested to discuss Code of Conduct issues;
- attend periodic meetings with the Monitoring Officer and other group leaders
- attend meetings between the Monitoring Officer and members of their group relating to Code of Conduct matter, as necessary
- work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee about improving standards;
- work together with other group leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the Council.
- Work constructively with the Ethics & Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer to identify training requirements for themselves and their members.
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Questions for PGLs

Compliance

Are you confident that you know what is expected of you regarding your duties to comply with the LGEWA2021 requirements?

Training

- What training have you attended during the last year
- How many of your group members have attended Code training and when?
- How many of your group members who use social media attended social media training and when?
- How many of your group members have received training relevant to the Committees they sit on?
- What further training do you/your group need if any?
- Have your group members had any difficulties accessing relevant training.
 - If yes, please elaborate.

Promoting civility and respect etc

- Please provide examples of how you have worked with other group leaders to promote high standards of behaviour during the past year?
- How confident are you in your understanding of your duties as a group leader?
- Please give some examples as to how you promote good standards across your group?
- Can you give examples of actions you have undertaken to promoting civility and respect within your group?
- Do you share APW/PSOW cases with your group?
 - If yes, please explain how and when.
 - If no please explain why not

Working with M.O. (*M.O. to report on these)

- With regard to promoting/maintaining high standards of behaviour do you feel adequately supported by appropriate officers?
 - If not, what would you like to change/what support would you like to receive?
- *Do PGLs work with you/take your advice on informal resolution?
- *Do PGLs work constructively with you and seek appropriate advice?

- *Do PGLs attend monthly meeting with you on a regular basis

Working with ESC (**for ESC to determine)

- What, if anything, do you need from ESC to facilitate compliance with your group leader duties?
- Do you feel your group members are committed to delivering high standards of behaviour? Please provide an explanation for your answer.
- **Have group leaders attended meetings with ESC when requested?
- **If relevant have group leaders worked with ESC as necessary to identify patterns of unacceptable behaviour?

Please use this space for any other comments you'd like to make

