

<b>Report to</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date of meeting</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2022
<b>Lead Member / Officer</b>	Gary Williams, Monitoring Officer
<b>Report author</b>	Gary Williams, Monitoring Officer
<b>Title</b>	Welsh Government Guidance – Duty of Group Leaders to Promote Ethical Behaviour

## **1. What is the report about?**

1.1. The draft statutory guidance produced by Welsh Government in respect of the new duty placed upon political group leaders to promote ethical behaviour.

## **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

2.1. To inform members of the Committee about the draft guidance and to seek their views on proposals to support group leaders in the discharge of this duty.

## **3. What are the Recommendations?**

3.1. That the Committee considers the draft guidance and discusses the practical arrangements to be made to comply with it.

## **4. Report details**

4.1. Section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ('the Act') provides a new duty on the leaders of political groups to take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members.

4.2. The Act also provides new duties on the Standards Committee to monitor group leaders' compliance with this duty and to advise and provide training for group leaders on the discharge of the duty.

4.3. The Welsh Government produced draft statutory guidance for group leaders and standards committees prior to the election and sought views upon it. The draft guidance can be viewed here: <https://gov.wales/consultation-local-government-and-elections-wales-act-2021-standards-conduct-statutory-guidance> Unfortunately, the consultation period did not coincide with the committee's cycle of meetings. The final version of the guidance is awaited.

4.4. The draft guidance includes examples of how Group Leaders might perform their duty such as: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;
- promoting civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal Council meetings;
- promoting informal resolution procedures in the Council, and working with the standards Committee and monitoring officers 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 Standards Committee if requested to discuss Code of Conduct issues;
- 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.

4.5. The draft guidance makes clear that the Committee should arrange to train the Group Leaders on the duty within 6 months of the elections and annually thereafter. It suggests meeting periodically with Group Leaders to review

behaviour. Group Leaders and this Committee will be asked to consider proposals for a vehicle for such meetings in the form of an Ethical Liaison Group.

4.6. The draft guidance also refers to the need for group leaders to make reports to the Standards Committee on their progress in fulfilling their duty. The Standards Committee will be able to discuss these reports with group leaders and use them as a basis for the Committee's annual report to Council on the way in which group leaders are discharging this duty.

4.7. The Committee is invited to discuss its preferred approach to the monitoring of group leaders' duty and the support to be provided to them.

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

5.1. The report has no direct impact upon the Corporate Priorities, however, high standards of conduct are a key component of effective local government.

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

6.1. There are no direct costs associated with this report.

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

7.1. An assessment is not required for this report.

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

8.1. The Committee is being consulted by this report. Discussions will take place with group leaders to consult them on the training required to discharge this duty and the arrangements to be put in place to support and monitor the discharge of the duty.

## **9. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

9.1. As stated in 6.1, there is no direct financial impact to this report.

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

10.1. The introduction of this duty and the enhanced role of the Committee in supporting the discharge of it, will mitigate against the risk of behaviour occurring which falls short of the expected standards of conduct.

## **11. Power to make the decision**

11.1. s54 Local Government 2000