



Standards Committee Annual Report 2019-20

Foreword by the Chair

I am pleased to present the seventh Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2019/20. The Annual Report provides information to the Council about the work carried out by the Committee during the past 12 months and identifies particular issues that have arisen.

This seventh Annual Report covers the period from November 2019 to November 2020 and follows on from the last report presented to Council in November 2019.

The Standards Committee is committed to promoting high standards of ethical conduct among elected Members and officers in order to maintain public confidence in local government.

We are pleased to report that, once again, no serious complaints of misconduct were referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman during the past 12 months and no complaints were referred for determination by the Committee under Stage 3 of the Local Resolution Protocol. The Council's proud record of never having any complaints upheld and sanctions imposed against individual Members has again been upheld, and long may this continue.

One complaint was successfully resolved under the Local Resolution Protocol. The resolution of this complaint demonstrates that the Protocol has been successful in dealing with these types of issues locally, without the need for any referral to the Ombudsman or the Standards Committee. We are grateful to the officers and members concerned for their co-operation in resolving these complaints amicably.

However, as I have mentioned previously, there is no room for complacency and it is essential that these standards are maintained. The Standards Committee will continue to proactively review all ethical standards policies and procedures as part of the forward work programme.

The training requirements for City Councillors, community councils and their clerks will continue to be monitored and reviewed as part of the Committee's forward work programme, particularly as we move towards the next round of local government elections in May 2022. The mandatory training modules for the Code of Conduct will be refined and redeveloped in readiness for the members induction programme, immediately following the elections.

There have been no changes to the membership of the Standards Committee during the past year. However, we will need to consider succession planning next year as the second term of office of two of the independent members of the Committee, including the Chair, will come to an end. Therefore, new independent members of Standards Committee will need to be appointed.

Finally, I would like to thank all Members of the Committee and Council officers for their advice and support throughout the last 12 months.

Phillip Westwood

Chair of Standards Committee

1. **Introduction**

1.1 **Terms of Reference**

The Local Government Act 2000 Part III requires the Council to establish a Standards Committee to carry out the following statutory functions:-

- (a) Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives;
- (b) Assisting the councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives 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 and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (f) Granting dispensations to councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (g) Dealing with any reports from the Monitoring Officer and hearing any complaints of misconduct or breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct referred by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and determining appropriate action, including the imposition of any sanctions;
- (h) The exercise of (a) to (g) above in relation to the community councils and the members of those community councils.

Standards Committee also carries out the following additional functions, making recommendations to the Council, as appropriate:-

- (i) The hearing and determination of "low level" complaints of misconduct at Stage 3 of the Local Resolution Protocol;
- (ii) Providing advice to the Council on the Council's Codes of Practice, including the Officers' Code of Conduct and the Whistle Blowing policy;
- (iii) Monitoring and updating the Codes of Practice as required; and
- (iv) Overseeing the Council's confidential complaints procedure;

1.2 **Structure and Membership**

The composition and membership of the Standards Committee is prescribed by the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The Standards Committee comprises:-

5 Independent Members (persons who have no connection with the local authority)

- Phillip Westwood (Chair)
- Andrew Mitchell (Vice Chair)
- Tracey Britton
- Kerry Watkins
- Dr Paul Worthington

3 councillor representatives:-

- Councillor Baroness Wilcox of Newport (replacing Councillor Herbie Thomas as from July 2020)
- Councillor Phil Hourahine
- Councillor Val Dudley

1 community council representative:-

- John Davies (Bishton Community Council)

The independent members serve a term of office of 4 years, although they are eligible to serve two consecutive terms of office. The Councillors are appointed annually by the Council at the AGM and replacement members can be appointed, as necessary, at any time. The community council representative continues as a member of the Committee until his term of office ends or he ceases to be a community councillor, or until he is replaced by another nominee.

1.3 Enforcement of the Members Code of Conduct

The Council's Monitoring Officer is Gareth Price, the Head of Law & Regulation, and the Deputy Monitoring Officer is Liz Bryant, the Assistant Head of Legal Services

The Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer are responsible for:-

- advising Standards Committee on law and procedure,
- ensuring compliance with statutory requirements (Registers of Members interest etc.)
- resolution of "low-level" complaints under Stage 2 of the Local Resolution Protocol
- investigation of complaints referred by the Ombudsman

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ("Ombudsman") is responsible for:-

- considering all formal complaints of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct and applying a two stage test of (1) prima facie evidence of misconduct and (2) whether the breach is so serious as to warrant any sanction
- investigating and reporting (where appropriate) any serious breaches of the Code to the Standards Committee or a Case Tribunal of the Adjudication Panel for Wales

The Adjudication Panel for Wales:-

- Case Tribunals hear serious misconduct cases referred by the Ombudsman
- Interim Case Tribunals can suspend Councillors for up to 6 months pending investigation of serious complaints
- Determine appeals against Standards Committee decisions or sanctions
- Can suspend Councillors for up to 1 year or disqualify for up to 5 years

The Standards Committee

- Conduct hearings and determine complaints referred to them by the Ombudsman and the Monitoring Officer
- Can censure or suspend Councillors for up to 6 months

2. The Committee's work in 2019/20

The Standards Committee is required to meet at least once annually in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. In practice, the Committee meets on a scheduled quarterly basis and additional special meetings are arranged, as necessary, to deal with specific matters such as misconduct hearings and requests for dispensation.

Three members are required to attend for a quorum at meetings (including the independent Chair or Vice Chair) and at least half of those present must be independent. The community council representative is not "independent" for this purpose.

The Standards Committee met on 2 occasions during the past 12 months:-

- 7th November 2019
- 16th January 2020

The meetings scheduled for 16th April 2020 and 16th July 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Coronavirus lock-down. All face-to-face Council meetings were cancelled in March 2020 due to the lock-down restrictions and remote meetings were re-introduced on a phased basis as from June 2020 in accordance with the remote meetings Protocol adopted by the Council and the Coronavirus Meetings (Wales) Regulations 2020. Future meetings of Standards Committee will be conducted remotely and webcast live using MS Live Events. A recording of the meeting will also be uploaded onto the Council web site for public viewing.

Therefore, the work programme has been significantly disrupted during 19/20 due to these unprecedented times but Standards Committee will continue to operate effectively under these new arrangements and will continue to fulfil its statutory functions.

2.1 Dispensation Applications

There have been no applications for dispensations during the past year in accordance with the Standards Committees (Grant of Dispensation) (Wales) Regulations 2001 and Section 81(4) of the Local Government Act 2000.

Standards Committee are able to grant special dispensation for individual members to speak and/or vote on a particular matter where they would otherwise be disqualified because of a "personal interest" under the Code.

Previously, most of the work of the Committee had been taken up with determining applications for dispensation for individual Councillors to enable them to allocate their Neighbourhood Allowances to community groups and individuals within their wards. These Neighbourhood Allowances were discontinued in April 2016 as part of Council budget savings. There have been no other requests for individual Councillor dispensations over the past three years.

2.2 Training

The Standards Committee has always stressed the importance of regular Member training, to ensure that Councillors keep up to date with the requirements of the Code of Conduct and any changes in the law or procedures.

It is the responsibility of each individual Councillor to ensure that they fully understand the requirements of the Code and that they comply fully with their obligations. As always, “ignorance of the law is no excuse” and a lack of understanding or training would be no mitigation if there is any breach of the Code.

The Committee has previously recommended to the Council that it should be compulsory for all City Councillors to attend training on the Code of Conduct. A training programme for Councillors was delivered as part of the induction arrangements following the May 2017 elections, in the light of the legislative changes to the ethical standards framework and the new Members Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2016. The Committee was pleased that 40 City Councillors and many community councillors attended these training sessions, and the training appeared to be well-received.

In July 2017, a letter was sent by the Chair of the Committee to the remaining 10 Councillors, with a copy to the group Business Managers, urging them to arrange a further training session as soon as possible. The Monitoring officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer then delivered a further training session on 18th January 2018, when 7 of the 10 Councillors attended. The Committee was pleased to note that 47 out of 50 City Councillors had attended the mandatory Code of Conduct training. It was agreed that no further additional training sessions were required and that no further action was necessary to compel the remaining 3 Councillors to undertake the mandatory training. However, they have been provided with electronic copies of the training presentation slides and documents and a link to the Ombudsman training video.

The Standards Committee has continued to proactively review all ethical standards policies and procedures as part of the forward work programme.

The training requirements of the community councils and their compliance arrangements has continued to be monitored and reviewed as part of the Committee’s forward work programme.

As part of this on-going review, the Committee has identified a need for refresher training, particularly for new community councillors and Clerks. This has also been identified at Liaison meetings with the community councils. Only some of the community councils subscribe to training from One Voice Wales and others are entirely dependent on Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer to provide advice and assistance in relation to Code of Conduct compliance. Community council clerks have raised a number of procedural issues

regarding maintenance of statutory registers and declarations of interest at meetings and have requested specific training on these matters. It was originally intended to deliver this refresher training in 19/20 but these plans were disrupted by the Coronavirus lock-down restrictions. Therefore, as part of the forward work-programme for 2020/21, we will be arranging further remote training sessions for community councillors and their Clerks. This will be specific to community councillors as the rules relating to the register of members interests and exemptions are different to the City Council.

We will review the need for any refresher training for City Councillors in the light of responses to the Ethical Standards questionnaire. We are conscious that some Members were last trained in 2017 and there have been some changes to protocols and guidance since that time. However, we are also conscious of the fact that the new local government elections will take place in May 2022 and a new induction training programme will need to be developed in readiness for the elections.

2.3 Local Resolution Protocol

In accordance with the recommendations of the Minister for Local Government and the Ombudsman, the Council has adopted an internal procedure for dealing with “low-level” member/member and officer/member complaints that are not sufficiently serious as to warrant formal investigation and sanction.

It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would periodically update the Committee on the numbers and types of complaints determined at officer level under Stages 1 and 2 of the Protocol, but maintaining the anonymity of both the complainant and the Councillor concerned.

One complaint was received under the Local Resolution Protocol in 2019/20. This complaint concerned allegations of lack of respect and consideration for IT support officers dealing with telephone requests regarding computer problems. The matter was resolved by the Monitoring Officer following a Stage 2 mediation meeting, when the Councillor apologised unreservedly for any upset caused to the staff. The Councillor was frustrated by a perceived lack of response to her IT problems and this was impacting on her ability to discharge her role. The service manager agreed an escalation process for dealing with any future concerns about IT support.

The resolution of this complaint demonstrates that the Protocol has been successful in dealing with these types of issues locally, without the need for any referral to the Ombudsman or the Standards Committee. We are grateful to the officers and members concerned for their co-operation in resolving these complaints amicably.

One Voice Wales has developed a similar Local Resolution Protocol for community councils, in conjunction with the Ombudsman, and further guidance has been provided. Those local community councils who are members of One Voice Wales have adopted this protocol within their councils. The responsibility for resolving these minor complaints rests with the community council clerk, the Chair and Vice-Chair. Other community councils have expressed an interest in their local complaints being resolved under the Council’s Local Resolution Protocol and this is something that we are considering. The Monitoring Officer

and Deputy Monitoring Officer will continue to provide advice and assistance to community council clerks in relation to the local resolution of minor complaints.

2.4 Revised Ethical Standards Framework and Procedures.

The Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) Amendment Order 2016 was made on 27th January 2016 and came into force on 1st April 2016. The Order amended the Model Code of Conduct for elected members of the Council and co-opted members with voting rights. Newport City Council formally adopted the new Code at its Annual General Meeting held on 17th May 2016.

The Local Government Democracy (Wales) Act 2013 transferred responsibility for maintaining the register of members' interests for community councils from the Council's Monitoring Officer to the "Proper Officer" of the community council as from 1st May 2016. However, Standards Committee still has the responsibility for ensuring that community councils continue to comply with these requirements.

As part of the ethical standards review of community councils carried out in 2018, 12 out of the 14 community councils responded to the questionnaire and confirmed their compliance with the requirements of the legislation. Standards Committee was pleased to note that all of the councils who responded had formally adopted the new Model Code within the prescribed timescale, all their members had signed an undertaking to abide by the Code and the community council clerks (as designated "Proper Officers") has made satisfactory arrangements for publishing the register of members' interests. The community councils were also publishing electronic copies of agendas and minutes on their website, in accordance with sections 55-57 of the 2013 Act.

Standards Committee will continue to monitor compliance as part of its on-going review of the community councils. In particular, we will review their current practices and procedures for the conduct of remote meetings and the publication of electronic copies of agendas and minutes in accordance with the Coronavirus Meetings (Wales) Regulations. As part of the forward work-programme, we will also be reviewing the Council's practices and procedures for declarations and registration of interests.

2.5 Succession Planning

There have been no changes to the membership of the Standards Committee during last year.

John Davies from Bishton Community Council was confirmed as the community council representative by the Council on 28th November 2017.

However, we will need to consider succession planning this year as the second term of office of two of the independent members of the Committee, including the Chair, will come to an end. Therefore, new independent members of Standards Committee will need to be appointed. An advertisement will need to be published and an appointments panel constituted in accordance with the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations, to interview

suitable applicants and make recommendations to Council regarding the appointment of new independent members.

2.6 General work

The Committee has continued to carry out review of Council policies and procedures relating to ethical standards.

The Committee considered the Welsh Local Government Association Social Media Guidelines for Councillors. This provided comprehensive guidance and advice on both the pitfalls and the positive impact of using social media. It detailed how members could communicate and engage better with the public through the use of social media. However, Councillors need to be mindful that anything that they publish on social media is also subject to the Code of Conduct, particularly the duty to show respect and consideration for others. Members at other Welsh local authorities have been found guilty of breaches of the Code and have been sanctioned by the Adjudication Panel for comments that they have posted on social media.

There is also a Council policy that all members have to adhere to regarding the use of IT and data security.

The Committee considered that the use of social media should be covered in more detail at future ethical standards training.

The Committee felt that there was a need to carry out a further Ethical Standards audit, particularly in the light of the revised Protocol for Officer/Members relations which we issued last year. It was felt that the general behaviour in meetings had improved since 2011 but, in view of the time that had elapsed since the last review, it was opportune to repeat the exercise. Therefore, the Committee agreed a form of simple questionnaire with a free text section at the end for comments, which was circulated to all Councillors, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service and also those other staff who came into regular contact with elected members, such as planning and licensing staff. In an effort to generate a better response than last time, the Chair of Standards Committee met with the Group Leaders of the main political Groups to get their support for this initiative and to encourage their members to respond to the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed in July 2019 and re-issued December 2019 but, unfortunately, only 9 completed responses were received, which is extremely disappointing. However, despite the low response, the actual responses received and the information provided was extremely positive. The full results and analysis of the Ethical standards survey are set out at [Appendix 1](#) to this Annual Report.

Although the Ethical Standards Questionnaire again yielded another poor response, 20% of the members and staff surveyed had replied, which was statistically the same response as the previous questionnaire and a similar response to other Council surveys, such as the staff questionnaires. Therefore, it was a fairly representational response and not unexpected. Enquiries were made with other local authorities such as Swansea, Caerphilly and Torfaen about whether they had undertaken a similar ethical standards audit. Caerphilly and Torfaen confirmed that they had not carried out similar surveys of members and staff and Swansea Council confirmed that they invited their Political Group Leaders, and Chairs of Committees

to their Standards Committee on an annual basis to have an open and honest discussion about general ethics, standards and behaviour in Swansea.

In response to Q1, 100% of those who replied agreed that the work of the Standards Committee had a positive effect on ethical standards and 89% replied positively to Q2 and believed that the public perception of the Council was that it operated in an ethical manner. 89% of those surveyed also agreed that the Council had clear policies and guidance in place. 78% agreed that the behaviour of officers and members demonstrated a clear understanding of ethical standards and 89% agreed that there was an open and transparent process in place for the registration and declaration of personal interests.

However, only 62% of those who responded believed that there was trust and mutual respect as between members and senior officers and only 55% believed that the different roles of elected members were clearly defined and understood. Therefore, in terms of perception, more work needs to be done here to improve trust and confidence and to clarify the different roles and responsibilities of officers and members.

Only 55% of those members who responded indicated that they knew how to access the Code of Conduct and 45% felt that they would benefit from additional training. Again, we will take this into account when reviewing and planning future member training.

Overall, the Committee considered that, despite the relatively low response, the outcome of the ethical standards audit was generally positive. We felt that the profile of the Standards Committee could be raised and the information published on the web pages should be updated to raise the profile of the committee and the members. The Chair of the Committee wrote to the Leaders of the political groups on the Council to inform them of the outcome of the questionnaire

The Standards Committee also received a presentation of the relevant parts of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill. The electoral reform proposals would allow 16 to 17 years old to vote in local government elections in 2022. The Welsh Government had already legislated to allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in the next Assembly elections in May 2021. The establishment of Corporate Joint Committees was intended to facilitate more consistent and coherent regional working and would allow local authorities to deliver certain services on a collaborative basis. This was different to existing Joint Committees, which did not have any separate legal status and operated as voluntary joint arrangements between councils. The new CJC's will have corporate legal status and will be able to employ their own staff. The initial services to be delivered via CJC's were regional transport and regional planning and development.

Some provisions of the legislation will come into force before the next local government elections in May 2022, which will necessitate extensive changes in governance arrangements. All Committee meetings will need to be remotely accessible and broadcast live. Prior to the lock-down, only full Council and Planning Committees were being Webcast from the Council Chamber. The current remote meeting arrangements all for all members to dial-in remotely, but the technology does not permit the type of "hybrid" meetings required by the Bill, where most Councillors would be in the meeting room but others would be able to join remotely. Therefore, all Councils meeting rooms will need to be adapted in order to allow all Committee meetings to be webcast.

The Bill imposed a duty on group leaders to promote ethical standards within their political groups and the Standards Committee would be required to monitor how Leaders do this. Welsh Government would be providing guidance on how this duty is to be discharged.

There would be a compulsory requirement for all Councillors to produce an annual report, and Newport already facilitates this. This report would also need to be made public.

We were also advised about proposal to reinstate some of the investigatory powers of the Ombudsman. The proposals would mean that that the Ombudsman could demand information from people and avoid claims of defamation under Section 69 of the Local Government Act 2000 Act.

The Committee again wrote to all of the community council clerks to ensure that proper arrangements are in place to maintain and publish the registers of members' interests. Sections 55-57 of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013 Act require Community Councils to publish certain information electronically (i.e. on a website). This includes the public register of members' interests, information about the council's clerk and Members, Minutes of council meetings and any audited statement of the council's accounts. Community Councils are also required to publish public notices electronically, and to make certain information about their meetings and proceedings available electronically. We were satisfied from the responses that proper arrangements were in place to publish the registers and other information, to meet the requirements of the legislation.

With regard to the Ombudsman's Annual report for 19/20, the Committee noted that nationally the number of Code of Conduct complaints had reduced by 18% compared with the past year. The Ombudsman received 231 new complaints last year, which was an 18% reduction on the previous year. 135 of these new complaints related to Town and Community Councils and 96 related to members of principal councils. This reduction was due to a significant drop in the numbers of frivolous complaints made against town and community councillors, many of which were motivated by personal or political differences. The majority of Code of Conduct complaints received during 2019/20 related to matters of 'promotion of equality and respect' (49%) and 'disclosure and registration of interests' (17%).

2.7 Ombudsman complaints

The Ombudsman advises the Monitoring Officer of complaints made against elected members of Newport City Council and community councillors and the outcome. The Monitoring Officer updates the Committee at each meeting about the numbers of on-going complaints being referred to and considered by the Ombudsman's office. This information is provided on a general basis, without disclosing precise details of individual complaints, to avoid any issues about pre-determination in case the complaints are reported to the Standards Committee for determination.

The Committee was advised that 5 complaints were referred to the Ombudsman about City Councillors in 2019/20 and 1 complaint was referred regarding a community councillor. However, only one of these complaints has been accepted for investigation and, in the other cases, the Ombudsman took the view that there was no evidence of any serious breaches of the Code.

Two of the complaints were not accepted for formal investigation on the basis that the Members concerned were not acting as councillors at the time of the complaints. The one complaint related to inappropriate posts on social media, which were considered to be offensive. However, the Ombudsman took the view that the Councillor has posted the comments in a private capacity and not as an elected member and, therefore, his behaviour was not covered by the Code of Conduct. The other complaint concerned a neighbour dispute and allegations but, again the Ombudsman took the view that this was a private matter.

Separate allegations had been made by different complainants about the behaviour of one member in supporting a planning application within her ward. The complainants alleged that the member concerned was a close friend and associate of the applicant and, therefore, should have declared an interest in the matter and should not have attempted to use her position as ward councillor to support the planning application. The member strongly denied any association or friendship with the applicant and the Ombudsman rejected the complaints on this basis.

The one complaint referred to the Ombudsman regarding a community councillor concerned a failure to declare an interest in a community council grant payment, when the Councillor's wife was Chair of the Church Group who were allocated the funding. The Ombudsman took the view that there had been a technical breach of the Code but it was not sufficiently serious as to warrant formal action. The Community Councillor concerned was reminded of his obligations to disclose any personal interests and he was told to seek further advice from the Monitoring Officer about his duties under the Code

The one complaint that has been accepted for formal investigation concerns allegations of bullying and lack of respect on the part of an elected member, when contacting ABUHB for information. This investigation is ongoing, but information has been provided to the Ombudsman regarding the Councillor's training record and external appointments. There is also a pending complaint of bullying in relation to a community councillor and the community council clerk

No complaints were referred to Standards Committee in 2019/20 for hearing and determination.

3. Forward Work Programme for 2019/20

Date	Topic	Information
November 2020	Annual Report to Council	Review of work undertaken in the past 12 months, identifying any specific ethical standards issues facing the Council and priorities for the forthcoming year.

		Summary of numbers of complaints received and outcomes.
As and when applications received Review annually	Dispensations	Granting individual and blanket dispensations to Councillors. Reviewing decisions annually to identify common issues and consistency of approach. Produce guidance to Members on any issues arising.
As and when required	Local Resolution Protocol complaints	Conducting hearings into any Stage 3 complaints by Members or Officers
Quarterly	Complaints of Misconduct	Update of numbers of complaints received and outcomes. Update on complaints resolved through Local Resolution Protocol.
By January 2021	Member training and development	Carry out review of community council training, re-assessing the need for training for new councillors and refresher training for existing members. Arrange training sessions for community councillors and Clerks, as necessary.
By February 2021	Succession Planning.	Agree advertisement and appointment panel for new independent members. Appointment of new Chair.
By March 2021	Ethical standards audit	Check that statutory registers are being properly maintained procedures for declarations are being followed Review Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and Protocols for hearings and recommend amendments, as necessary.
Annually	Review of community councils	Check that statutory registers are being properly maintained

		<p>procedures for declarations are being followed</p> <p>Engage with community councils to ensure compliance and to identify any training and development needs.</p> <p>Review adoption of Local Resolution Protocols by community councils.</p>
By September 2021	Review of Council Policies, Protocols and procedures relating to ethical standards	<p>(a) Gifts and Hospitality</p> <p>(b) Planning Protocol</p> <p>How they are implemented, communicated to staff, training and compliance monitoring.</p>

4. Helpful Information

4.1 Can I attend Meetings of the Standards Committee?

Yes, all of our meetings are open to the public, except for specific items where personal or confidential information is likely to be disclosed and the public interest requires that these meetings are conducted in private, for example hearings into misconduct complaints

Dates of forthcoming meetings, agendas, reports and minutes are available on our own webpage on the Council website which can be accessed by clicking here: [Standards Committee Webpage](#)

4.2 Who do I contact if I want to know more?

If you wish to find out more about the Standards Committee or make a comment or suggestion, please visit our website: [Standards Committee Webpage](#) where you will find an online contact form or email us at info@newport.gov.uk

Phillip Westwood
Chair of the Standards Committee;

Gareth Price
Head of Law & Regulation and Monitoring Officer

Liz Bryant
Assistant Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Pamela Tasker
Governance Officer

Appendix 1

Standards Committee

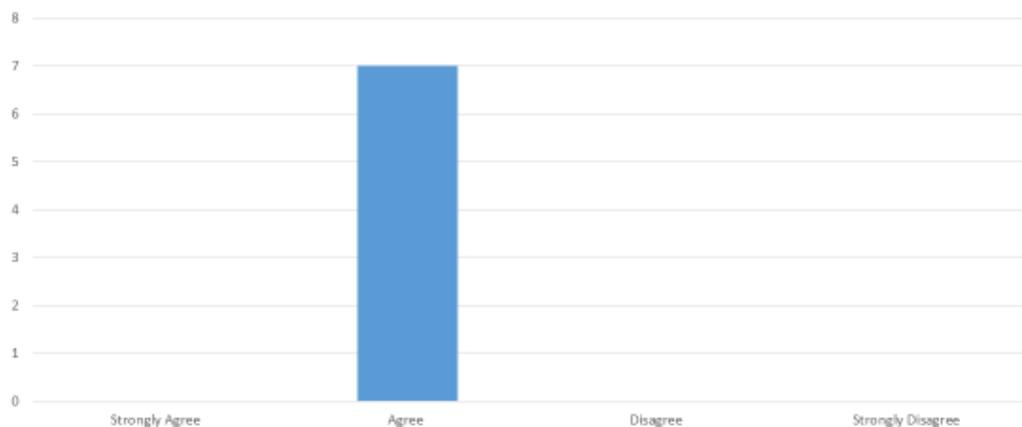
Response to Ethical Standards Questionnaire



Response to Questionnaire

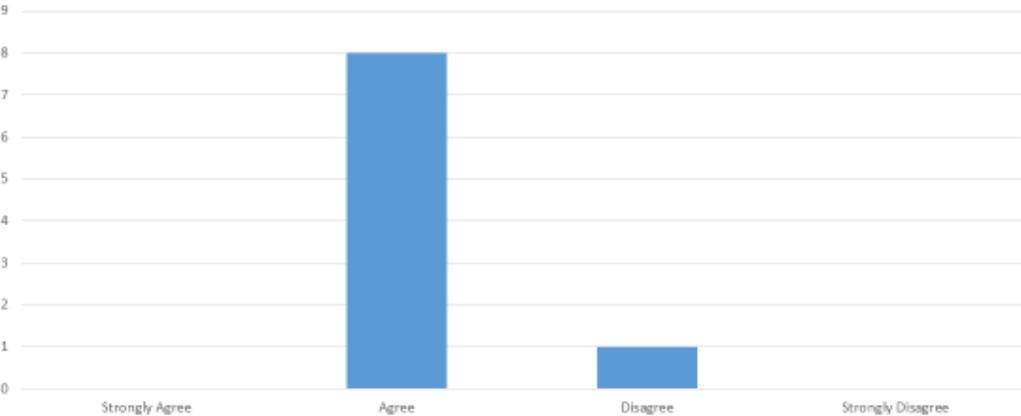
- The questionnaire was sent out to 3rd and 4th tier management on two occasions.
- In all 9 responses were received.
- Comments received have also been included

Question 1: The work of the Standards Committee has a positive effect on the work of the Council



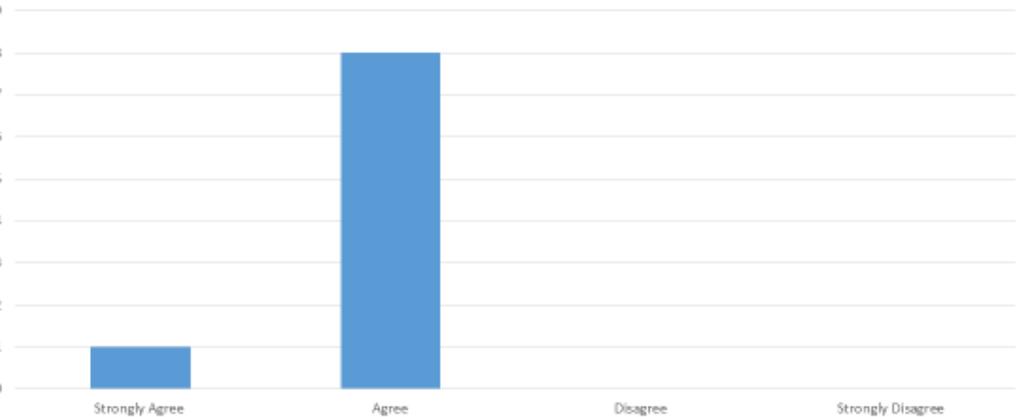
100 % of respondents replied in a positive manner (strongly agree or agree)

Question 2: I believe that the public perception of the Council is that it operates in a manner that meets ethical standards



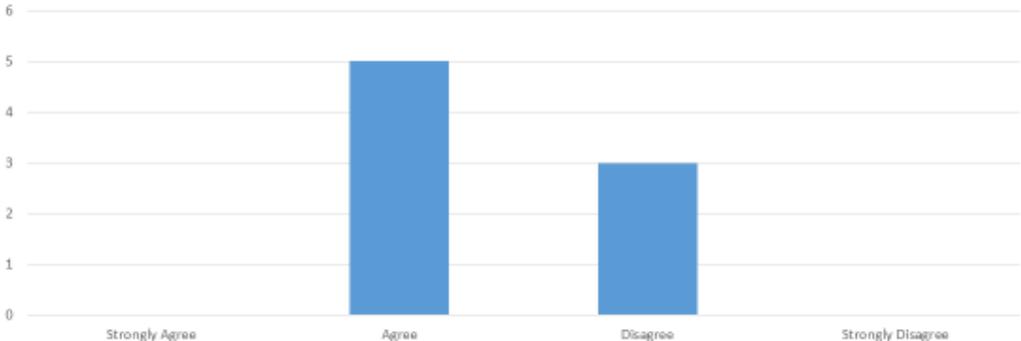
89% of respondents replied in a positive manner (strongly agree or agree)

Question 3: The Council has clear policies and guidance on Ethical standards



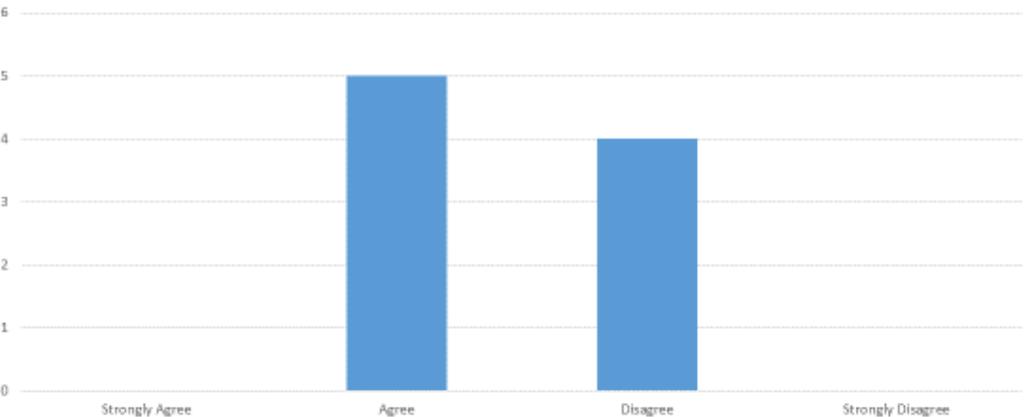
89% of respondents replied in a positive manner (strongly agree or agree)

Question 4: There is trust and mutual respect between officers and members of the Council



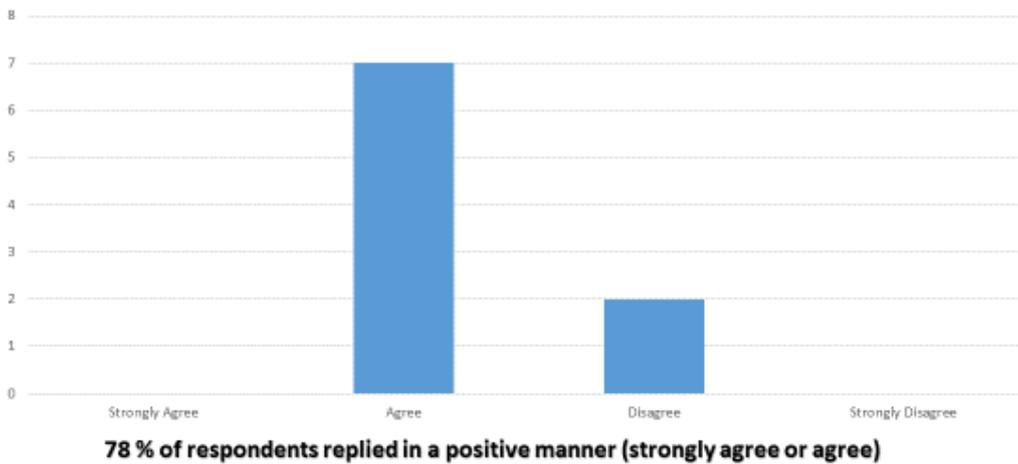
62 % of respondents replied in a positive manner (strongly agree or agree)

Question 5: The differing roles between members and officers in the Council are clearly defined

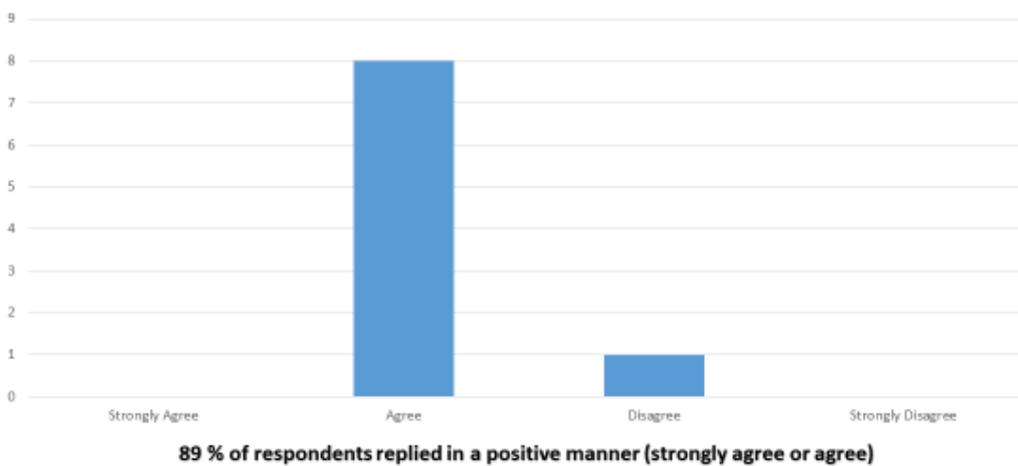


55 % of respondents replied in a positive manner (strongly agree or agree)

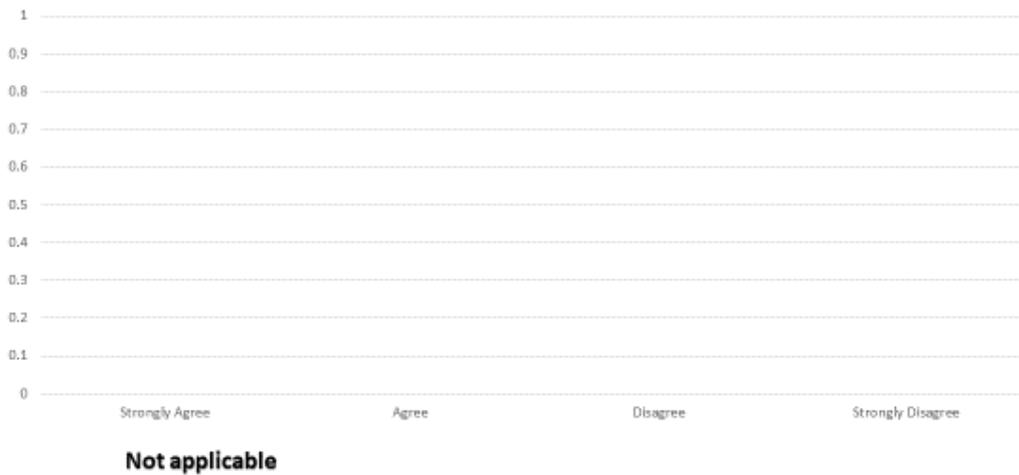
Question 6: The behaviour of elected members and officers displays an understanding of ethical standards



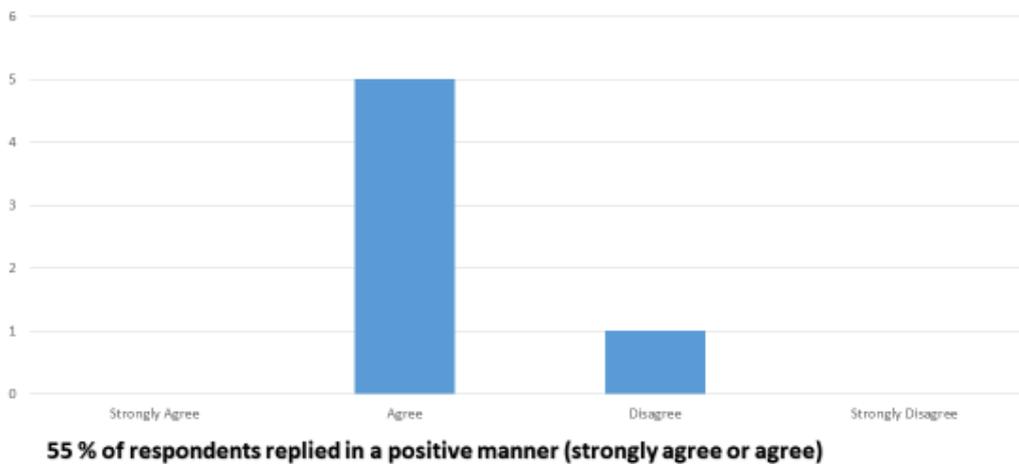
Question 7: Interests of elected members are declared openly and available to the public



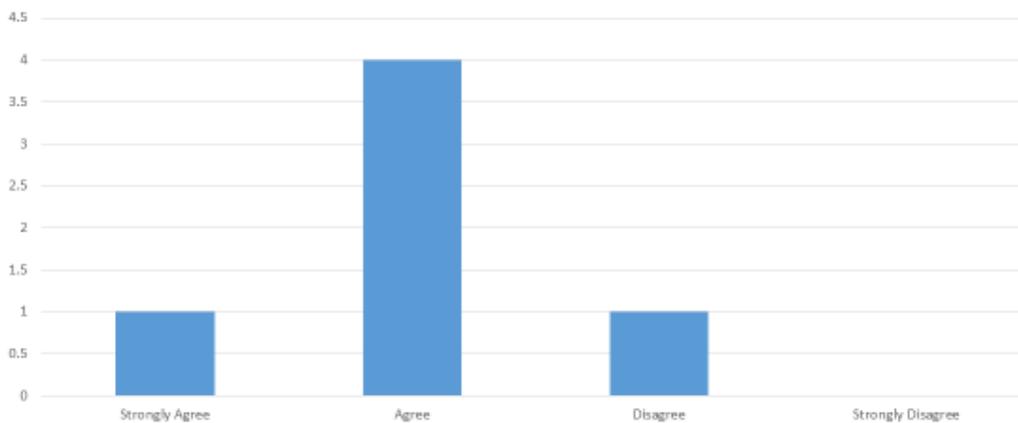
Question 8: As an elected member it is easy for me to declare and register an interest



Question 9: I know where to access the Councillor Code of Conduct



Question 10: I would benefit from further training on the code of conduct



45 % of respondents replied that they agreed that they needed further training

Questionnaire Comments

- I have never seen a copy of the Member's code of conduct.
 - I suggest a box between agree and disagree is added for future responses. There are some grey areas that are not so clear to define
 - The public mistrust of the apparatus of local government is embedded in the community and any decision that a community member does not agree with is often framed in terms of corruption. Additionally, the age of austerity and the need to cut services has driven out openness and transparency. This lack of openness impacts all levels and of the organisation, and the organisation's communications with the community at large. The ongoing need to frame service cuts as improvements and so-called efficiency savings leads mistrust and rightly so. The dialogue should be honest at all levels
 - Whenever there are political changes, whether local government elections, by-elections or changes in political leadership/cabinet, and likewise senior management changes - there should automatically be refresher training in place to ensure all new parties are fully aware of the differing roles between members and officers, the code of conduct, declarations of interest and standards.
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