

CYNGOR SIR YNYS MON / ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
COMMITTEE:	Standards Committee
DATE:	14 December 2022
REPORT TITLE:	Standards Committee's Monitoring of a sample of Council/Committee meetings
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	To publish details of the exercise undertaken by the independent members of the Standards Committee to observe a sample of formal meetings of the Council and its Committees and the process for providing feedback
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1. INTRODUCTION

Part of the Standards Committee's statutory responsibilities involve supporting Members of the Isle of Anglesey County Council in complying with the Council's [Code of Conduct](#).

Although the Code applies to Members whenever they carry out work as elected/co-opted members, conduct at formal Council and committee meetings is central to public confidence in the Council as a whole, and its decision makers in particular.

A recommendation was made by Richard Penn to a national meeting of Standards Committee Chairs in Wales when discussing the developments under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 that reviews be developed and reviews undertaken.

In light of these matters, the Standards Committee's Work Programme for 2022/2023 (approved by full Council on the 30/09/2022), included a resolution to undertake a review of conduct at a sample of County Council and committee meetings.

2. PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS

→ Who would undertake the work:

This is the first time such an exercise has been undertaken by the Standards Committee. It was a pilot, and involved only four co-opted members of the Standards Committee, as the fifth independent member of the Committee had a personal interest due to the nature of their employment outside their Council role. The Town and Community Council representatives and the County Councillors on the Standards Committee were not involved in the process.

→ Which meetings?

The Standards Committee members decided they would attend meetings of the Council, the Planning and Orders Committee and both Scrutiny Committees.

In deciding which meetings to attend, the Standards Committee considered the following:

- Council meetings were deemed pivotal as this is where all Council elected members meet; political discussions and decisions are made by members. Poor conduct would be acutely damaging in such an arena.
- The Standards Committee wanted to observe a regulatory Committee and on that basis the Planning and Orders Committee was added to the list of meetings to be observed.
- Both Scrutiny Committees were selected due to their importance in the decision making process; scrutiny committees provide an opportunity for other members, particularly from different political groups, to hold the Executive and Senior Officers of the Council to account in relation to decisions made and to be made.
- It was decided that attending Executive meetings would be of limited value as the Executive is a statutory body in its own right, governed by the Leader, and that it is run very differently from the other Council Committees.
- The Governance and Audit Committee is regularly observed by external regulators and so it was considered excessive for the Standards Committee to also attend to observe these meetings.
- Other Committees meet on an ad-hoc basis (generally) and it was felt that the Standards Committee's resources would be put to greater use if it concentrated on the four identified above.

The arrangements for attending the meetings of these Committees were shared and approved in advance by the four relevant Group Leaders.

3. THE PROCESS

Arrangements were made for the Standards Committee members to attend the meetings in accordance with the table in **Enclosure 1**. Two of the four independent members of the Standards Committee attended at each arranged meeting.

A standard form was developed by the Standards Committee to capture the findings they made when attending at the meetings as observers. A copy of the template Evaluation Sheet is included in **Enclosure 2**.

Each Standards Committee member completed an Evaluation Sheet at, or soon after, the meetings they attended.

Immediately after, or very shortly after each review, the relevant members of the Standards Committee would meet with the Chair of the Council/Committee to provide “fast feedback”.

Following the last of the observed meetings, the four independent members met to agree on the main points they wished to communicate with the Council members by way of observations and recommendations. A general feedback letter has been shared with Group Leaders, for discussion at a meeting on 8 December 2022. Whilst it was the Standards Committee’s intention to restrict the observations made to Code of Conduct matters, it was inevitable that other process/governance issues would emerge and the Standards Committee members have included some of those observations in the letter too in the hope they assist the Council and its Members moving forward.

4. OBSERVATIONS MADE

The Standards Committee members commented:

- They were welcomed by the Chairs; and all Chairs positively accepted the feedback after the meetings.
- Chairs understood the role and functions of the Standards Committee.
- The Planning and Orders Committee and the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee were run in an exemplary manner.

It was noted that the chairing skills demonstrated in both these Committees was excellent and would stand as good examples to other members who, in the future, might wish to become committee chairs themselves.

- Respect for the Chair was evident in all the meetings monitored.

Members were respectful of each other, with clear evidence of differing views and opinions being expressed.

There was a positive, but professional, rapport between members and officers.

- Members generally appeared to be well prepared. There was active participation, and engaged debate.
- There was particularly effective joint working between the Chair and Vice-Chair in the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.
- The Standards Committee’s feedback to the Chair of the County Council in relation to meeting arrangements and ensuring public engagement after the first monitoring meeting, had clearly been acted upon by the second meeting, and the Standards

Committee welcomed the improvements made. The issues identified related to the likely perception of the meeting by members of the public, and, whilst minor in nature, the changes adopted were felt to have made meetings clearer and easier for a lay person to follow events in an engaged way.

- No prejudicial interests were declared during the monitoring process.
- Personal interests were declared and the Standards Committee would encourage members to be mindful when preparing for meetings as to whether or not they have interests; to seek advice in advance if they require it and, perhaps, to advise the Chair that they will be declaring interests (so as to assist the Chairs; it is not a legal requirement).
- There was no opportunity to view public speaking in Scrutiny but the arrangements at the Planning and Orders Committee were considered very well done.
- There was no opportunity to observe co-opted members as there were no relevant agenda items on the Scrutiny Committees.
- The only issues of significant concern detected by the Standards Committee, related to the political management of Corporate Scrutiny Committee . These matters have been raised with all four Group Leaders.

5. STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations included in the Standards Committee's letter to all members are:

- Code of Conduct
 - 1) Encouragement for any Committee Chair/Vice-Chair who has not recently received training on chairing skills to attend such training. The same level of training should be made available to Vice-Chairs as well as Chairs. The Standards Committee recommends that attendance at such training should be mandated by group leaders.
 - 2) Training for Chairs should be provided for any new Chairs/Vice-Chairs appointed and all Chairs/Vice-Chairs appointed at the beginning of the term of a new Council.
 - 3) The training referred to in 1 and 2 above should include the effective management of hybrid meetings and participation from public speakers where relevant.
 - 4) All members, but especially Chairs/Vice-Chairs, need to undergo an appropriate evaluation of their IT skills and offered further training, if required. It is understood that this has happened but the Standards Committee felt that in one case, it had not been effective. The Standards Committee recommends that relevant group leaders should grasp the statutory responsibility they have been given and mandate attendance at such training where re-evaluation demonstrates a continuing need. Refreshing such training should be taken into consideration in the same way as chairing skills.
- Generally

- 5) A request for a “countdown” clock to be visible to the public speakers when they participate in the three committees which provide for direct public participation.
- 6) A suggestion that all reports should be more clearly focused on decisions/ outcomes and included only the information required by members to form a view/make properly informed decisions. And no acronyms!
- 7) It was noted that, at times, there were technical IT issues and IT support for Committees would be advantageous. Whilst appreciating that there are resource/capacity issues, it was suggested that it would be useful if a nominated IT support officer could be “on call” to lend support during Committee meetings if required, but not to be in continuous attendance.
- 8) The Council’s webcast arrangements, from the perspective of the viewing public, was not considered to provide the best experience; despite complying with its legal obligations. It would be better if there were a clear distinction between the members of the committee, those advising the committee and those other members who may be present but who are not members of the committee. If it were technically possible, it would be better for the full names of individuals to be included under their video, denoting “Councillor” / “Co-opted Member” where appropriate. If it is not possible to specifically identify committee members, then this should be done at the outset by way of a roll-call of those who are members of the committee.
- 9) Cameras should remain switched on, even for those who are not participating in the meeting so as to avoid black screens on the webcasting of meetings.
- 10) Having clarity around the identity of individuals, and their roles, would be particularly helpful for any member of the public tuning in and using the translation service as there is only one voice to be heard, making it more difficult to identify who is speaking.
- 11) It was quite difficult to see the meeting when attending remotely as if a member of the public; the view was limited and it was often not possible to see the speakers. The experience is quite different from logging in remotely as a member or officer. It was suggested that the poor viewing experience for the public will not help improve engagement in politics and this may be significant when contentious matters come to be debated.

6. FUTURE WORK ARISING FROM THIS OBSERVATION PILOT

Given the Standards Committee members’ particular concerns regarding the Corporate Scrutiny Committee, and the perception that the initial feedback given to the Chair appears to have had no impact, the Standards Committee will continue to monitor this Committee.

More generally, the intention is to carry out a review of this pilot and decide how and when to continue with this work in the future. This will be done at a future informal meeting of the Committee. However, given the overall reassurance felt by the Standards Committee from carrying out these observations, it is likely that future work will be occasional and “light touch”.

Having seen the feedback letter the Standards Committee members wish to share with elected members, the Chief Executive has suggested that the Democratic Services Committee be requested to consider the general matters raised during this observation pilot which fall outside the remit of the Standards Committee, including the experience for the public in attending hybrid meetings. It will be a matter for the Democratic Services Committee as to whether this is a piece of work they wish to undertake.

7. RECOMMENDATION

The Standards Committee is to:

1. Accept the recommendation made by the Chief Executive for the Democratic Services Committee to consider those general matters identified during the observation exercise which fall outside the remit of the Standards Committee;
2. Continue with monitoring the Corporate Scrutiny Committee; and
3. Revisit the pilot and evaluation sheet in 6 months.

CYFARFODYDD / MEETINGS

Medi / September 2022			Aelodau i fynychu / Members attending
Mer/Wed	7	1.00pm Pwyllgor Cynllunio a Gorchmynion / Planning and Orders Committee	John R Jones Sharon Warnes
Maw/Tues	13	2.00pm Cyngor Sir / County Council	Rhys Davies Sharon Warnes
Llun/Mon	19 26	9.30am Pwyllgor Sgriwtini Partneriaeth ac Adfywio/Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	John R Jones Sharon Warnes
		2pm Pwyllgor Sgriwtini Corfforaethol (Ch1)/Corporate Scrutiny Committee (Q1)	John R Jones Rhys Davies
Iau/Thur	29 30	2.00pm Cyngor Sir / County Council (cadarnhau cyfrifon terfynol / approval of final accounts)	John R Jones Gill Murgatroyd
Hydref / October 2022			
Mer/Wed	5	1.00pm Pwyllgor Cynllunio a Gorchmynion / Planning and Orders Committee	Gill Murgatroyd – methu mynychu / unable to attend Sharon Warnes
Maw/Tues	18	2.00pm Pwyllgor Sgriwtini Partneriaeth ac Adfywio/Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	Rhys Davies Gill Murgatroyd
Mer/Wed	19	2.00pm Pwyllgor Sgriwtini Corfforaethol / Corporate Scrutiny Committee	John R Jones Rhys Davies
Iau/Thur	27	2.00pm Cyngor Sir (Arbennig) County Council (Extraordinary)	John R Jones Rhys Davies
Tachwedd / November 2022			
Mer/Wed	2	1.00pm Pwyllgor Cynllunio a Gorchmynion / Planning and Orders Committee	Gill Murgatroyd Sharon Warnes
Maw/Tues	22	2.00pm Pwyllgor Sgriwtini Corfforaethol (Ch2)/Corporate Scrutiny Committee (Q2)	Rhys Davies Sharon Warnes
Mer/Wed	23	2.00pm Pwyllgor Sgriwtini Partneriaeth ac Adfywio/Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee	John R Jones Gill Murgatroyd
Rhagfyr / December 2022			
Maw/Tues	6	Cyngor Sir / County Council	Rhys Davies Gill Murgatroyd
Mer/Wed	7	1.00pm Pwyllgor Cynllunio a Gorchmynion / Planning and Orders Committee	John R Jones Sharon Warnes

TAFLEN WERTHUSO / EVALUATION SHEET

DYDDIAD / DATE	
ENW'R PWYLLGOR NAME OF COMMITTEE	
AELODAU'R PWYLLGOR SAFONAU SY'N MYNYCHU MEMBERS OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE ATTENDING	
AELODAU'R PWYLLGOR NAD YDYNT YN BRESENNOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT IN ATTENDANCE	
SIARAD CYHOEDDUS, OS YN BERTHNASOL PUBLIC SPEAKING, IF RELEVANT	
DATGANIADAU O DDIDDORDEB INTERESTS DECLARED	
PERSONOL / PERSONAL	
SY'N RHAGFARNU / PREJUDICIAL	
ESBONIAD O'R DIDDORDEB EXPLANATION OF INTEREST	
OS YW'N RHAGFARNU, A WNAETH YR AELOD(AU) ADAEL YR YSTAFELL IF PREJUDICIAL, DID THE MEMBER/S LEAVE THE MEETING ROOM	
PARCH TUAG AT Y CADEIRYDD RESPECT FOR CHAIR	
PARCH TUAG AT AELODAU ERAILL RESPECT FOR OTHER MEMBERS	

<p>PARCH TUAG AT SWYDDOGION</p> <p>RESPECT FOR OFFICERS</p>	
<p>PARCH TUAG AT GYFRANOGWYR TRYDYDD PARTI</p> <p>RESPECT FOR THIRD PARTY PARTICIPANTS</p>	
<p>RHYNGWEITHIO RHWNG AELODAU CYFETHLEDIG AC AELODAU ETHLEDIG, OS YN BERTHNASOL</p> <p>INTERACTION BETWEEN COOPTED MEMBERS AND ELECTED MEMBERS, IF RELEVANT</p>	
<p>PAWB A OEDD YN CYMRYD RHAN WEDI CAEL CYFLE TEG I GYFRANNU</p> <p>ALL PARTICIPANTS GIVEN A FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE</p>	
<p>A OEDD YR AELODAU WEDI PARATOI'N DDIGONOL</p> <p>WERE THE MEMBERS ADEQUATELY PREPARED</p>	
<p>A OEDD YNA UNRHYW YMDDYGIAD A ALLAI DDWYN ANFRI AR YR AWDURDOD</p> <p>WAS THERE ANY CONDUCT THAT MIGHT BRING THE AUTHORITY INTO DISREPUTE</p>	
<p>CADEIRIO'R CYFARFOD</p> <p>CHAIRING OF THE COMMITTEE</p>	
<p>SYLWADAU PELLACH</p> <p>FURTHER COMMENTS</p>	
<p>UNRHYW HYFFORDDIANT NEU GEFNOGAETH AR GYFER Y PWYLLGOR NEU AELODAU UNIGOL</p> <p>ANY TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR THE COMMITTEE OR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS</p>	

<p>UNRHYW ARFERION DA / DYSGU I'W RANNU</p> <p>ANY GOOD PRACTICE / LEARNING TO BE SHARED</p>	
<p>ANGEN AM UNRHYW BWYNTIAU / ADBORTH ARALL</p> <p>ANY OTHER POINTS / FEEDBACK REQUIRED</p>	
<p>ADBORTH I GADEIRYDD Y PWYLLGOR</p> <p>FEEDBACK TO THE COMMITTEE CHAIR</p>	
<p>ADBORTH I'R ARWEINYDDION GRŴPIAU</p> <p>FEEDBACK TO THE GROUP LEADERS</p>	
<p>ADBORTH I UNRHYW ARWEINYDD GRŴP PENODOL</p> <p>FEEDBACK TO ANY SPECIFIC GROUP LEADER</p>	