

Report to	Standards Committee
Date of meeting	2 nd December 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Gary Williams, Monitoring Officer
Report author	Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Title	Ethical Liaison and the Duty of Group Leaders to Promote Ethical Behaviour.

1. What is the report about?

The report is about the new duty placed upon political group leaders to promote ethical behaviour.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To enable an agreed approach between Standards Committee and Group Leaders to be worked up and implemented.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 That members discuss and agree an approach which supports Group Leaders to discharge their duties.
- 3.2 That the Chair/Vice Chair attend with the Monitoring Officer at a Group Leaders' meeting in order to move forward with an agreed method of monitoring the duty.
- 3.3 That the Committee give consideration as to the training and support to be provided and by whom.
- 3.4 That the Group Leader' reports be received by the Committee on an agreed date and annually thereafter.

4. Report details

4.1. Standards Committee will be aware the provisions of section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 provide 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 legislation 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 Committee has previously been advised that 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 The draft guidance can be viewed here: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-governmentand-elections-wales-act-2021-standards-conduct-statutory-guidance>, with the consultation on the draft closing on the 16th May 2022.

4.4 By way of reminder the draft guidance includes examples of how Group Leaders might perform their duty such as: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;
- attending 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 proposals also recommend that the Standards Committee arrange to train the Group Leaders on the duty annually. Therefore, a meeting periodically with Group Leaders to review behaviour will need to be diarised from now on 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.

4.8 The attached table (Appendix 1) provide the Committee with a simple template that will be kept up to date by each Group Leader for their group and itemised on the forward work programme for the Committee to receive such reports.

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

There is no direct impact on corporate priorities. However, a functioning, well governed Council contributes to good local democracy and trust in elected members' decision making.

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

Standards members receive a daily rate for attendance in accordance with the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

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?

Standards Committee have been consulted on the WG Guidance in respect of this item and Group Leaders have been briefed on duties but an auditable approach that is acceptable to them will require further consultation.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The duty should be contained within existing resources.

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

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

s.54 Local Government Act 2000 and Section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021