

# Report

## Council

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### Part 1

Date: 24 September 2023

**Subject** Standards Committee Annual Report 2023/2024

**Purpose** To present the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2023/24

**Author** Democratic and Electoral Services Manager  
Interim Head of Law and Standards  
Chair of Standards Committee

**Ward** General

**Summary** In accordance with the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021, Standards Committee are required to make an annual report after the end of each financial year and Council is required to consider that report within 3 months.

The statutory annual report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the previous year and, in particular, must include a summary of any reports, actions or recommendations made or referred to the Committee. In addition, the annual report must include an assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their new duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within their groups.

This Annual Report covers the period from April 2023 to March 2024.

**Proposal** To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2023/2024 and to note the forward work programme.

**Action by** Head of Law and Standards

**Timetable** Immediate

**Signed**

## Background

1. Standards Committee have presented an Annual Report to the Council over the past 11 years, which provides information about the work carried out by the Committee during the previous 12 months, identifies particular issues that have arisen and sets out the forward work programme for the forthcoming year.
2. Since May 2022, there has been a statutory requirement under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 for Standards Committee to make an annual report as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year and for full Council to consider that report within 3 months. The statutory report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the previous year and, in particular, must include a summary of any reports, actions or recommendations made or referred to the Committee. In addition, the Annual Report must include an assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their new duties to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within their groups. Copies of the Standards Committee Annual Report must also be provided to the Ombudsman and all of the local community councils.
3. In 2024, the Committee prepared their annual report for consideration in July so that it could be finalised and presented to Council within 3 months of that date.
4. The Report confirms that, once again, no serious complaints of misconduct were referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman during the reporting period April 2023 and March 2024 and no complaints were referred for determination by the Committee under Stage 3 of the Local Resolution Protocol.
5. The Annual Report also contains a draft forward work programme for the forthcoming 12 months.
6. The Committee will continue to monitor any complaints referred to the Ombudsman, and to meet with Group Leaders to continue the conversation about member standards and associated policies and activities that support adherence to the standards. The training requirements for City Councillors, community councils and their clerks will also continue to be monitored as part of the Committee's forward work programme.

## Financial Summary

7. There are no financial implications.

## Risks

9. This report is a retrospective consideration of the work of the Standards Committee.

<b>Risk Title / Description</b>	<b>Risk Impact score of Risk if it occurs* (1-5)</b>	<b>Risk Probability of risk occurring (1-5)</b>	<b>Risk Mitigation Action(s)</b> What is the Council doing or what has it done to avoid the risk or reduce its effect?	<b>Risk Owner</b> Officer(s) responsible for dealing with the risk?
An ineffective Standards Committee would undermine public confidence in local	4	1	By proactively promoting high standards of ethical conduct among elected Members	Standards Committee / Monitoring Officer Deputy /

government and would lead to poor quality decision making, with the risk of legal challenge, reputational harm to the Council and sanctions imposed on individual Members			and officers and delivering effective training, there have been no findings of misconduct and no serious complaints of breaches of the Code.	Monitoring Officer
Failure to agree key priorities and a structured forward work programme could lead to a reduction in standards and behaviour and undermine the effectiveness of the Committee	3	1	The forward work programme sets out a structured basis for reviewing all ethical standards policies and procedures and reviewing training needs and development	Standards Committee / Monitoring Officer Deputy / Monitoring Officer

## Links to Council Policies and Priorities

10. The Nolan principles, which underpin the ethical standards framework, and principles of good governance, are all enshrined in the Council's corporate and well-being objectives.

## Options Available

- (a) To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report and note the forward work Programme.
- (b) To reject the report and/or ask for further work to be undertaken.

## Proposed Action

- (a) To receive the Standards Committee Annual Report and note the forward work Programme

## Comments of Chief Financial Officer

12. There are no financial implications coming from this report.

## Comments of Monitoring Officer

13. The statutory and constitutional provisions which give rise to this report are set out in this report and the attached annual report. There are no additional legal implications.

## Comments of Head of People, Policy and Transformation

14. The Annual Report assists the Standards Committee and the Council in improving ethical standards.

There are no human resources arising from the report.

### Fairness and Equality Impact Assessment:

- **Wellbeing of Future Generation (Wales) Act**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Socio-economic Duty**
- **Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011**

15. The principles of fairness and equality are embodied within the Members Code of Conduct and the Ethical Framework. No FEIA is required, as the Annual Report is for information purposes only.

- There are no negative impacts in terms of equalities or social disadvantage.
- In terms of the sustainable development principle and 5 ways of working

**Long-term** – The Annual Report will assist Standards Committee and the Council in taking a long-term view about improving ethical standards.

**Prevention** – The Annual Report guide will help to prevent future complaints of misconduct.

**Integration** – The Annual Report has been produced in consultation with key stakeholders.

**Collaboration** – The Annual Report will assist people in interacting with councils and elected members, in a more collaborative way. It will also facilitate collaboration between Standards Committees in discussing matters of common interest.

**Involvement** – The Annual Report will encourage greater involvement in reporting and resolving complaints.

## Consultation

16. No comments at this stage.

## Background Papers

17. There are no additional background papers.

Dated: 16<sup>th</sup> September 2023