

To: Chair and Members of Standards
Committee

Date: 20 October 2022

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Dear Member of the Committee,

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **STANDARDS COMMITTEE** to be held at **11.30 am** on **FRIDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2022** in **COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, WYNNSTAY ROAD, RUTHIN LL15 1YN AND VIA ZOOM.**

Yours sincerely

G. Williams
Monitoring Officer

AGENDA

PART 1: THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THIS PART OF THE MEETING

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (Pages 5 - 6)

Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in any business identified to be considered at this meeting.

3 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.

4 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (Pages 7 - 14)

To receive the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 22 July 2022 (copy attached).

5 CHAIRS ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 15 - 24)

To consider a report by the Deputy Monitoring Officer (copy attached) prior to the report being presented at Full Council.

6 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS (Pages 25 - 34)

To note the attendance by members of the Standards Committee at County, Town and Community Council and to receive their reports.

7 STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 35 - 36)

To consider the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme (copy attached).

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Standards Committee is scheduled for 2 December 2022.

PART 2: CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

It is recommended in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that exempt information (as defined in paragraph “[Insert Number]” of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Act would be disclosed.

9 CODE OF CONDUCT - PART 3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 (Pages 37 - 52)

To consider a confidential report by the Monitoring Officer (copy attached) providing an overview of complaints against members lodged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

MEMBERSHIP

Independent Members:

Julia Hughes (Chair), Anne Mellor (Vice-Chair) and Peter Lamb

Town/Community Council Member

Gordon Hughes

County Councillors

Councillor Bobby Feeley

Councillor Hugh Irving

COPIES TO:

All Councillors for information
Press and Libraries
Town and Community Councils

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

Code of Conduct for Members

DISCLOSURE AND REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS

I, *(name)*

a *member/co-opted member of

*(*please delete as appropriate)*

Denbighshire County Council

CONFIRM that I have declared a ***personal / personal and prejudicial** interest not previously declared in accordance with the provisions of Part III of the Council's Code of Conduct for Members, in respect of the following:-

*(*please delete as appropriate)*

Date of Disclosure:

Committee *(please specify)*:

Agenda Item No.

Subject Matter:

Nature of Interest:

*(See the note below)**

Signed

Date

*Note: Please provide sufficient detail e.g. 'I am the owner of land adjacent to the application for planning permission made by Mr Jones', or 'My husband / wife is an employee of the company which has made an application for financial assistance'.

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Public Document Pack Agenda Item 4

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Ruthin and by video conference on Friday, 22 July 2022 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

Independent members:

Julia Hughes (Chair), Anne Mellor (Vice-Chair), Peter Lamb a Councillor Gordon Hughes

Councillors Bobby Feeley and Hugh Irving

Observer – Councillor Andrea Tomlin

ALSO PRESENT

Monitoring Officer (GW)

Deputy Monitoring Officer (LJ)

Senior Committee Administrator (KJ)

Democratic Services Officer (KE)

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Corwen Town Councillor, Gordon Hughes declared a personal interest in agenda item 14, Code of Conduct – Part 3 Local Government Act 2000.

3 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Nominations were sought for the role of Chair of Standards Committee. Members were reminded that the appointment could only be made from the independent membership of the committee, although all members were entitled to vote.

Anne Mellor nominated Julia Hughes for the role. The nomination was seconded by Peter Lamb. There being no other nominations Julia Hughes was duly appointed.

RESOLVED that Julia Hughes be appointed Chair of Standards Committee.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair nominated Anne Mellor for the role of Vice-Chair of Standards Committee. The nomination was seconded by Peter Lamb. There being no other nominations Anne Mellor was duly elected.

RESOLVED that Anne Mellor be appointed Vice-Chair of Standards Committee.

5 URGENT MATTERS AS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There were no urgent matters.

6 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Chair welcomed Councillors Bobby Feeley and Hugh Irving to the Standards Committee.

Minutes accuracy:

Apologies, page 7- erroneously refers to the 'acting chair's last meeting' instead of 'Chair's last meeting'.

Matters arising:

Standards Conference 2022, page 9 – Over 100 delegates had joined a virtual meeting of the conference. It was pleasing to note that attendance did not drop throughout the day.

Process for recruiting independent members of Standards Committee, page 10 – It was noted that The Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 allowed for up to nine members. Denbighshire's constitution currently stipulated seven members. That may need to be reviewed in future depending on the anticipated changes to investigation of complaints and the requirement of local resolution.

Page 11, item 8 – at the last meeting there had been some discussion around the inclusion of independent members on the recruitment panels for independent members of standards committees which had not been recorded. It was requested that a report reviewing Independent Member Recruitment to Standards Committee, including comparisons of other Local Authority panels be added to the forward work programme.

RESOLVED that subject to the above amendments that the minutes for Standards Committee held on Friday 4th March 2022 be agreed as an accurate record.

7 PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES - 'OUR FINDINGS'

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report (previously circulated). He reminded the Committee that the Public Services Ombudsman (PSO) previously produced a Code of Conduct Casebook on a quarterly basis which summarised the cases referred to them from the various local authorities across Wales. It gave a brief outline of the complaint and whether they had determined that there was or was not a breach of conduct. Subsequently, if they had concluded that there was a breach whether it was determined: no further action; referred to the Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

The Code of Conduct Casebook had been replaced with a section on the PSO website called 'Our Findings'. The summaries were more comprehensive and

categorised into subjects. Complaints reported on between 1st April 2021 and 30th June 2022 were as follows:

- Integrity 12
- Equality and respect 12
- Disclosure and registration of interests 3
- Duty to uphold the law 3
- Selflessness and Stewardship 1

Their outcomes resulted in:

- No evidence of breach 10
- Investigation discontinued 5
- No action necessary 6
- Referral to a Standards Committee 7
- Referral to Adjudication Panel for Wales 3.

There was one case relating to a Denbighshire council on the matter of sharing of a CCTV image on a Facebook page that may have been possible to identify a young individual. The Ombudsman determined that there may have been a breach of the Code of Conduct but due to the absence of training (on CCTV and social media) and the prompt apology and removal of content that no further action was necessary.

Two substantive complaints were referred to the Adjudication panel for Wales (The Panel). Both were found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct. The first resulted in the resignation of the member. Nevertheless, The Panel decided he should be disqualified from holding office or standing for election for a period of 24 months. The second was suspended for their part in a street altercation that became a police incident but not sanctioned further over social media postings that potentially would restrict the member's Article 10 right to Freedom of Speech.

Members of the Committee reflected that the 'Our Findings' section was quite difficult to navigate and many of the searches were truncated. Members considered that search facility would be easier if there was a single category of 'Code of Conduct' and then a drop down menu for integrity, respect etc. It was anticipated that as it was a new section on the PSO website it would be under review and changes made as necessary in due course.

RESOLVED that the 'Our Findings' section of the Public Services Ombudsman website be noted.

8 ETHICS AND STANDARDS TRAINING

The Chair introduced the item by stressing how important it was upon entering a new term of Council that all County and Town, City & Community Councillors were given the opportunity to access training and information to help them undertake their duties and adhere to the Code and the Standards Committee's responsibility to ensure that induction and training does happen.

The Monitoring Officer advised that previously local authorities had produced their own Code of Conduct training for members but the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) had agreed for the sake of consistency to produce a common set of training materials (appended to the report).

Denbighshire's amended its Code of Conduct to make it a requirement that every member attended a Code of Conduct Training session at least once each Council term – regardless of whether they were returning members.

There were three separate training sessions in the first week following the elections in May where the agenda included Code of Conduct and Member / Officer Relations Protocol with further sessions arranged for September. There had also been a commitment for the Monitoring Officer to attend Group meetings in the autumn for a question and answer session.

Although more sessions had been offered for training than previously there had been less of a turnout. In 2017 at one session in Denbigh Town Hall there had been 45 (out of 47) members present. In the three sessions run in May there had been 27 attendees. Reminders were being circulated for members to attend the September training session.

In July similar training sessions were run for City, Town and Community Councils. However, an administrative problem meant that there was limited attendance and further sessions were being scheduled for September. Those dates would be circulated to members of the Standards Committee who as co-opted members of the Authority were also obliged to comply with the Code.

Members' Code of Conduct training had previously been presented to the Senior Leadership Team. Employees also had their own Code of Conduct training upon induction to the Authority. It had been some time since that Code had been reviewed, it would be updated and re-launched in the near future. It was expected that if there were an issue between an elected member and a member of staff then the Head of Service would be the person to mediate a resolution in the first instance.

Members were advised that the Code of Conduct training was the same for County and Town, City and Community Councils. Clerks to the Town, City & Community Councils received letters reminding them of the rules on dispensations given that they were usually the person responsible for submitting them to the Committee. The Chair was keen that training be provided to all members on dispensations.

The Chair felt it was important that the Committee continue to receive statistics on the attendance of members at meetings until the 100% attendance had been achieved. The MO agreed to circulate the September training date with members of the Committee.

Clarification was sought on the statement (page 49) in the training materials 'Note: Standards Committee local resolution may still be discussed and debated in a public forum'. It appeared to contradict the proposition that an issue be resolved

locally. The MO explained that there was no single way of completing local resolution. Some local authorities may have a local resolution that concluded in a Standards Committee hearing. That was not the case in Denbighshire.

RESOLVED that the materials being used in the training of elected members on ethics and standards be noted.

9 WELSH GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE - DUTY OF GROUP LEADERS TO PROMOTE ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report (previously circulate) advising that the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provided a new duty on the leaders of political groups to take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members. The Act also provided a duty for the Standards Committee to monitor, advise and provide training to group leaders to enable compliance with the duty.

The Committee noted that Welsh Government's consultation on the statutory guidance for group leaders had not coincided with the Committee's scheduled meetings. The guidance should have been circulated to members via email. The final guidance was still to be circulated, the draft was not expected to change, it included examples of how group leaders might perform their duty.

One of the examples included in the guidance was to work together with other Group Leaders to collectively support high standards of conduct with the Council. Therefore, group leaders were going to be approached with the proposal of creating an Ethical Liaison Group comprised of each Group Leader plus another group member of the opposite gender. The group would be supported by the MO and a member of the Standards Committee (e.g. Chair or Vice-Chair).

The Group would examine any current issues or new initiatives around standards e.g.:

- implementing the recommendations of the Penn Review, enabling them to support each other and
- local resolution.

The idea of the Group was to have a collective responsibility of maintaining standards within Council. Specific terms of reference were yet to be discussed.

Responding to the Committee's questions the MO advised:

- If an issue was with a group leader then the Chair of Council would be recruited to take their place.
- It was important for group leaders to set aside any political leanings and undertake their legal duty to uphold the standards of the Council.
- If group leaders were not seen to be compliant with their duty to promote or maintain good standards of conduct, then that would be seen to be a breach of the Code of conduct in itself.

- It was anticipated that rather than stifling debate the expectation of high standards of conduct would more likely promote participation.
- Production of a template to assist group leaders report to Standards Committee e.g. listing the activities undertaken to promote compliance, would be useful.

Further discussion would be required as to whether Standards Committee would be members of the Ethical Liaison Group or whether they would be invited to attend meetings as observers.

The MO would brief and consult and Group Leaders at a meeting on 29th July.

RESOLVED that the Welsh Government Guidance – duty of Group Leaders to Promote Ethical Behaviour be noted.

10 NATIONAL STANDARDS FORUM

The MO reminded the Committee that previously there had been a North Wales Standards Forum comprised of the Chairs of each of the Standards Committees from the 6 North Wales Local Authorities and National Parks Authority. It met twice per year to exchange best practices and deal with any new initiatives.

On a few occasions the Ombudsman attended the forum for question and answer sessions. The forum was held up as good practice under the Penn Review of the Ethical Regime in Wales and recommended that it should be a national forum.

Following that recommendation Monitoring Officers were asked whether their authority would support the notion of an all Wales forum, to which the response was positive. Discussions had been held with the WLGA seeking secretariat support for the forum, the burden of which would ease through remote meetings.

The remote meetings of the forum could prove a useful tool to promote engagement with the Ombudsman's office as well as tackling some of the issues arising from the Ethical Framework Review.

It was anticipated that there would be one representative from each authority.

RESOLVED that the update on the creation of a National Standards Forum for Wales be received.

11 ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

The Chair explained to the new members that the independent members of the Committee attend Town, City and Community Councils (TC&CC) on an ad hoc basis as observers and report their findings – good/poor practices - back to the Standards Committee.

The Chair suggested that Attendance at Meetings item be tabled on the agenda for September's meeting to consider a more structured approach with respect to which

meeting should be observed, what information was noted and how to report feedback to the TC&CC.

The MO would provide contact details for all the TC&CC clerks and the recently agreed Committee Timetable for 2022/23 in order to discuss prioritisation of meetings to be observed. The introduction of webcast meetings meant that members did not have to observe in real time but could view the webcast at their convenience.

Where members intended to attend a TC&CC meeting in person clerks should be notified by an officer in advance explaining that it was routine rather than a challenge.

The Committee asked for a list of which councils had been visited in recent times to avoid duplication. It was also suggested that a template of the visit report be produced to facilitate feedback to the clerks following the meeting and that feedback be provided formally to clerks in the form of a letter.

RESOLVED that a specific item for Attendance at Meetings be added to the agenda for the meeting of the Standards Committee on 16th September 2023.

12 STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair opened the item for discussion by querying whether 1 meeting per quarter was sufficient to attend to the duties of the Standards Committee. The Monitoring Officer advised that the legal requirement was 1 meeting per year and there was a wide variety of scheduling across local authorities.

It was suggested that meetings proceed quarterly, however, if the agendas became too cumbersome, dispensations were received or cases referred for local resolution then additional meetings could be considered. It was highlighted that additional meetings would be a resource issue for Democratic Services and would have to review the impact of increased frequency of meetings.

It was agreed that there would be standing items for each meeting including:

1. 'Our findings'
2. Dispensation Requests.
3. Forward Work Programme
4. Attendance at Meetings
5. Part 2 – Code of conduct – Part 3 Local Government Act 2000

Future Items to be considered:

- Report on Regular Training Sessions for Committee Members
- Progress of Group Leaders' Duty.
- Member Induction / Training Update
- Code of Conduct for Employees Policy Review.
- Feedback from Ethical Liaison Meeting.
- Report back from Standards Forum.
- Joint meeting with Town, City and Community Councils.

- Draft Annual Report of the Standards Committee.
- Comparison of Standards Committee Recruitment Panel Compilations.

RESOLVED that subject to the inclusion of the above the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme be agreed.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The time table for future meetings of the Standards Committee was at 10:00am Friday:

- 16th September 2022
- 2nd December 2022
- 3rd March 2023
- 16th June 2023
- 15th September 2023
- 1st December 2023

14 CODE OF CONDUCT - PART 3 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

The Monitoring Officer (MO) presented the confidential report (previously circulated) to provide Members with an overview of complaints lodged with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) since 1 January 2018. There were seven Denbighshire complaints completed since the last meeting – all determined not for investigation.

The MO advised the committee that the Ombudsman had changed the way in which they dealt with notification of complaints. Previously they had sent:

- a copy of the letter of complaint to the member with the complaint against them and
- a copy of the complaint letter, together with the letter sent to the member to the Monitoring Officer.

That process had allowed the Monitoring Officer to keep abreast of the situation by looking out for the Ombudsman's determination as to whether the complaint would be investigated or not. At the conclusion of the Ombudsman's considerations the Monitoring Officer would receive a copy of the letter sent to the complainant and the member for the record.

The change of process meant that Monitoring Officers were no longer informed of complaints, only the outcomes. The MO advised that even if the Ombudsman deemed that there was no case for investigation, if they felt there was a training requirement for the member they would apprise the MO of such.

The Committee asked that the MO provide feedback to the Ombudsman that receiving a copy of the initial complaint was of value.

RESOLVED –that the Standards Committee receive and note the contents of the report.

Report to	Standards Committee
Date of meeting	28 October 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Gary Williams, Corporate Director, Governance and Business/ Monitoring Officer
Report author	Lisa Jones, Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer
Title	Chairs Annual Report

1. What is the report about?

This report to Standards Committee is to enable the full Committee to have sight and contribute to the Chair's Annual Report, in advance of the item being presented to the full council. The draft report is attached as Appendix 1.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

It was agreed by Members of this Committee that an Annual Report should be presented on the work of the committee each year and its findings and observations, to all Council Members as part of the Committee's drive to increase standards of ethical behaviour and compliance with the Members Code of Conduct.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Members:

- 3.1 Note the contents of the report.
- 3.2 Provide the Monitoring Officer with comments on the content in order to ensure that it accurately reflects the views of this Committee.
- 3.3 Recommend it's presentation by the Chair to the Full Council

4. Report details

The draft report is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

A fully functioning and representative Standards Committee which upholds the high standards expected of members helps underpin the Council's exercise of its democratic functions.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no additional costs associated with this report and there are no implications for other services as a result of this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well Being Impact Assessment is not required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

No other consultations are considered required; this report is the consultation with Standards Committee that they are content the report reflects the Committee and Chair' perspective in respect of adherence to the Members' Code of Conduct in the County and observations in respect of probity and ethics generally.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no identified risks.

11. Power to make the decision

The Local Government Act 2000; the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

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Report to	County Council
Date of meeting	[to be confirmed]
Lead Member / Officer	Julia Hughes, Chair of Standards Committee
Report author	Lisa Jones, Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer
Title	Draft Chairs Annual Report

1. What is the report about?

This is Annual Report of Standards Committee to the Full Council and covers the calendar year January to December 2021. It was agreed that the Chair will present their report on this basis annually to the Full Council, in order to keep Members informed of trends; issues in respect of compliance with the Members Code of Conduct generally across the County and the work of the Committee in driving up standards of behaviour at the County level, but also at Town, City and Community levels.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

It was agreed by Members of this Committee that an Annual Report should be presented on the work of the committee each year and its findings and observations, to all Council Members as part of the Committee's drive to increase standards of ethical behaviour and compliance with the Members Code of Conduct.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Members note the contents of the report.

4. Report details

- 4.1 Standards Committee main role is to monitor adherence to the Members Code of Conduct. All members are aware that their Code is founded (and should be read in conjunction with) the 7 Nolan Principles of Public Life. In Wales there are ten principles namely Selflessness, Honesty, Integrity and Propriety, Duty to uphold the law, Stewardship, Objectivity in decision making, Equality and Respect, Openness, Accountability and Leadership.
- 4.2 Standards Committee consists of the following Member types – 2 County Councillors, 4 Independent (co-opted) Members, and 1 Community Council Member (who is not also a twin hatted Member). The majority of the Members are therefore not elected, but are recruited from members of the public as per the requirements of the Standards legislation in Wales. The Committee can also only be quorate when at least half of those Members present are the independent lay members.

Lay members are recruited via a public advert, which is open to all save for strict criteria including being of good standing and having certain attributes as laid down in the legislation. Other than this the opportunity is open to persons from all walks of life, in order to represent the views of the public with regard to the standards they expect of their elected members; and who will also then if required to do so, sit in judgement in respect of any references to the Standards Committee from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, where there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct, which falls below the relevant threshold. The decision to investigate a breach, is at the discretion of the Ombudsman; based on the facts, evidence and nature of the breach and whether there is corroborative evidence or not, and if there is a public interest in exhausting time and public financial resources in the investigation and hearing itself; similar to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) approach to charges and prosecutions.

When the Committee receives a reference from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) following her investigation into a complaint, they will then sit in a quasi-judicial capacity whilst they hear the matter. They have powers to suspend a Member from Office for a maximum of 6 months, during which time they will not be able to act in their capacity as an elected member and will not receive any member salary. The Committee has discretion to impose lesser sanctions such as a partial suspension from duties or a 'public censure' and to impose other conditions such as attendance at training.

There is also the option where the PSOW seeks the views of the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee on whether in those circumstances where the Ombudsman decides not to investigate, that the Monitoring Officer may wish to investigate locally. In these circumstances, the Monitoring Officer consults the Chair and/or the Committee and each case is considered on its merits.

4.3 During the past year the Committee met on 3 occasions and 1 meeting was cancelled. The table below sets out a summary of the items under discussion: -

Date of Meeting	Report Items/Area s
5/3/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Item: Attendance at meetings • Forward Work Programme • Draft revised guidance from the PSOW on the Code of Conduct • Briefing on the Local Government and Elections Wales Act • Standards Committee Terms of Reference • Draft Chairs Annual Report up to March 2021 • Standing Item : overview of complaints in Denbighshire against Members
11/6/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determination of an Allegation of breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.
17/9/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Item: Attendance at meetings • Forward Work Programme • Protocol the Member Officer Relations • PSOW Code of Conduct Casebooks

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Item: Overview of Complaints against Members.
3/12/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Item: Attendance at meetings • Standards Committee Conference • Penn Review on the Ethical Framework. • Forward Work Programme.

4.4 Standing Items

The 3 standing items the Committee receives that continue to work well : -

- (a) Reports from Standards Members in respect of their attendance and observations at Committee and Council meetings whether at County or Community level. Denbighshire County Council Standards Committee is proactive in its' approach to raising standards and awareness of the Code of Conduct. Committee Members attend to observe conduct and general effectiveness of the meetings; will then feed back to the Committee, who may make recommendations in respect of any training needs or trends or patterns of conduct in particular communities or at County level.

In respect of the 2021 period, the general ethical framework functions were at reasonable level in the community and at county level; and this is reflected in the level of complaints to the PSOW.

As emphasised last year, the Committee is keen to make it clear that their approach in attending in person at meetings is from a support and educational angle; in order to target resources to improve standards and the public's confidence in the vital work being done at community level, on a voluntary basis; and not from any enforcement or critical angle. The Committee fully recognises the value such councils and their members add to local communities. The Committee believes that the Code is there to give public confidence, but to also protect members and any efforts to raise this awareness for all serving members is a key theme they continually endorse.

- (b) Overview of Complaints lodged against Members with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The report is presented in a closed session and members are provided with a limited amount of detail in respect of the complaint but with sufficient detail to enable members to consider if training or other actions can be recommended to particular town city and community councils which are experiencing issues or an increase in complaints.

(c) Forward Work Programme. This aligns the approach of other council committees and encourages a more strategic approach to the role of the Committee as a proactive one not just reactive to complaints.

- 4.5 During this year there was also one meeting of the North Wales Standards Forum. The main item for discussion at this meeting was the then ongoing independent review of the ethical framework in Wales commissioned by Welsh Government and conducted by Richard Penn. The review was considering the strengths and weaknesses of the current framework, how it could be enhanced and how the number of complaints could be reduced. This review has subsequently been completed and Welsh Government is considering its recommendations. On the whole the review concluded that the framework is fit for purpose. One of the recommendations was that the work of the North Wales Standards Forum be replicated on a national basis. Work is currently underway to establish an All Wales Standards Forum to enable representatives of local Standards Committees to share good practice and discuss matters of common interest.
- 4.6 During this year there was one meeting in respect of a Determination as to whether there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct. The Standards Committee heard the matter and concluded that there had been a breach of the Code of Conduct and imposed a two-month suspension. The member concerned appealed this decision to the Adjudication Panel for Wales which upheld the Standards Committee's decision.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

A fully functioning and representative Standards Committee which upholds the high standards expected of members helps underpin the Council's exercise of its democratic functions.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no additional costs associated with this report and there are no implications for other services as a result of this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well Being Impact Assessment is not required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

No other consultations are considered required; this report has been for consultation to Standards Committee and that they are content the report reflects the Committee and Chair's perspective in respect of adherence to the Members' Code of Conduct in the County and observations in respect of probity and ethics generally.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no identified risks.

11. Power to make the decision

The Local Government Act 2000; the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

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Report to	Standards Committee
Date of meeting	28 th October 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Gary Williams, Corporate Director, Governance and Business/ Monitoring Officer
Report author	Lisa Jones, Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer
Title	Attendance at Meetings

1. What is the report about?

The Committee has requested a report to consider a structured approach to their attendance and observation at meetings and feedback.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

One of the Committee's methods of overseeing adherence to the Code of Conduct is to attend County, City, Town or Community Council meetings either online or in person and a structured approach is preferable hence this report.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Members consider and agree a co-ordinated and structured approach.

4. Report details

4.1 County Council Meetings

Members of Standards Committee in previous terms have generally attended the main full Council meeting rather than any other Committee, such as Democratic Services or a Scrutiny Committee for example. A list of the public meetings is attached at Appendix 1 for information and details of the latest meeting can be accessed on the Councils website. Standards members have traditionally focused their efforts on Town, City and Community Councils but may wish to attend and

observe occasional County level meetings. A legal advisor or Monitoring Officer is not present at all Committees and not all Committees are webcasted therefore Members may wish to discuss whether they wish to increase their activity at County level.

4. 2 Town, City and Community Meetings.

In previous terms the Committee' approach has been to work through the list of Councils and agree which Member will attend particular Councils. Members have shared the workload and reported back their findings as and when they are able to feasibly attend the meetings. A central record of attendances has been kept by the Monitoring Officer in previous years albeit since the pandemic this has not been kept up to date, and can be recommenced if agreed. Members may wish to review the attendance, coverage and progress in respect of covering the whole County at each Standards meeting rather than ad hoc; they may wish to focus on particular localities in their area, or alternatively attend as observer outside of their immediate local area. Members may wish to align attendance with the information provided in respect of Public Services' Ombudsman complaints; or may have other suggestions on approach.

Appendix 2 is the list of Town, City and Community Councils to assist together with a suggested script.

Appendix 3 is a draft feedback form for discussion.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

A fully functioning and representative Standards Committee which upholds the high standards expected of members helps underpin the Council's exercise of its democratic functions.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

There are no additional costs associated with this report and there are no implications for other services as a result of this report.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well Being Impact Assessment is not required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

No other consultations are considered required.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not required.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no identified risks.

11. Power to make the decision

The Local Government Act 2000; the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

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Committee structure at County Level.

Committees

- [Cabinet](#)
- [Climate Change and Ecological Emergency Working Group](#)
- [Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Joint Committee](#)
- [Communities Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board](#)
- [Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [County Council](#)
- [Democratic Services Committee](#)
- [Governance and Audit Committee](#)
- [Licensing Committee](#)
- [Licensing Sub Committee](#)
- [North Wales Economic Ambition Board](#)
- [North Wales Police and Crime Panel](#)
- [North Wales Residual Waste Joint Committee](#)
- [Partnerships Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [Performance Scrutiny Committee](#)
- [Planning Committee](#)
- [Special Appointments Panel](#)
- [Standards Committee](#)
- [Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education \(SACRE\)](#)
- [Welsh Language Steering Committee](#)

Members can access these on the following pages – note that not all meetings are webcasted.

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1&LLL=0>

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Appendix 2

Link to the Town, City and Community Council contact details.

<https://moderngov.denbighshire.gov.uk/mgParishCouncilDetails.aspx?LS=17&SLS=1&bcr=1&LLL=0>

Suggested script – members may tailor to suit their own personal preference:

'My name is and I'm a member of Denbighshire County Council's Standards Committee. I am simply here as an observer in the same way as a member of the public is able to attend the open meetings of the Council. One of the areas that Standards Committee focuses upon is the provision of training and awareness of the Members Code of Conduct and we are keen to support local councils and their members to enable them to understand their obligations under the Code and drive up standards. Attendance at community meetings is also an opportunity to raise the Committee's profile and try to avoid being a remote body, but one that is in touch with local democratic issues. Unless we are specifically requested to attend a meeting by a clerk or Chair, we select the community councils to attend and observe fairly randomly so please feel free to proceed as you would normally.....'

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Appendix 3

Standards Committee Members Feedback Form

Name of Member in attendance:	
Council name:	
Date of attendance:	

Pre meeting observations

Council website check	
Clerk contact details up to date?	
Public Notice visible	
Accessibility/ease of finding meeting venue	
Councillor contact details	
Bilingual	

Meeting Observations

Standing item on Declarations of Interest:
Chairing:
General observations on conduct at the meeting:
Any recommendations in respect of training and skills:
Good practice observations:

Any other comments :

Feedback to Clerk

Letter to be sent

YES/ NO

Standards Members - Please email or hand in this form to the Monitoring Officer to retain and keep a central record of attendances across the County. Guidance on the completion of this form is available from the Monitoring Officer, in particular the use of anonymised personal information.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

PLEASE NOTE AGENDA TO BE CIRCULATED 1 WEEK IN ADVANCE OF MEETING

DATE OF MEETING	REPORT ITEMS / AREAS	REPORT AUTHOR
2 Dec 2022	Standing Item: Public Services Ombudsman 'Our Findings'	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings	Independent members
	Standing Item: Dispensation Requests	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Standards Committee Forward Work Programme	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Member Induction / Training Update	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Report on Regular Training Sessions for Committee Members	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Feedback from Ethical Liaison Meeting	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Report back from Standards Forum	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Comparison of Standards Committee Recruitment Panel Compilations	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Ethical Liaison Group	Lisa Jones
	Progress of Group Leaders' Duty	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
3 March 2023	Standing Item: Public Services Ombudsman 'Our Findings'	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings	Independent members
	Standing Item: Dispensation Requests	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Standards Committee Forward Work Programme	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
16 June 2023	Standing Item: Public Services Ombudsman 'Our Findings'	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings	Independent members
	Standing Item: Dispensation Requests	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Standards Committee Forward Work Programme	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)

15 September 2023	Standing Item: Public Services Ombudsman 'Our Findings'	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings	Independent members
	Standing Item: Dispensation Requests	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Standards Committee Forward Work Programme	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
1 December 2023	Standing Item: Public Services Ombudsman 'Our Findings'	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Attendance at Meetings	Independent members
	Standing Item: Dispensation Requests	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Item: Standards Committee Forward Work Programme	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)
	Standing Part 2 Item: Overview of Complaints in Denbighshire	Gary Williams (Monitoring Officer)

Future Items to be considered

Meeting T.B.C.	Joint meeting with Town, City and Community Councils	

By virtue of paragraph(s) 12, 13 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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