

Meeting of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	11 JULY 2024
Report Title:	STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	MONITORING OFFICER
Responsible Officer:	LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules
Executive Summary:	To receive reports from the political Group Leaders in the Council outlining their compliance with their duties in relation to high standards of conduct.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 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.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 30 September 2022 the Committee received a report on the new duties placed upon Standards Committees and political Group Leaders under the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021.

- 2.2 A new duty under the Act is placed on the leaders of political groups to take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members. Under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 a political group is constituted where the Proper Officer is notified of two or more members who wish to be treated as a political group, the name of the group and the name of the one member of the group who is to act as its leader. At the Annual Meeting in May 2024 the Proper Officer was informed in writing of the following political groups and leaders:

- Labour – Group Leader: Cllr John Spanswick, Leader of the Council
- Bridgend County Independents – Group Leader: Cllr Amanda Williams
- Democratic Alliance Group – Group Leader: Cllr Ross Penhale-Thomas

- 2.3 The duty recognises those in positions of leadership and influence within a principal council should have responsibility for combating bullying and harassment amongst elected members and council staff, and must act as a positive role model. Among

other things, this duty is designed to support Welsh Government's diversity in democracy agenda and actions in its Race Equality Action Plan. The 2021 Act also requires that a leader of a political group, must co-operate with the Standards Committee in the exercise of the Committee's functions.

- 2.4 Standards Committees play an important role in supporting members, individually and collectively, to develop and maintain a culture which embraces high standards of conduct. The 2021 Act also extends the specific functions of a Standards Committee to include monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups with the new duty imposed on them by the Act to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 Group Leaders are required to report compliance with their duty to the Standards Committee. This could take the form of a short letter or report at a frequency agreed by the political Group Leaders in the Council and its Standards Committee. Group Leaders should also report any serious concerns about members' behaviour which has not been remedied by informal actions, in line with the requirement in the Code for councillors to report breaches. The Council's political Group Leaders and the Standards Committee have previously agreed on the form and frequency of a report from each Group Leader to the Committee.
- 3.2 It is recommended that the Committee now consider each report submitted by the Group Leaders (attached as **Appendices 1-3**) and provide feedback. The Group Leaders have been invited to attend the Committee meeting on 11 July 2024. The Chair may also wish to meet with Group Leaders privately and periodically to review behaviour.

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 Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change 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 consider the reports attached as Appendices 1-3 and provide feedback.

Background documents:

None