

Report to	Standards Committee
Date of meeting	16 th June 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Gary Williams, Monitoring Officer
Report author	Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Title	Group Leaders Duty

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 provide Standards Committee with the opportunity to consider the information received from Group Leaders who report annually to the Standards' Committee.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 That members consider whether reasonable steps have been taken to promote compliance.
- 3.2 That the Committee consider whether there is merit in an informal meeting with the Group Leaders collectively and the Committee taking place, to share best practice and consider any training requirements.

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 reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members.

4.2. The legislation also provides 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 The draft guidance can be viewed here: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>.

4.4 By way of reminder the draft guidance includes examples of how Group Leaders might perform their duty such as: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.

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?

There are no additional costs to this duty and any activity will be met within existing resources.

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.

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