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Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr  
Bridgend County Borough Council



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*Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Rhowch wybod i ni os mai Cymraeg yw eich dewis iaith.*

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**Cyfarwyddiaeth y Prif Weithredwr / Chief Executive's Directorate**  
Deialu uniongyrchol / Direct line /: 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513  
Gofynnwch am / Ask for:

Ein cyf / Our ref:  
Eich cyf / Your ref:

**Dyddiad/Date:** Thursday, 5 February 2026

Dear Councillor,

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

A meeting of the Standards Committee will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams on **Thursday, 12 February 2026 at 10:00.**

**AGENDA**

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence from Members.

Derbyn ymddiheuriadau am absenoldeb gan Aelodau.

2 Declarations of Interest

To receive declarations of personal and prejudicial interest (if any) from Members/Officers in accordance with the provisions of the Members' Code of Conduct adopted by Council on 1 September 2008.

Derbyn datganiadau o ddiddordeb personol a rhagfarnol (os o gwbl) gan Aelodau / Swyddogion yn unol â darpariaethau'r Cod Ymddygiad Aelodau a fabwysiadwyd gan y Cyngor o 1 Medi 2008.

3 Approval of Minutes

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To receive for approval the Minutes of the 06/02/2025, 26/02/2025, 30/05/2025, 14/07/2025 and 22/07/2025

**By receiving this Agenda Pack electronically you will save the Authority approx. £1.60 in printing costs**

I dderbyn am gymeradwyaeth y Cofnodion cyfarfod y 06/02/2025, 26/02/2025, 30/05/2025, 14/07/2025 a 22/07/2025

- |   |   |         |
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| 4 | <u>Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2024/25</u>  | 29 - 46 |
| 5 | <u>Local Resolution Protocol</u>                                  | 47 - 62 |
| 6 | <u>Updates from Observing Town and Community Council Meetings</u> | 63 - 76 |
| 7 | <u>Appointment of Vice-Chairperson</u>                            | 77 - 80 |
| 8 | <u>Urgent Items</u>   |         |

To consider any item(s) of business in respect of which notice has been given in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council's Procedure Rules, and which the person presiding at the meeting is of the opinion should by reason of special circumstances be transacted at the meeting as a matter of urgency.

I ystyried unrhyw eitemau o fusnes y, oherwydd amgylchiadau arbennig y cadeirydd o'r farn y dylid eu hystyried yn y cyfarfod fel mater o frys yn unol â Rhan 4 (pharagraff 4) o'r Rheolau Trefn y Cyngor yn y Cyfansoddiad.

**Note: This will be a Remote meeting and Members and Officers will be attending remotely via Microsoft Teams. The meeting will be recorded for subsequent transmission via the Council's internet site which will be available as soon as practicable after the meeting. If you would like to view this meeting live, please contact [cabinet\\_committee@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet_committee@bridgend.gov.uk) or tel. 01656 643148 / 643694 / 643513 / 643159.**

Yours faithfully

**K Watson**

Chief Officer, Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy

Councillors:

P Baker

M Daley

J Evans

R Lynch

S Maughan

G Thomas

G Walter

MJ Williams

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 2025**  
**AT 09:30**

Present

S Maughan – Chairperson

Present Virtually

G Walter

P Baker

R Lynch

Apologies for Absence

None.

Officers:

Kelly Watson  
Laura Griffiths  
Oscar Roberts

Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services  
Group Manager – Legal and Democratic Services  
Business Administration Apprentice – Democratic Services

Declarations of Interest

None.

**168. Notice Of Decision Of The Adjudication Panel For Wales In Relation To  
Councillor Steven Bletsoe**

Decision Made	The Chief Officer Legal, HR and Regulatory Services presented this report following the recent decision of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) in relation to a complaint against Cllr Steven Bletsoe of Bridgend
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**This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg**

	<p>Town Council in order for the Committee to consider the recommendation by the APW in relation to the sanction to be imposed. The Committee enquired whether an alternative sanction could be sought other than upholding their original decision or following the APW's recommendation, and it was confirmed by the legal officer that they could not. The Members withdrew to deliberate.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Following the Committee's deliberations, they determined that their original sanction was not unreasonable despite taking into account the findings of the APW. They unanimously agreed to uphold their original sanction of a 6 month suspension. The Committee also noted that they were concerned that individual committee members had been named in the press and on social media following the original hearing and strongly cautioned against a repeat of such comments.</p>
Date Decision Made	6 February 2025

**169. Urgent Items**

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	6 February 2025

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 09:30**

Present

S Maughan – Chairperson

Present Virtually

MJ Williams  
R Lynch

G Thomas

G Walter

P Baker

Officers:

Laura Griffiths  
Kelly Watson  
Michael Pitman

Principal Solicitor  
Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy  
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Martin Williams declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 9 as the complainant was known to him.

Cllr Graham Walter declared a person interest in Agenda Item 9 as two of the witnesses listed in the report were known to him.

**170. Approval of Minutes**

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That the minutes of the 240409, 240507, 240509, 240621 and 240711 were approved as a true and accurate record, subject to the amendment of the title for the Chairperson Sue Maughan to remove Cllr next to her name, which was incorrectly input on a number of minutes.</p> <p>The Chairperson also asked that the date decision made was correctly reflecting the date of the meeting as this was incorrect on a number of minutes.</p>
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

**171. Dispensations**

Decision Made	<p>Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy presented a report which updated the committee on the process for granting dispensations.</p> <p>She advised that dispensations are available for Members for a number of reasons and these were set out at section 2 of the report.</p> <p>A Member seeking a dispensation is required to complete an application on the application form. This was attached as Appendix 1.</p> <p>Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy explained that if the Committee noted the report, she would reinforce the option to Members to ensure that they were aware of the process.</p> <p>A Member asked how many dispensations had been requested. Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy explained that since she had been in post as Monitoring Officer, as of 2019 there had been no requests. She was aware of one previous request approximately 10 years ago</p> <p>A Member asked if a dispensation is requested but the agenda had only been made available up to 7 days before the meeting, it may not be suitable to delay that item due to time sensitivity. What are the processes in place to ensure a dispensation can be carried out.</p> <p>Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy explained that dispensations would usually be required on higher profile cases or reports and therefore Members whether they were BCBC or</p>
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	<p>Town/Community Council Members should keep an eye on their forward work programme to ensure they have sufficient time to enquire about a dispensation. Should there be particular urgency, she would be confident that the Standards Committee could convene a meeting within that time and make a decision should there be the need.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Committee noted the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

**172. Independent Review of Investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – Code of Conduct Complaints**

Decision Made	<p>Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy presented a report which updated the Committee with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Investigation Report into Code of Conduct Complaints published on 27 September 2024.</p> <p>She advised that the published report was attached at Appendix 1 for Members information. The key recommendations from the report were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documenting Political Affiliations</li> <li>• Notification of the accused Member</li> <li>• Quality Assurance for Investigating Officer Decisions</li> <li>• Accused Member’s right to comment</li> <li>• Oversight of the Code Team Member’s Delegated Authority</li> <li>• Clarification Amendments</li> <li>• Public Interest Considerations</li> </ul> <p>A Member stated his disappointment that the report did not look at Bridgend and specific circumstances and complaints.</p> <p>The Chairperson asked if unconscious bias training was something that was carried out within BCBC committees. Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy explained that this was not something that was included as standalone training but rather included within other training. She added</p>
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	<p>that this could be fed through to the Democratic Services Committee as a recommendation for the Member Development Programme.</p> <p>A Member asked if there was a training plan for Standards Committee Members.</p> <p>Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy there was not a specific training plan for Standards Committee Members. She advised that all Members must undertake the Code of Conduct training which is regularly checked upon.</p> <p>Chief Officer - Legal &amp; Regulatory Services, HR &amp; Corporate Policy added that she would update the Committee after the next Democratic Services Committee meeting discuss the Member Development Programme.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That the Committee noted the report.</p>
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

**173. Urgent Items**

Decision Made	There were no urgent items
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

**174. Exclusion of the Public**

Decision Made	<p><u>RESOLVED:</u> That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) (Wales) Order 2007, the public was excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business as they contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 12 of Part 4 and/or Paragraph 21 of Part 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act.</p> <p>Following the application of the public interest test it was resolved that pursuant to the Act referred to above, to consider the following items in private, with the public excluded from the meeting, as it was considered that in all the circumstances relating to the item, the public interest in maintaining the</p>
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	exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, because the information would be prejudicial to the applicant so mentioned.
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

**175. Approval of Exempt Minutes**

Decision Made	This item was exempt
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

**176. Referral by the Ombudsman of Investigation Under S69 of the Local Government Act 2000**

Decision Made	This item was exempt
Date Decision Made	26 February 2025

The meeting closed at 10:05

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD HYBRID IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES, ANGEL STREET, BRIDGEND, CF31 4WB ON FRIDAY, 30 MAY 2025 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor S Maughan – Chairperson

G Thomas

R Lynch

Apologies for Absence

None.

Officers:

Philip Morris  
Riah Skillin  
Llinos Lake  
Kelly Watson  
Mark Galvin  
Oscar Roberts

Counsel Representing the Ombudsman  
Code of Conduct Case Handling Assistant · Public Services Ombudsman for Wales  
Representative from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales  
Chief Officer - Legal, HR and Regulatory Services  
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees  
Business Administrative Apprentice – Democratic Services

Declarations of Interest

None.

**179. Urgent Items**

Decision Made	None.
Date Decision Made	30 May 2025

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**180. Exclusion of the Public**

Decision Made	<p>The Committee considered whether to hold the meeting in closed session, considering recommendations from the Ombudsman that it should remain in open session as there was nothing within the Ombudsman’s documentation that was not suitable to enter the public domain. Cllr Jones also expressed a desire for the meeting to be held publicly.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u> Following consideration of the above, the Committee ruled to have the meeting held in open session noting that members of the Committee should not seek to unduly make meetings confidential when not required.</p>
Date Decision Made	30 May 2025

**181. Ombudsman Investigation Under S69 of the Local Government Act 2000**

Decision Made	<p>The Committee convened to determine on a complaint of an alleged breach of the Member Code Of Conduct against Cllr Lisa Lewis of Brackla Community Council. In specific the Cllr was alleged to have breached paragraphs 4(b) and 6(1)(a) of the Code of Conduct, which comprise:</p> <p>4(b) - Members must show respect and consideration for others.          6(1)(a) - Members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or authority into disrepute.</p> <p>The Committee heard representations from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales and Cllr Lisa Lewis, while Cllr S Bletsoe of Bridgend County Borough Council and Bridgend Town Council provided a character reference for Cllr Lewis. During this process, the Committee retired several times to consider aspects of the hearing.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED:</u></p> <p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>1 On 30 May 2025 the Council’s Standards Committee considered a report from the Public Services</p>
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Ombudsman for Wales (“the Ombudsman”) into a complaint from Cllr John Spanswick (“the Complainant”) of Bridgend County Borough Council (“the Council”) and Brackla Community Council (“the Town Council”), that Councillor Lisa Lewis (“the Member”) had failed to observe the Council’s Code of Conduct for Members.

2 It was alleged that the Member had maliciously and deliberately tried to discredit the Complainant during a Community Council meeting that was attended by other Councillors and members of the public, and that during a Whats App chat the Member had used accusatory language against the Complainant.

3 The Ombudsman determined that the Member’s behaviour was suggestive of breach of the Council’s Code of Conduct, in particular, the following paragraphs which provide:

- **4(b) Members must show respect and consideration for others**
- **6(1)(a) – Members must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or authority into disrepute.**

4. During the Ombudsman investigation, copies of relevant documents were obtained from the Council, witness accounts were obtained, and statements were taken from the Complainant and the Member.

5 The Ombudsman referred her investigation report to the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council for consideration by the Standards Committee.

6 The Standards Committee initially considered the report of the Ombudsman and determined that the former Member should be given the opportunity to make representations either orally or in written. The Member advised that she wished to attend the hearing.

### **The Hearing**

The Committee considered whether they would hear the matter in public or in private. Both the Member and the Ombudsman made submissions that the hearing should be held in public.

The Committee considered the Ombudsman’s written report and oral submissions, together with the representations submitted by the Member in accordance with the Committee’s pre-hearing procedure. The

Member made a request to call Cllr Steven Bletsoe as a witness. No witness evidence had been produced prior to the hearing. The Member also requested that the Committee listened to two recordings which she suggested were relevant to the proceedings. The Ombudsman objected to the calling of Cllr Bletsoe but did not object to the submission of the recording provided they had the opportunity to listen to the relevant extract.

The Committee determined that they would not allow the Member to call Cllr Bletsoe as a witness. No witness statement had been produced. The Member had been given a number of earlier opportunities to confirm her witnesses and had failed to do so and therefore the Ombudsman hadn't had the opportunity to consider the evidence.

The Committee were prepared to listen to the recording, however the Member chose not to share it. It was therefore not part of the evidence considered by the Committee.

The Committee, in accordance with their adopted procedure dealt with the case in three stages. Their decision in relation to each stage is detailed below.

#### **Findings of Fact**

The Committee first considered the disputed facts and found on the balance of probabilities that:

- Cllr Lewis did inappropriately challenge Cllr Spanswick during the Council meeting on 23 March 2023
- Cllr Lewis was acting her official capacity when she commented on the Whats App group chat
- Cllr Lewis inappropriately challenged Cllr Spanswick during the Whats App group chat on 24 March 2023

#### **Breach of Code of Conduct**

Following the findings of fact the Committee proceeded to hear representations from the PSOW as to whether the facts amounted to a breach of the code of conduct. After careful consideration of all the evidence presented, the Committee determined that the Member had failed to comply with the following paragraph of the Code of Conduct:

4(b) –Members must show respect and consideration for others.

The comment was made in a public meeting without any supporting evidence and was therefore inappropriate. The Committee didn't consider the comment to be highly offensive or outrageous however they did find that the comment was inappropriate in nature and could discredit the Complainant in the eyes of the public.

The comment made on the Whats App group was inappropriate in nature. It referenced the Complainant by name and contained unsubstantiated allegations implying that the Complainant was aware the funding hadn't been used as expected.

The Committee considered that the comments made went beyond political comment and had the potential to cause reputational damage, The Committee considered Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights and determined that due to the nature of the comment it did not attract enhanced protection under Article 10 and an interference with Article 10 rights was justified.

The Committee did not find that the Member had failed to comply with the following paragraph of the Code of Conduct:

6 (1) (a) – The Member must not conduct themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their office or authority into disrepute.

Looking at the conduct of the Member, the Committee didn't consider that it was sufficiently serious in nature to bring the Council into disrepute. The comment was directed at a specific member and not at the wider Council. Whilst the initial comments were in a public forum they were limited in nature and the Member was muted quickly. The additional comments were made in a closed Whats App group that didn't have any public members and therefore couldn't cause wider disrepute.

### **Sanction**

In considering what sanction was appropriate, the Committee listened to representations from the PSOW. They had regards to the Sanctions Guidance issued by the Adjudication Panel for Wales and considered mitigating and aggravating factors.

With regard to mitigating factors, the Committee acknowledged that there had been no previous breaches. They heard character evidence from Cllr Steven Bletsoe and accepted that the Member was passionate about her role and at the time was an inexperienced Councillor. The Committee felt that the Member struggled to articulate herself well and did become frustrated when trying to put her point across.

	<p>Turning to the consideration of <u>aggravating factors</u>, the Committee found that the Member had failed to acknowledge any wrongdoing and didn't show any remorse. They felt she could have tried to raise and resolve the issues in a different way. The Committee acknowledged that there was some confusion as to whether the Member had undertaken code of conduct training. However, the Committee noted the Member had signed her declaration of interest and the onus was on the Member to ensure she understand the Code and undertook any relevant training.</p> <p>The Committee resolved that the Member should be censured in relation to the above breaches of the Code of Conduct This is in accordance with their powers under s 9(1)(c) of the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001</p> <p>The Committee made recommendations that discussions take place around training opportunities for the Member to add real value to the contribution she can make to Brackla Community Council and to ensure she has the relevant skills in a challenging environment. The Committee also recommended that there needs to be a revisit around Code of Conduct training. The Monitoring Officer will also offer her support to other Members of Brackla Community Council.</p> <p>The Member, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Monitoring Officer for Bridgend County Borough Council are notified of the Committee's decision by this Notice of Determination.</p> <p><b><u>Appeal</u></b></p> <p>The Member may seek permission to appeal against the Committee's determination to an appeals tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales by giving notice in writing within 21 days of receiving this notification of determination to the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales. Further details can be found on the Adjudication Panel's website <a href="http://www.adjudicationpanel.gov.wales">www.adjudicationpanel.gov.wales</a>.</p> <p>Bridgend County Borough Council Standards Committee</p> <p>Dated: 6 June 2025</p>
Date Decision Made	30 May 2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this [link](#)

The meeting closed at 14:32.

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Present

S Maughan – Chairperson

MJ Williams

G Walter

P Baker

R Lynch

Apologies for Absence

None

Officers:

Oscar Roberts  
Mark Galvin  
Kelly Watson

Business Administrative Apprentice - Democratic Services  
Senior Democratic Services Officer - Committees  
Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy

Invitees

Cllr Ian Spiller

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Martin Williams – Personal interest as Cllr Spiller is member of his political group.

184. Request For Dispensation

Decision Made	<p>The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer, the purpose of which was to present to the Standards Committee with an application received for special dispensation to speak at the next meeting of Laleston Community Council.</p> <p>The Monitoring officer advised the committee that they may briefly receive representations from the applicant or they may be content to refer to the papers presented to members. She added that should the committee choose to receive representations; they were required to be factual in relation to the reasons provided.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer informed the committee that, on the day the Standards Committee Meeting was convened to hear the application for dispensation, she received contact from an individual who would have objected to the application had there been a process to receive such objections. The objector had been advised that the committee did not have a process to receive objections in the regulations and would therefore make their decision based on the information they have before them.</p> <p>The Chairperson invited the applicant to make his presentation advising him of the necessary guidelines. The applicant stated that the purpose for seeking dispensation was so he could speak on matters arising within discussions at the Laleston Community Council. He specifically made reference to two points :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An update he had circulated to the Council following a school governing body meeting, where he had received confirmation that the governing body were happy to proceed.</li><li>• A discussion regarding an organisation that was not classed as a charity and therefore did not meet the Council's criteria for receiving donations.</li></ul> <p>The applicant stated that these points needed to be clarified within the minutes of the Community Council Meeting and he was seeking dispensation to allow him to provide information on both these points.</p> <p>The Chairperson stated that it was not often that dispensations were received by the Standards Committee and suggested that a separate session be arranged to award members an opportunity to discuss the points raised by the applicant and the subsequent request made. She suggested that they could thereafter inform the applicant of their decision.</p> <p>The Chairperson then briefly adjourned the meeting, in order that the Committee could make a decision upon the application. Upon reconvening, it was</p>
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	<b>RESOLVED :</b> The Committee made a unanimous decision to award the dispensation against both elements mentioned in the application as clarified by the applicant. They stated that the dispensation was only valid specifically for the meeting on the 17th of July and also it did not compel Laleston Council to allow the applicant to speak on the points mentioned. The chairperson stated that it was up to the protocols and the procedures of the local council as to how they enact that decision.
Date Decision Made	14/07/2025

**185. Urgent Items**

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	14/07/2025

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click the following links :

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

The meeting closed at 14:20

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD REMOTELY - VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY, 22 JULY 2025 AT 10:00**

Present

Councillor S Maughan – Chairperson

MJ Williams  
R Lynch

G Thomas

G Walter

P Baker

Apologies for Absence

None

Officers:

Kelly Watson  
Michael Pitman  
Nimi Chandrasena

Chief Officer - Legal & Regulatory Services, HR & Corporate Policy  
Technical Support Officer – Democratic Services  
Note Taker

Invitees

Cllr J Spanswick  
Cllr R Penhale-Thomas  
Cllr A Williams

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Martin Williams declared a person interest as he is married to one of the Group Leaders , Cllr Amanda Williams.

188. Standards of Conduct

Decision Made	<p>The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer, the purpose of which was to present to the Standards Committee the reports of the three political Group Leaders of the Council outlining their compliance with their duties in relation to high standards of conduct.</p> <p>The three Group Leaders presented their reports and were asked the following questions by members :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What could be the one thing each Group Leader could do to improve Member standards in the future. The Group Leaders responded that they would like to :<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Encourage and promote respect among members and for opposing parties.</li><li>- Members with senior roles to set an example for their respective party members</li><li>- Facilitate members to view footage of meetings where their conduct was not up to the expected standard</li></ul></li><li>• Members working in specific committees to receive relevant training and the online training platform to be looked into as some members have been experiencing technical difficulties.</li><li>• The Chairperson asked the Monitoring Officer to comment on the possibility of obtaining data on complaints against members. The Monitoring officer responded that in most cases Group Leaders are copied into correspondence from the inception. She stated that in situations where they are not copied, she would ask members for their consent to copy in the Group Leaders.</li><li>• A member inquired the possibility of scheduling the Standards Meeting to coincide with the Ombudsman's report. The Monitoring Officer responded that the information was not always available within the time frame, however, she had no objections to scheduling the Standards meeting as requested.</li><li>• The Chairperson asked that all Group Leaders ask the members of their party to share information relating to complaints with them.</li><li>• A Group Leader asked if there was a possibility of differentiating between the types of complaints so that Members could be made aware. The Monitoring officer stated that she would prepare a categorization that would benefit members to understand the different types of complaints.</li><li>• The Monitoring Officer suggested alerting members to the code of conduct prior to every meeting</li></ul>
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	<p>by including it into the opening speech of all meetings. A member inquired if it was possible that this could be extended to Community Councils. The monitoring officer stated that she could write to community councils for them to include either as a standing item on their agenda or as a reminder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a discussion around the number of Community Council meetings, member representation at such meetings and the appropriate members to represent their Community Council at the forum.</li> <li>• The Chairperson mentioned the possibility of members of the Standards committee to observe and support community council meeting specially focusing on the ones who have generated complaints and also to use the opportunity to share best practice.</li> <li>• A Group Leader inquired if recordings of Town and Community Council meetings could be shared, the Monitoring Officer responded that as the obligations of the community councils were different to Council, she would have to check the procedure.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>RESOLVED</u></b></p> <p>The Committee considered the reports attached as Appendices 1-3 and provided feedback, it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain data relating to complaints to be provided to Group Leaders and also ask members against whom the complaints were made to inform their relevant Group Leader.</li> <li>• Schedule the Standards Meeting to coincide with the report from the Ombudsman regarding complaints against Councillors.</li> <li>• Prepare a categorization that would benefit members to understand the different types of complaints.</li> <li>• Look at including a statement regarding Code of Conduct in the opening speech of Committee Meetings.</li> <li>• Write to community councils for them to include Code of Conduct either as a standing item on their agenda or as a reminder.</li> <li>• Check procedure in relation to sharing recordings of Town and Community Council Meetings with a view to addressing complaints.</li> </ul>
Date Decision Made	22/07/25

**189. Annual Report**

Decision Made	<p>The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer, the purpose of which was to gain approval from the Committee to present its Annual Report for 2024/25 to Council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>The Committee approved the Annual Report for 2024/25 for the purpose of reporting to Council on 23/07/25.</p>
Date Decision Made	22/07/25

**190. Appointments to the Standards Committee**

Decision Made	<p>The report was presented by the Monitoring Officer, the purpose of which was to advise the Committee of two Independent Member (co-opted) appointments to the Committee to be reported to Full Council on 23 July 2025 for approval.</p> <p>The Chairperson stated that they were two strong candidates who would bring a greater diversity to the panel, which they felt was positive and beneficial for the Panel to be back to full strength. The Monitoring Officer stated that she expected to provide training opportunities to the new members in time for the next meeting of the Standards Committee.</p> <p><u>RESOLVED</u></p> <p>The Committee noted the appointments of Janet Evans and Martyn Daley to the Standards Committee to be reported to Full Council on 23 July 2025.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer would be scheduling training for the new members in preparation for the next meeting of the Standards Committee.</p>
Date Decision Made	22/07/25

**191. Urgent Items**

**STANDARDS COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 22 JULY 2025**

Decision Made	None
Date Decision Made	22/07/25

To observe further debate that took place on the above items, please click this link

The meeting closed at 11:00.

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<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>12 FEBRUARY 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>PUBLIC SERVICES OMUBUDSMAN FOR WALES ANNUAL LETTER 2024/25</b>
<b>Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To present to the Committee the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2024/25.</b>

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to present to the Standards Committee the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter 2024/25 for noting.

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) is independent of all government bodies and has legal powers to investigate complaints about public services and independent care providers in Wales. They also investigate complaints that Members of local government bodies have breached their authority's Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 The PSOW reports annually on the number of complaints against public bodies received by its office.
- 2.3 The Complaints Officer is the Contact Officer for the PSOW, and the Monitoring Officer is responsible for liaising with the PSOW regarding Member Code of Conduct complaints.

## 3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 **Appendix 1** provides the PSOW Annual Letter for 2024-2025.
- 3.2 As outlined in the Annual Letter, the number of complaints against the Authority for the period 2024–2025 was 58 of which 57 were closed. The figure for 2023-2024 was

59. The figure for 2024-25 represents 0.07 complaints received per 1000 residents. Children's Social Services attracted the largest number of complaints - 14. Overall, 20 cases were not investigated, 19 were premature, 12 were out of jurisdiction, 5 were settled by working with the Ombudsman for early resolution. One complaint proceeded to investigation and was upheld.

- 3.3 10 Member Code of Conduct complaints against the Authority's Councillors were received by the PSOW in this period, none of which proceeded to investigation.
- 3.4 The PSOW Complaints Standards Authority publishes datasets on complaints handled by local authorities. These datasets are now published on the Ombudsman's website and on the Council's website. This data shows that in 2024/2025 the Ombudsman intervened in 11% of the Authority's complaints.
- 3.5 In terms of complaints handling roles, Section 115 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 sets out a provision that came into force in April 2021 for the Governance and Audit Committee (GAC) to "review and assess the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and to make reports and recommendations in relation to the authority's ability to handle complaints effectively". GAC currently receives an Annual Report on complaints under its Terms of Reference. Anonymised data is also shared quarterly with the PSOW Complaints Standards Authority as part of the Council's commitment to accountability and learning from complaints.
- 3.6 The Council takes complaints and concerns seriously and will try to learn from any mistakes made. The Information Team (responsible for the management of the Corporate Complaints process) has developed a process to monitor both the effectiveness of the complaints process and how complaints data is being used to improve services and delivery of care. It is proposed that Services then consider any emerging themes and identify any service improvements required as a result of concerns raised. The information identified will then be used to contribute to service development which could include additional training, changes to internal procedures, increased monitoring etc.

#### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

#### **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of wellbeing goals/objectives as a result of this report.
- 5.2 Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

**6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change or nature implications.

**7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

**8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the report.

**Background documents:**

None

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Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 30 September 2025

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## PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor John Spanswick  
Bridgend County Borough Council

### By email only

cllr.john.spanswick@bridgend.gov.uk  
jake.morgan@bridgend.gov.uk  
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Dear Councillor John Spanswick

## Annual Letter 2024-25

### Role of PSOW

As you know, our role as the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is to consider complaints about public services, to investigate alleged breaches of the councillor Code of Conduct, to set standards for complaints handling by public bodies and to drive improvement in complaints handling and learning from complaints. We also undertake investigations into public services on own initiative.

### Purpose of letter

Through this letter, we want to give you an update on our work, share key trends in complaints about local government in Wales and highlight any particular issues for your organisation, together with actions I would like your organisation to take.

### Complaints about public services

This letter, as always, coincides with the publication of our Annual Report. Again, we saw an increase in the number of people contacting us about public services. Since 2019-20, the volume of new complaints about public services reaching our office has increased by 44%.

We also closed a record number of complaints about public services – 5% more than last year. This year, we intervened (found that something has gone wrong, and recommended how to put things right) in 18% of complaints that we closed. Positively, this year we resolved many more complaints early on. 87% of our interventions this year involved Early Resolution, compared to 70% in 2023-24.

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ombwdsmon.cymru  
holwch@ombwdsmon.cymru  
0300 790 0203  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ  
Rydym yn hapus i dderbyn ac  
mateb i ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.

ombudsman.wales  
ask@ombudsman.wales  
0300 790 0203  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ  
We are happy to accept and respond  
to correspondence in Welsh.

We understand that people who come to us want their complaints resolved as quickly as possible and we are committed to dealing with them in a timely manner.

Overall, we assessed incoming complaints, or intervened with an Early Resolution, within an average of 4 weeks; well within our target of 6 weeks. We have also reduced the time it takes us to complete an average investigation, from 64 weeks in 2023-24, to 53 weeks this year.

During 2024-25, we received 1,337 complaints about local councils - an increase of 20% on the previous year and 54% more than in 2019-20.

The main complaint subjects accounting for this increase related to social services, environment and environmental health, and housing. However, we also saw a welcome drop in complaints about complaint handling.

We intervened in 13% of local council complaints that we closed – a similar proportion to recent years.

We received 58 complaints about Bridgend County Borough Council and closed 57 – some complaints were carried over from the previous year. Bridgend County Borough Council's intervention rate was 11%. You can find detailed information on complaints about your organisation that we handled this year can be found in the appendices.

In 2024-25, we made 15 recommendations to your organisation. To ensure that our investigations and reports drive improvement, we follow up compliance with the recommendations agreed with your organisation. In 2024-25, 18 recommendations were due. 28% of the recommendations due was complied within the timescale agreed. Recommendations and timescales for complying with recommendations are always agreed with the public body concerned before being finalised, and we therefore expect organisations to comply within the timescales agreed.

### **Our Code of Conduct work**

Our role is to investigate allegations that councillors have breached their Code of Conduct. Where an investigation finds evidence to support the complaint on a matter which is serious enough to require a referral in the public interest, these cases are referred either to the local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for consideration.

In 2024-25, we received 4% less new Code of Conduct complaints than the previous year. 60% of these complaints related to members of Town and Community Councils. We continue to see that over a half of these complaints (56% this year) tends to relate to promotion of equality and respect.

We made 15 referrals to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales (compared to 21 last year). We are grateful to your Monitoring Officer for their positive engagement with my office over the last year. We will continue to engage with them on matters relating to the ethical standards framework, including Local Resolution Procedures this year.

## **Independent Review**

As you will be aware, last year, it was brought to our attention that a member of staff who had been the Team Leader of our Code of Conduct Team had been making inappropriate and unacceptable social media posts of a political nature.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, we commissioned Dr Melissa McCullough to conduct an independent review of our Code of Conduct work. [Dr McCullough's Report](#), published in September 2024, found that, "in general terms, the PSOW's Code of Conduct processes and delegations are robust in terms of safeguarding fairness and impartiality. They are systematic, well documented and supplemented with appropriate guidance and the reasoning for decisions is required to be recorded and explained as applicable."

While the findings overall were very positive, the review report included a number of recommendations and lessons learned, to "augment the existing safeguards for ensuring the fairness and impartiality of the processes and would clarify the related guidance as applicable."

Following this, the Senedd's Finance Committee published its report on the [Review into the operations, processes and investigations carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#). The Committee made further recommendations to us in its report. The details of all the recommendations and lessons learned and the actions we have taken in response can be found in our Annual Report.

To provide additional assurance, Dr McCullough undertook further independent assessment of how we implemented the recommendations and lessons learned, as set out in her 2024 Independent Review Report. This [assessment](#) concluded that:

- all recommendations and lessons learned were fully accepted by us and have been fully implemented
- we demonstrated a comprehensive, thoughtful and consultative approach to the implementation
- the pace of implementation has been impressive
- a separate quality assurance review confirmed the robustness of our process.

## **Supporting improvement of public services**

We continued our work on supporting improvement in public services.

During 2024-25, we concluded our second wider own initiative investigation which looked into unpaid carers' needs assessments in Wales. We considered whether 4 local councils – Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Flintshire and Neath Port Talbot - undertook carers' assessments in line with their statutory obligations.

We published the report on this investigation in October 2024. We found that only 2.8% of people in those council areas who identified as carers had received a needs assessment. In addition, only 1.5% had received a proper support plan following their assessment. Many carers were also not aware of their rights with regard to assessments and support services that might be available to them.

We identified some areas of good practice by the councils we investigated. However, we also made several recommendations including to:

- improve recording practices
- improve how information is shared with carers
- offer staff refresher training on carers' rights
- collaborate better with the healthcare sector.

We invited the other local councils in Wales to make similar improvements.

As we did in the case of our first own initiative investigation, we have been actively monitoring how organisations' have been complying with our recommendations.

We are planning to review compliance with the recommendations and any other impacts of the report in October 2025.

Currently 54 organisations across Wales operate our model complaints policy. This includes all local councils, all health boards and now most housing associations - representing about 85% of the complaints which we receive.

Our offer of free complaints handling training has remained popular and we provided a further 52 training sessions to public bodies across Wales during the year. This brings the total to 550 training sessions and 10,000 people, since 2020.

We have continued our work to publish complaints statistics, gathered from public bodies, with data published twice a year. We expect to publish the data on complaints handled by local councils in Wales during 2024-25 in the Autumn. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, during 2024-25 5.18% of complaints made to local councils went on to be referred to us. Finally, this year we also published 2 thematic reports, which included as case studies complaints about local councils:

- 'Living in Disrepair' (November 2024): a thematic report about housing disrepair and damp and mould complaints
- 'Equality Matters' (January 2025): a thematic report on inclusion and accessibility across public services.

These reports include general recommendations for public service providers, drawing on lessons learned from our casework.

## **Action we would like your organisation to take**

Further to this letter, can I ask that your organisation takes the following actions:

- Present this Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Consider the data in this letter, alongside your own data, to understand more about your performance on complaints, including any patterns or trends and your organisation's compliance with recommendations made by my office.
- Inform me of the outcome of the organisation's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to thank you, and your officers, for your continued openness and engagement with my office. Our information shows that local authorities are looking into more complaints than ever before and are using information from complaints to deliver better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely

*Michelle Morris*

**Michelle Morris**

Public Services Ombudsman

Cc. Jake Morgan, Chief Executive, Bridgend County Borough Council  
Kelly Watson, Monitoring Officer, Bridgend County Borough Council  
Charlotte Branford, PSOW Liaison Officer, Bridgend County Borough Council

## Information Sheet

**Appendix A** shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2024-25. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

**Appendix B** shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

**Appendix C** shows intervention rates for all Local Authorities in 2024-25. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

**Appendix D** shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2024-25. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

**Appendix E** shows the compliance performance of each Local Authority.

**Appendix F** shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2024-25. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

**Appendix G** shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2024-25. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

## Appendix A – Complaints received (overview)

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Local Authority	MAL			CODE			Total		
	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	14	67356	0.21	1	67356	0.01	15	67356	0.22
Bridgend County Borough Council	58	146743	0.40	10	146743	0.07	68	146743	0.46
Caerphilly County Borough Council	78	176437	0.44	3	176437	0.02	81	176437	0.46
Cardiff Council*	219	383536	0.57	4	383536	0.01	223	383536	0.58
Carmarthenshire County Council	86	190083	0.45	14	190083	0.07	100	190083	0.53
Ceredigion County Council	47	73050	0.64	0	73050	0.00	47	73050	0.64
Conwy County Borough Council	29	114410	0.25	9	114410	0.08	38	114410	0.33
Cyngor Gwynedd	46	119173	0.39	2	119173	0.02	48	119173	0.40
Denbighshire County Council	98	97156	1.01	7	97156	0.07	105	97156	1.08
Flintshire County Council	61	155812	0.39	3	155812	0.02	64	155812	0.41
Isle of Anglesey County Council	22	69291	0.32	2	69291	0.03	24	69291	0.35
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	58593	0.29	3	58593	0.05	20	58593	0.34
Monmouthshire County Council	19	94572	0.20	9	94572	0.10	28	94572	0.30
Neath Port Talbot Council	48	142898	0.34	1	142898	0.01	49	142898	0.34
Newport City Council	61	163628	0.37	1	163628	0.01	62	163628	0.38
Pembrokeshire County Council	47	125006	0.38	6	125006	0.05	53	125006	0.42
Powys County Council	55	134439	0.41	24	134439	0.18	79	134439	0.59
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	62	241178	0.26	3	241178	0.01	65	241178	0.27
Swansea Council	113	246742	0.46	6	246742	0.02	119	246742	0.48
Torfaen County Borough Council	20	93419	0.21	4	93419	0.04	24	93419	0.26
Vale of Glamorgan Council	61	134733	0.45	3	134733	0.02	64	134733	0.48
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	136149	0.56	11	136149	0.08	87	136149	0.64
<b>Total</b>	<b>1337</b>	<b>3164404</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>3164404</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>1463</b>	<b>3164404</b>	<b>0.45</b>

## Appendix B – Complaints received (by organisation)

<b>Bridgend County Borough Council</b>	<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>% Share</b>
Adult Social Services	2	3%
Benefits Administration	0	
Children's Social Services	14	24%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	
Complaints Handling	4	7%
Covid19	0	
Education	4	7%
Environment and Environmental Health	10	17%
Finance and Taxation	5	9%
Health	0	
Housing	7	12%
Licencing	0	
Planning and Building Control	8	14%
Roads and Transport	1	2%
Self Funding Care Provider	0	
Various Other	3	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	

## Appendix C – Cases with PSOW intervention (overview)

Local authority	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	12	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	6	57	11%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	11	79	14%
Cardiff Council*	37	190	19%
Carmarthenshire County Council	11	86	13%
Ceredigion County Council	11	45	24%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	29	17%
Denbighshire County Council**	6	98	6%
Flintshire County Council	7	61	11%
Cyngor Gwynedd	3	44	7%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	1	20	5%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	15	7%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	16	6%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	6	62	10%
Pembrokeshire County Council	8	47	17%
Powys County Council	8	51	16%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	6	60	10%
Swansea Council	12	109	11%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	18	0%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	12	63	19%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	72	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>1279</b>	<b>13%</b>

### Appendix D – Complaint outcomes (by organisation) (\* denotes intervention)

<b>Bridgend County Borough Council</b>	<b>Complaint Outcomes</b>	<b>% Share</b>
Complaint investigation discontinued (with early resolution at assessment stages)*	0	
Complaint investigation discontinued (without settlement)	0	
Decision not to investigate complaint	20	35%
Early resolution*	5	9%
Matter out of jurisdiction	12	21%
Non-public interest report issued: complaint not upheld	0	
Non-public interest report issued: complaint upheld*	1	2%
Non-public interest report issued: complaint upheld with early resolution at assessment stage*	0	
Premature	19	33%
Public interest report issued: complaint upheld*	0	
Public Interest report issued: complaint upheld with early resolution at assessment stage*	0	
Special Interest Report*	0	
Voluntary settlement*	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	

## Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

Local Authority	Number of recommendations made on complaints closed in 2024-25	Number of recommendations falling due in 2024-25	% of recommendations, complied with in line with agreed target date
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Bridgend County Borough Council	15	18	28%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	24	24	50%
Cardiff Council*	97	96	56%
Carmarthenshire County Council	29	27	67%
Ceredigion County Council	24	24	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	14	14	71%
Denbighshire County Council**	10	8	50%
Flintshire County Council	20	22	91%
Cyngor Gwynedd	9	9	89%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	4	6	0%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	4	0%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	2	0%
Neath Port Talbot Council	11	8	75%
Newport City Council	12	11	27%
Pembrokeshire County Council	20	18	61%
Powys County Council	21	23	22%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	10	20%
Swansea Council	25	24	33%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Vale of Glamorgan Council	30	31	55%
Wrexham County Borough Council	19	16	75%

**Appendix F - Code of Conduct Complaints Closed (\* denotes investigation)**

<b>Bridgend County Borough Council</b>	<b>Code of Conduct Complaints Closed</b>
Cc not acted on	0
Code of Conduct leaflet sent/link to website provided	0
Complaint taken over telephone – awaiting signature	0
Complaint Withdrawn	0
Discontinued. Not in the public interest to pursue*	0
Duplicate complaint with no new evidence	0
Information provided	0
No action necessary*	2
No declaration rec'd – Withdrawn	0
No evidence of Breach*	0
No prima facie evidence of breach	4
Not in the public interest to investigate	4
Out of Jurisdiction - signposted	0
Premature - referred for local resolution	0
Referred to Adjudication Panel*	0
Referred to Standards Committee*	0
Withdrawn	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

## Appendix G - Town / Community Council Code of Complaints

Bridgend County Borough Council	Decision not to investigate Code		Investigations						Total
	Not in the public interest to investigate	No prima facie evidence of breach	Discontinued. Not in the public interest to pursue	No action necessary	No evidence of Breach	Referred to Adjudication Panel	Referred to Standards Committee		
Brackla Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Bridgend Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	
Cefn Cribwr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Coity Higher Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Cornelly Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Coychurch Higher Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Coychurch Lower Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Garw Valley Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Laleston Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Llangynwyd Lower Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Llangynwyd Middle Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Maesteg Town Council	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	
Merthyr Mawr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Newcastle Higher Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Ogmore Valley Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pencoed Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Porthcawl Town Council	10	4	0	2	0	0	0	16
Pyle Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Brides Minor Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ynysawdre Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

# Agenda Item 5

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>12 FEBRUARY 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>LOCAL RESOLUTION PROTOCOL</b>
<b>Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To present to the Committee the revised Local Resolution Protocol for consideration.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Standards Committee the revised Local Resolution Protocol for consideration following a review carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) of all the local resolution protocols of principal local authorities across Wales and recommendations made by the All Wales Monitoring Officers' Group.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Committee will be aware that the formal route for complaints relating to the conduct of another Member under the Code of Conduct for Members would be for the complaint to be made directly to the PSOW. In September 2012, the PSOW revised its Guidance for Members to encourage informal local resolution of low-level complaints in order to avoid the need for a formal investigation by the Ombudsman and to avoid unnecessary escalation of the situation which might impact on personal relationships and potentially cause wider damage to corporate governance or the reputation of the Council.
- 2.2 In 2013, the Council adopted a Local Resolution Protocol (LRP) for the determination of complaints made by a Member against another Member(s) in response to the PSOW guidance.

## **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 The PSOW has carried out a review of the LRPs of each of the principal local authorities in Wales. The review identified a varied approach to local resolution in terms of:
- the type of complaints which were deemed to be ‘low level’
  - the role of the Standards Committee or members of it
  - the inclusion of an agreement not to refer a matter to PSOW whilst the protocol is in operation
  - reference to the statutory duties on Group Leaders in managing standards of conduct and
  - the outcomes available when the protocols are used
- 3.2 As part of its review, the PSOW sought Counsel’s opinion which was shared with Monitoring Officers for consideration. A Working Group of Monitoring Officers was established to review the advice note and the Group subsequently recommended that each local authority should review its LRP to reflect Counsel’s advice. The findings of the Working Group are outlined at **Appendix 1**.
- 3.3 Having regard to the Monitoring Officers’ Group recommendations (reflecting Counsel’s advice on local resolution processes) the Council’s LRP has been reviewed and updated (**Appendix 2**). It is proposed that the Committee agree the revised LRP for submission to full Council for approval.
- 4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**
- 4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.
- 5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**
- 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of wellbeing goals/objectives as a result of this report.
- 5.2 Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.
- 6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**
- 6.1 There are no climate change or nature implications.
- 7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**
- 7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.
- 8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**9. Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree the revised Local Resolution Protocol for submission to full Council for approval.

**Background documents:**

None

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## Bridgend County Borough Council Local Resolution Protocol

### General Principles

- This Protocol for self-regulation of Member conduct has been adopted in response to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales guidance on the Code of Conduct for Members which states that “low level” complaints which are made by a Member against a fellow Member regarding alleged failures of the Code should be dealt with at a local level. The aim is to resolve matters at an early stage so as to avoid the unnecessary escalation of the situation which may damage personal relationships within the Council and the Council’s reputation.
- It should be noted that this Protocol does not replace the Code of Conduct rather it is intended to sit alongside it enabling complaints which may not reach the Ombudsman’s threshold to be dealt with.
- Members are not precluded from referring any complaint to the Ombudsman at any time if they so wish, however, it should be noted that the Ombudsman is likely to refer the matter back to the Monitoring Officer in the first instance so that the procedures set out in this Protocol are fully exhausted.
- If a complaint is referred to the Ombudsman, then the use of this Protocol will be stopped; and will only resume if the complaint is referred back to the Council for local resolution.
- All Members will work to ensure compliance with this Protocol and will commit to training and development in support of the Protocol and in compliance with Section 7 of the Local Government Measure 2011.
- This Protocol does not apply to complaints from members of the public (which should instead be raised directly with the Ombudsman) or complaints by Members about officers (which should instead be raised in accordance with the Protocol on Member / Officer Relations within the Constitution and may be investigated under the Disciplinary Policy).

### Criteria

For a complaint to fall within the remit of this Protocol, it should satisfy the following criteria:

- The complaint is made by a Member (or Co-Opted Member) of the Council and relates to a breach of the Code by a fellow Member or the complaint is made by an Officer of the Council and relates to a breach of the Code by a Member or Co-Opted Member of the Council.

- The complaint is “low level”. The Ombudsman has advised that, “typically these complaints will be about alleged failures to show respect and consideration for others as required by paragraph 4(b) of the Code or the duty not to make vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints against other Members under paragraph 6(1)(d) of the Code”. Complaints which, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, potentially involve a serious breach of the Code shall be referred to the Ombudsman for consideration and expressly excluded (please see examples at Appendix 1).
- The complaint does not relate to repeated occurrences of similar conduct that has already been dealt with under this Protocol or by the Ombudsman. In the event that the complaint relates to such a “repeated offence” it is likely that it will be appropriate to refer the matter to the Ombudsman directly.
- If a Member or officer is unsure whether a matter they wish to complain about is “low level” or within the remit of this Protocol, they may wish to discuss with the Monitoring Officer (who may consult with the Ombudsman) to obtain further guidance.

### Procedure

- The Member seeking to make a complaint under this Protocol should in the first instance arrange to discuss the matter with the Monitoring Officer (or in their absence the Deputy Monitoring Officer who may assume the role of the Monitoring Officer under this Protocol). The purpose of doing so is to determine whether the matter should be dealt with under this Protocol or whether the complainant should be advised of the option to instead refer their complaint directly to the Ombudsman for investigation.
- The operation of this Protocol is subject to the agreement of both parties to participate in the process, as set out, and to comply with its agreed outcome.
- If the Monitoring Officer advises that the matter is suitable to be dealt with under this Protocol, and the complainant is content to use this Protocol, the Monitoring Officer will arrange a meeting of the Members concerned (either together or separately) with the aim of resolving the matter by conciliation at an early stage so as to avoid the unnecessary escalation of the situation.
- The Monitoring Officer will adopt such arrangements as he /she deems necessary in an attempt to resolve the complaint and may require the attendance of any Member or Officer at a meeting as he /she determines beneficial. This may involve reliance upon the Group

Leaders if initial attempts at resolution have not been successful by the Monitoring Officer, noting they have a statutory duty to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of their group which may include supporting informal resolution procedures in the Council, and working with the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer to achieve local resolution.

- The parties may agree that the matter has been satisfactorily resolved by those discussions or subject to: (a) any appropriate remedial action being taken; (b) the offer of an apology or apologies; and or (c) an agreement to attend any specific training. There can be no statutory determination of a breach of the Code of Conduct or the imposition of any sanction/s other than an invitation to take one or more of the options listed above.
- If the matter cannot be resolved by mutual resolution, the Member bringing the complaint may refer the matter to the Ombudsman.

## Appendix 1 – Outside the remit of this Protocol

Examples of the types of complaints which may be regarded as a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, and therefore outside the remit of the Protocol, include (but are not limited to):

- a) where it is alleged that the member deliberately sought personal gain for themselves or another person at the public expense
- b) where the circumstances of the breach are such that a member is alleged to have misused a position of trust or authority and caused harm to a person
- c) where the breach is alleged to be motivated by any form of discrimination against the victim's ethnic or national origin, gender, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity
- d) where there is evidence of previous similar behaviour, or the member has previously been found to have breached the Code by a standards committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales
- e) where there is evidence of a course of conduct, the conduct is ongoing, or the misconduct is escalating
- f) where an investigation or referral to a standards committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales is required to maintain public confidence in elected members in Wales
- g) where it is likely that the breach would lead to a sanction being applied to the Member and where the use of resources in carrying out an investigation or hearing by a standards committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales would be regarded as proportionate when weighed against any likely sanction.

## LOCAL RESOLUTION PROTOCOL

### WORKING GROUP

### REPORT BACK

6<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025

#### **Members**

Victoria Davidson, Andrew Wilkins, Rhian Young, Gareth Owens, Debbie Marles, Clive Pinney, Kelly Watson, Robert Edgecombe, Leanne Weston

#### **Background**

The PSOW conducted a review of all LRP's taking counsel's advice on their provisions. Following that review the PSOW shared with MOG the findings from counsel's advice (Appendix 1). We agreed to convene a small working group to consider preparing a model protocol that would address the perceived problems identified by counsel for the PSOW.

The group met on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025 and 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025. It considered the summary of counsel's advice (kindly provided by the PSOW), the group leader's duty (Appendix 2) and all the current LRPs that had been supplied to the PSOW when they undertook their own review.

During its deliberations the group agreed that a model LRP would not be prepared. The group has therefore drafted a checklist based on the comments by counsel with advice for each council to review its own LRP against the points listed below.

In addition, given that there would not be a model LRP document, we agreed that we would recommend each council to review its LRP against the principles enunciated in the advice from counsel to the PSOW as follows:

- 1) The LRP should only apply to the following (subject to point 2 below):
  - a. low level complaints -
  - b. complaints only at county/county borough council/city council level
  - c. member-on-member complaints
- 2) The LRP may include the option to permit officers to use/complain under the protocol as well
- 3) The LRP should specify the standards of behaviour expected – an aggregate list of behaviours drawn from 8 existing LRP's is attached for suggested inclusion (Appendix 3)
- 4) Examples of what might be perceived to be high level complaints can be included in the LRP but it should state that the MO will advise in the all the circumstances and the complainant will choose which route to adopt.
- 5) It is difficult for the MO to appear unbiased and to fulfil their statutory role in proceedings if they make a complaint themselves and so the complainant should be urged to refer the matter to the PSOW if warranted rather than the MO performing that task
- 6) The complainant and the member must agree to use the protocol
- 7) The LRP should not apply to
  - a. complaints from members of the public

- b. complaints by members about officers because, as employees, the correct measure to use would be the council's disciplinary policy (which may well include an informal resolution stage in any event)
- 8) Use of the protocol cannot exclude the statutory right of the complainant to complain to the PSOW at any time they choose
  - 9) The number of stages within the LRP is up to each council but 2 seems to be most common.
  - 10) Whether the LRP includes group leaders is up to each council but it should be borne in mind that they have a duty to assist the Standards Committee in its duties ([relevant extract below](#)). Some LRP's rely upon Group Leaders as the primary agents to resolve complaints, but it is more common for them to be called in at the second stage if initial attempts at resolution by the Monitoring Officer have not been successful
  - 11) The inclusion of a hearing stage is not recommended because of perceived predetermination (see below) and because without a clear statutory basis it is not possible to interfere with a person's human rights. If a hearing stage is included then the following should be borne in mind:
    - a. There is no statutory basis for a sanction and even a finding of breach can be regarded as an interference with a councillor's human rights
    - b. Any "sanctions" should therefore be limited to inviting the member to apologise and/or undertake training
    - c. The Standards Committee must be cognisant that should the complaint subsequently be made to the PSOW and referred back for a hearing it will need to exclude any members who might be said to have predetermined the matter.
    - d. If an LRP includes a hearing stage, then it should also include a statement about which members will take part and which will be kept in reserve. Some LRPs deal with this by saying a single Independent Member will be engaged as a form of advisory arbiter to the Monitoring Officer in lieu of a hearing

I am grateful to the members of the LRP for their input and to Debbie Marles for chairing a meeting when I was myself unable to attend.

Gareth Owens

Chief Officer Governance, Flintshire County Council

Chair of Working Group

As discussed at the last MOG meeting, PSOW has obtained a legal opinion on the status of some provisions with Local Resolution Procedures ('LRPs').

As agreed, this note sets out the key issues of principle arising from the advice and the PSOW's position on the use of LRPs:

- LRPs are entirely informal and there is no statutory basis for LRPs
- LRPs are intended to deal with low level & trivial complaints, for example allegations of a failure to show respect and consideration at the very lowest level and which the right to free speech may indicate are not breaches of the code (For example, [One Voice Wales's LRP](#) for Town & Community Council's states "*Serious complaints – breaches of the Code of Conduct, failure to disclose interests/bullying/abuse of position or trust/repeated breaches*" should not be considered under the process
- Issues which are suitable for consideration under a Local Resolution Procedure should be clearly defined to avoid any confusion arising. Examples seen that draw on an authorities established standards of conduct which sit alongside the Code of Conduct provide a clear list of examples of behaviour expected from Councillors
- Matters that suggest a breach of the Code for example, relating to the declaration of interests, bullying, disreputable conduct should be referred to the PSOW for consideration and expressly excluded if possible
- The powers of Standards Committees under an LRP are legally uncertain or tenuous at best given that there is no statutory basis for it in the LGA 2000 or other statute/secondary legislation
- LRPs are drafted on the basis that the complainant and the subject of the complaint agree to participate (i.e. upon consent) with both agreeing to participate and agreeing to be bound by its outcome. Although, it is reasonable that a complaint to PSOW will bring the LRP process to a stop, the parties should not be precluded by that agreement from making a referral if they consider it is appropriate to do so after the process has started
- The ethical standards regime as a system does not however deal with 'private rights' – rather it is intended to maintain standards in public life in which 'the complainant' merely acts as a trigger to an investigation by PSOW
- No decision under an LRP can oust the PSOW's power to investigate a potential breach of the Code under s69(1)(a) of the LGA 2000. This is a statutory power with the purpose of maintaining high standards of conduct in public life in Wales and cannot be and isn't limited by the private agreement of two individuals who submit to an LRP
- Therefore, any 'sanction' which a standards committee decides to 'informally' apply, could result in the committee finding itself revisiting in a quasi-judicial capacity a complaint they have already considered under an LRP if the PSOW were to refer the back to it formally under the LGA 2000. This is dubious from a public law perspective because it would constitute 'predetermination' and impinge upon and fetter the discretion of the PSOW. Examples seen that stop short of a determination of No Further Action or Censure seem to

offer practical resolutions to issues negating such risks. We have also seen good practice where any member of a standards committee who has been involved in an informal LRP process, is then required to step back from any future consideration of a formal referral

- Were a standards committee to do this, the PSOW will fulfil her role under the LGA as usual, applying her usual approach when deciding whether to investigate and which of the findings under s69(4)(1)(a) – (d) is appropriate in the circumstances

The principles set out above are consistent with the PSOW's [Guidance](#) which refers to LRPs dealing with 'low level' complaints and disputes, typically about alleged failures to show respect and consideration.

This approach is also consistent with the High Court decision of *Bishop v The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales [2020] EWHC 1503 (Admin)*. The councillor sought an injunction from the High Court restraining the Ombudsman's investigation on the grounds that the complaint should have been dealt with pursuant to an LRP. The court rejected that argument. Any complaint received by the PSOW triggers the Ombudsman's powers under s69 of the LGA 2000 – upon receipt of a 'written allegation', the PSOW 'may investigate'.

If a discussion about this issue would be helpful we are happy to arrange this. When the Ombudsman revises her guidance in the autumn we will revisit the section on LRPs.

.....



Section 52A(1)(a) of the 2000 Act requires that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council or county borough council in Wales, must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group.

The duty does not make leaders of a political group accountable for the behaviour of their members as conduct must be a matter of individual responsibility and accountability. However, they do have a role in taking reasonable steps in maintaining high standards, setting an example, using their influence to support a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in their group and addressing issues of alleged non-compliance as soon as they arise.

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 [my emphasis]
- 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

**LOCAL RESOLUTION PROTOCOLS WITH SPECIFIC  
STANDARDS OF CONDUCT/BEHAVIOUR INCLUDED**

**Appendix 3**

Flintshire, Monmouthshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Vale of Glamorgan, Neath Port Talbot, Gwynedd, Powys and Caerphilly

Members must:

**Behaviour towards others / Public Behaviour:**

- Show respect to each other and officers
- Not make personal or abusive comments about each other or officers
- Not accuse each other or officers of lying or falsifying facts or documents
- Not make malicious allegations against each other or officers
- Not publish anything insulting about each other
- Not publish or spread any false information about each other or officers
- Show respect to diversity and equality
- Show respect to each other's diverse background and circumstances
- Not accuse or imply that officers are acting from political motives
- Use social media responsibly and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

**Behaviour in meetings:**

- Behave with dignity in meetings
- Show respect to and obey decisions of the Chair and conversely Members can expect the Chair to show mutual respect to Members
- Make points based on the issue under discussion not personal remarks about others
- Allow others to speak without interruption or heckling
- Not to use indecent language nor make discriminatory remarks or remarks which prejudice or may be deemed to be offensive any section of society
- Exclude officers from the scope of political remarks

**Confidentiality:**

- Keep the confidentiality of exempt papers and any other documents which are not public.
- Not to release confidential information to the press or the public.
- Return or securely destroy confidential papers.
- Not to use confidential information for purposes other than intended.

## **Local members**

- Work with any joint ward member and/or members of adjoining wards for the benefit of the locality.
- If dealing with any matter relating to another ward
  - Explain to anyone seeking assistance that they are not the local member;
  - Inform the local member, unless it would lead to a breach of confidentiality
- Ensure that officers are treated with respect at public meetings within their ward. Where several Councillors are at the same public meeting all share this obligation equally.

# Agenda Item 6

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>12 FEBRUARY 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>UPDATES FROM OBSERVING TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS</b>
<b>Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To update the Committee following Members of this Committee observing meetings of Town and Community Councils.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Standards Committee following Members of this Committee observing meetings of Town and Community Councils.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 There are a number of roles and functions of the Standards Committee, one of which is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted Members. As part of the Committee's work programme, it has previously been agreed that Independent Members of the Standards Committee would attend meetings of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings to observe meetings with a view to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 In deciding which meetings to attend, it was proposed that the Committee consider the following:
- BCBC Council meetings are deemed pivotal as this is where all Elected Members meet, political discussions are held and decisions are made.

- Members may wish to observe an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as it provides an opportunity for Members to hold the Executive and Senior Officers to account in relation to decisions made and to be made.
- Observing TCC meetings and the undertaking of observations from Clerks and Chairs of TCCs allows the sharing of good practice.
- The Governance and Audit Committee is regularly observed by external regulators and therefore it may be considered excessive for the Committee to also attend to observe these meetings.
- The Committee may wish to observe a regulatory committee.

2.3 A schedule of future visits has been produced and an Observation Evaluation Sheet to provide Independent Members with a list of questions to consider when undertaking the visits. Chairs of BCBC Council meetings and Clerks of TCCs will then be advised by Democratic Services of the dates of the meetings that Independent Members intend observing in order that arrangements for the agenda and the link to the meeting can be forwarded to the Members in time for the meeting. The arrangements for attending meetings of BCBC will also be shared and approved in advance by the Group Leaders.

2.4 Following the observation, it is recommended that the information gathered and any concerns / comments of the Independent Members are fed back to the Committee Chairs, Clerks and / or Chair of the TCCs by the Monitoring Officer. The Independent Members will also report to the next available Standards Committee following their visits. The Monitoring Officer may also seek to receive feedback of how Chairs and / or Clerks intend to take any suggestions made, as a result of observations, forward.

2.5 Whilst the intention of the Standards Committee would be to restrict the observations made to Code of Conduct matters, it is inevitable that other process / governance issues may emerge which Members may include in their observations in the hope they assist BCBC, TCCs and its Members moving forward.

### **3. Current situation / proposal**

3.1 There have been three recent observations:

- 15 January 2026 – Brackla Community Council
- 10 November 2025 – St Brides Minor Community Council
- 28 October 2025 – Maesteg Town Council

3.2 The observation sheets are attached as **Appendix 1**. There were no specific concerns raised during the observations and no matter needed to be reported back to the Chairs / Clerks for further consideration.

### **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the

review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

## **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

- 5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report. The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

## **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 6.1 There are no climate change or nature implications arising from this report.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications arising from this report.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 Independent Members are able to be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC). The costs will be met from the existing Democratic Services budget.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 Members are recommended to note the report.

### **Background documents:**

None

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## Observations of Independent Member of Standards Committee

Name of Independent Member observing:

Janet Evans \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting observed: \_\_Brackla Community  
Council \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Meeting: \_\_\_\_ 15<sup>th</sup> January  
2026 \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Meeting: 6.30 pm \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Meeting: \_\_Oakdale Surgery,  
Brackla \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Member observing: \_\_\_\_\_ In  
person \_\_\_\_\_

Were you welcomed by the Chair / Monitoring Officer?

I was greeted by the Clerk and the Finance Officer and they then introduced me to the chair when he Arrived .

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Were Members of the Committee advised that you were observing the Meeting?

Members of the Committee were informed in advance via email from the Clerk that I would be attending .

The Chair didn't formally welcome me to the meeting or remind the members why I was in attendance

---

Did Members and Officer(s) have name cards identifying who they were?

8 people were physically in attendance in the Board Room , excluding me, but including 4 councilors, the Clerk, Admin Officer, Finance Officer and BCBC Liaison Officer. Name cards were not available .

4 councilors attended remotely – names were displayed on screen but not their role.

---

Were copies of the agenda available on the website and were any copies available for the public (if attending in person)?

Agenda was not available on the website prior to the meeting.

I mentioned this to the Clerk following the meeting and he said he would check .

Hard copies of agenda was available to all who attended in person. There were no members of the public, but there were spare copies of the agenda should anyone have attended.

---

Did the meeting commence on time?

yes

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Does the Authority have a procedure for public speaking or is there an opportunity to suspend Standing Orders to allow a person to speak?

Could not assess as no public in attendance. However, the agenda clearly stated that there were no public matters to discuss.

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Were motions moved and seconded? Decisions were mostly taken on the basis of consensus

Motions both moved, seconded and unanimously passed

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If there wasn't agreement by the meeting as a whole was the motion voted on?

n/a

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Were any amendments moved and seconded?

none

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Did the meeting follow the agenda?

Agenda was followed.

---

Were rulings by the Chair adhered to?

Yes.

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If Exempt items appeared on the agenda, did Members agree to move into closed session for this part of the agenda?

\_\_\_\_\_no exempt agenda items, but agenda allowed for part 2 discussions should they be required\_\_\_\_\_

Were Members of the Public (including the Independent Standards Committee Member) asked to leave the meeting room prior to the discussion of exempt matters?

n/a

Were there any other items discussed at the meeting without a report being available and no prior notice given?

\_\_\_\_\_none\_\_\_\_\_

Did Members show respect and consideration for others?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes.\_\_\_\_\_

If a Member declared a personal interest, did the Member explain the nature of the interest?

Yes, members declared a personal interest – mostly as a result of also being a members of BCBC

If a Member declared a personal and prejudicial interest in a report did they leave the Meeting during the consideration of the relevant report?

Yes. This happened during the last Agenda item which was to discuss a planning application. A few Community councillors are also members of BCBC Planning committee so the declared an interest and left the room.

What time did the Meeting end? 7.20 pm

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Any additional general comments

- \_\_\_ When chatting with the finance officer and the Clerk after the meeting, It was mentioned that this meeting had been a particularly short and uncontentious one and that the meetings are often very confrontational especially between different political parties. Maybe worth considering observing another meeting later in the year. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ when reviewing the minutes of previous meeting, the chair asked in anyone had attended the training available by One Voice Wales - no one had taken up this training. Maybe we can emphasise the importance of this training to the Clerks and Chairs of Town and Community Councils.
- Whilst discussing the One Voice Wales Training, it was asked whether the BCBC Monitoring Office had organised the training that had previously been discussed. This was mentioned twice during the course of the meeting so may be worth striking whilst the iron is hot

## Observations of Independent Member of Standards Committee

Name of Independent Member observing:	Martyn Daley
Meeting observed:	St Brides Minor Community Council
Date of Meeting:	10 November 2025
Time of Meeting:	1800
Location of Meeting:	Sarn Lifelong Learning Centre
Location of Member observing:	Public Seating area (In person, not remotely)

Were you welcomed by the Chair / Monitoring Officer?
Yes
Were Members of the Committee advised that you were observing the Meeting?
Yes
Did Members and Officer(s) have name cards identifying who they were?
Yes
Were copies of the agenda available on the website and were any copies available for the public (if attending in person)?
Yes
Did the meeting commence on time?
Yes
Does the Authority have a procedure for public speaking or is there an opportunity to suspend Standing Orders to allow a person to speak?
There was an Agenda Item for the public to speak, apart from introductions, nobody chose to
Were motions moved and seconded? Decisions were mostly taken on the basis of consensus
Mostly by consensus. Some were moved and seconded, none were contested and nothing struck me as being untoward.
If there wasn't agreement by the meeting as a whole was the motion voted on?
Not applicable.
Were any amendments moved and seconded?
No. One or two matters were revisited by and revised entirely by consensus.
Did the meeting follow the agenda?
Yes, certainly.
Were rulings by the Chair adhered to?

The Chair capably conducted the meeting well and was regarded with appropriate respect there were no formal rulings apart from the flow from item to item.
If Exempt items appeared on the agenda, did Members agree to move into closed session for this part of the agenda?
Did not occur.
Were Members of the Public (including the Independent Standards Committee Member) asked to leave the meeting room prior to the discussion of exempt matters?
Did not occur.
Were there any other items discussed at the meeting without a report being available and no prior notice given?
No
Did Members show respect and consideration for others?
Yes, throughout.
If a Member declared a personal interest, did the Member explain the nature of the interest?
Yes
If a Member declared a personal and prejudicial interest in a report did they leave the Meeting during the consideration of the relevant report?
Yes, this happened on two occasions when firstly two members withdrew for an item, and on the second occasion, one member withdrew.
What time did the Meeting end?
1942

Any additional general comments
A positive experience throughout. I was struck by the number of Members holding positions on more than one Community Council. This is probably a measure of the lack of people prepared to take public office. Those Members are to be commended, but it is, perhaps, a worrying reflection of the level of engagement among the electorate.

## Observations of Independent Member of Standards Committee

Name of Independent Member observing:	Roy Lynch
Meeting observed:	Maesteg Town Council
Date of Meeting:	28th Oct 2025
Time of Meeting:	18.30pm
Location of Meeting:	Maesteg council chamber
Location of Member observing:	Via Teams

Were you welcomed by the Chair / Monitoring Officer?
Unsure if I was introduced by clerk , unfortunately I had difficulty logging on and signed in approx 2mins late.
Were Members of the Committee advised that you were observing the Meeting?
Unsure
Did Members and Officer(s) have name cards identifying who they were?
Identity cards were visible, unfortunately I was unable to read them on screen
Were copies of the agenda available on the website and were any copies available for the public (if attending in person)?
I received a copy of the agenda via a link to the website. I am unsure if copies were available to the public. * See additional report.
Did the meeting commence on time?
The meeting had a prompt start.
Does the Authority have a procedure for public speaking or is there an opportunity to suspend Standing Orders to allow a person to speak?
Unsure
Were motions moved and seconded? Decisions were mostly taken on the basis of consensus
Motions were moved, seconded but were then agreed by consensus.
If there wasn't agreement by the meeting as a whole was the motion voted on?
N/A
Were any amendments moved and seconded?
yes
Did the meeting follow the agenda?
A full agenda was presented and followed item by
Were rulings by the Chair adhered to?

Yes
If Exempt items appeared on the agenda, did Members agree to move into closed session for this part of the agenda?
N/A
Were Members of the Public (including the Independent Standards Committee Member) asked to leave the meeting room prior to the discussion of exempt matters?
N/A
Were there any other items discussed at the meeting without a report being available and no prior notice given?
No, all items discussed appeared on the agenda
Did Members show respect and consideration for others?
A inclusive meeting, elected members showing respect for others at all times.
If a Member declared a personal interest, did the Member explain the nature of the interest?
On at least one occasion, ie Governors at a school applying for a g
If a Member declared a personal and prejudicial interest in a report did they leave the Meeting during the consideration of the relevant report?
N/A
What time did the Meeting end?
19.45 APPROX

Any additional general comments
*SEE ADDITIONAL REPORT

Observation of TCC by independent (Lay) Member of Standards Committee,

Observed by Roy Lynch – attending via Teams.

Held at Maesteg Council Chamber

A Hybrid meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> Oct 2025, started at 18.30

I had excellent communications with the Clerk. They initially confirmed the date and time of the meeting and provided a link to the agenda located on the Town Council Website. On the day of the meeting I was provided a “Teams Link” well in advance of the start of the meeting. Unfortunately I had technical difficulties with “Teams” and arrived at the meeting a few minutes late.

I am unsure if the Elected Members were aware I intended to observe the meeting due to my lateness and therefore I did not have the opportunity read the Standards Committee “Observation Statement”.

I enjoyed the experience which gave me a greater insight into how TCC meetings are conducted and the scope of work they undertake.

From my observation I am more aware of the Expertise and Professional role of the Clerk. The meeting was conducted in a professional well-ordered manner. This was aided by the way both the Clerk and Chair worked collaboratively to manage the agenda. On a number of occasions and in the relevant place the Clerk reminded the Elected Members of the documents sent via their meeting packs to aid discussion. The Chair's approach was very inclusive, ensuring each Elected Member was able to speak on a relevant agenda item. I came away from the meeting feeling that all the Elected Members worked together for the benefit of their constituents and the Town Council as a whole - respecting each other's opinion.

An example being: the discussion on the Draft Budget. This was mainly based around the increase of the Precept from April 2026. Various points of view were put forward. Recommendations from the Finance Sub Committee were presented. The discussion was aided by an active “on screen” spreadsheet, where the Clerk/ Chair was able to increase/decrease the % Precept. Following proposals, and amendments a consensus was agreed.

I was also interested to note the appointment of the role of a Deputy Clerk.

Going forward -The Standards Committee should support the work of the TCC Clerks.

I am unsure if the following is within the remit of the Standards Committee – If we could consider the following:

To conduct a Work Force Review in relation to TCC Clerks. ie If any Clerk is intending to retire due to work load and or retirement age.

Does each TCC also employ a Deputy Clerk to ensure succession and continuity due to retirement?

If not due to financial constraints - The possibility of conducting Advertising campaign to encourage the next generation of TCC Clerks.

# Agenda Item 7

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>12 FEBRUARY 2026</b>
<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRPERSON</b>
<b>Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member</b>	<b>MONITORING OFFICER</b>
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	<b>LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES</b>
<b>Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:</b>	<b>There is no effect upon the policy framework and procedure rules, however the Standards Committee contributes to the maintenance of probity in the Council.</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>	<b>To appoint a Vice-Chair for the Standards Committee.</b>

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to appoint a Vice Chairperson for the Standards Committee.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Under the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 the members of a Standards Committee shall elect a Chairperson from amongst the Independent Members of the Committee.
- 2.2 A Chairperson shall be elected for whichever is the shorter of the following periods: (a) a period of not less than four nor more than six years, (b) until the term of office of that person as an independent member of that standards committee comes to an end.
- 2.3 The Council's Standards Committee consists of five Independent Members, two County Borough Council Members and one Town and Community Council Member. The Chair of the Committee is Ms Sue Maughan, there is currently a vacancy of the post of Vice Chairperson.

## **3. Current situation / proposal**

- 3.1 The Role Description for the Chair of the Standards Committee as set out within the Council's Constitution is as follows:

Accountabilities

*To Full Council.*

Role Purpose and Activity

- (a) *Providing Leadership and Direction*
- (i) *To act within technical, legal and procedural requirements to oversee the functions of the committee fairly and correctly.*
  - (ii) *To ensure thoroughness and objectivity in the committee, receiving and responding to professional advice on the Code of Conduct.*
  - (iii) *To demonstrate independence, integrity and impartiality in decision making which accord with legal, constitutional and policy requirements.*
  - (iv) *To provide confident and effective management of meetings to facilitate inclusivity, participation and clear decision making.*
  - (v) *To lead the committee in its role in:*
    - (A) *promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted members;*
    - (B) *assisting the Councillors and co-opted members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (C) *advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (D) *monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (E) *advising, training or arranging to train Councillors, co-opted members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;*
    - (F) *granting dispensations to Councillors and co-opted members on dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that officer by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales;*
    - (G) *the exercise of these functions in relation to community councils and the members of those community councils.*

## Values

*To be committed to the values of the council and the following values in public office:*

- (b) openness and transparency;*
- (c) honesty and integrity;*
- (d) tolerance and respect;*
- (e) equality and fairness;*
- (f) appreciation of cultural differences;*
- (g) sustainability.*

3.2 If the Chair is absent from a meeting then the Vice-Chair shall preside, if present. If both the Chair and Vice-Chair are absent, the Committee shall choose another Independent Member to preside.

## **4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)**

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

## **5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives**

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report. This report also assists in the achievement of the following well-being objective under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

A county borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community.

5.2 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

## **6. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

6.1 There are no climate change and nature implications.

## **7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications**

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1 In accordance with the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report, the remuneration for Chairs of Standards Committees is £268 (4 hours and over), £134 (up to 4 hours) and for ordinary members of the Committee £210 (4 hours and over) and £105 (up to 4 hours). Remuneration for members of the Standards Committee is met from the existing Democratic Services core budget.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Committee appoint a Vice Chairperson from amongst the Independent Members to take office from the date of this Committee meeting for a term to be determined.

### **Background documents:**

None