

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 22 January 2026

PRESENT: **Independent Members**

Mr Trefor Owen (Chair)
Mr Brace Griffiths (Vice-chair)
Mr David Davies
Mrs Gill Murgatroyd

Representing Town and Community Councils

Councillor Iorwerth Roberts

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer
Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (LL)
Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (GPW)
Head of Democratic Services (for Item 4)
Assistant Human Resources Training Officer (LAJ) (for Item 3)

APOLOGIES: Committee Officer (SC)

Mr Rhys Davies
Councillor Margaret M Roberts
Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas
Mrs Margaret Thomas (Town/Community Council)
HR Learning and Development Manager (EP)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He extended a warm welcome to Mr David Davies, the Standards Committee's new independent member.

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Mrs Gill Murgatroyd and Mr David Davies declared a personal interest in Item 7 on today's agenda. They are both members of the Flintshire Standards Committee, but did not participate in any decision on the item.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING

The draft minutes of the Standards Committee meetings held on the following dates were presented and confirmed as correct: -

- 16 May 2025 (Local Hearing)
- 12 June 2025

The Chair confirmed that the action points in the minutes have either been implemented or are being acted upon.

The draft minutes of the Standards Committee Selection Panel held on the following dates were presented and noted for information: -

- 6 November 2025
- 13 November 2025

3. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Submitted - a report by the HR Learning and Development Manager to update the Standards Committee on training and development that has been offered to members since the Committee's last meeting in June 2025.

The HR Training Officer reported that there has been an increase in the number of members who have completed mandatory training. She stated that Safeguarding has the lowest completion rate at 83%. It was reiterated that support is available to access training modules on Learning Pool, if required. It was noted that the 29 members who have completed the Safeguarding module will not need to revisit the training under the current three year renewal period.

The Council will need to adapt its Safeguarding training to reflect the new Social Care Wales Training Framework and updated guidance. Clarity was sought on the new programme for Safeguarding modules, and how it will be implemented.

It was noted that good progress continues to be made on the Development Plan for Group Leaders. A final training session will be held soon, and feedback will be provided in due course.

Close collaboration between the HR Learning and Development Team and Democratic Services continues to be effective.

It was further noted that the L&D team will send reminders to Members when mandatory training needs to be refreshed.

The Chair requested a list of members who have not completed mandatory training.

RESOLVED: -

- **To note the content of the report.**
- **That the HR Learning and Development Team send reminders to members who have not completed Safeguarding training.**
- **That the HR Training Officer forwards a list of members who have not attended mandatory training to the Chair.**

Action: See Resolution above

4. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES UPDATE

Submitted – a report by the Head of Democratic Services on the governance work that has been undertaken by Democratic Services.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that 23 elected members' annual reports have been received for 2024/25, being a small reduction on the previous year. He stated that the response levels in Anglesey are favourable compared to other Councils in North Wales. A template for recording annual reports for 2025/26 will be shared with members in March, for completion by the end of May, and published in June 2026.

The Head of Democratic Services reported that members are being reminded to update their Registers of Interest within 28 days of any changes in circumstances. A reminder was sent out on 13 January with instructions on updating the online register.

It was noted that Group Leaders receive regular updates on their members' training. Annual conversations are also held between Group Leaders and individual members to discuss their training and development needs.

A review of Town and Community Council election arrangements will start this month, to consider whether the current number of electoral wards and members on Town and Community Councils are fit for purpose.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

Action: None

5. CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (PSOW)

Submitted – a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer in relation to conduct complaints received against (a) County Councillors and (b) Town/Community Councillors, for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2025/26.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the PSOW investigated two cases against County Councillors during the period. The first case reported in August 2023 was referred to the Standards Committee to convene a hearing. A local hearing was held on 16 May 2025, and actions from that matter have been completed and the case has now been closed.

The second case received in August 2024 is still under investigation. No updates have been received to date from the PSOW.

One complaint was received by the PSOW in relation to Town/Community Councillors in Quarter 1, which involved an initial investigation. In Quarter 2, the PSOW concluded that the Code of Conduct had not been breached in this case and the investigation was closed. Two new complaints relating to the same matter were received by the PSOW in Quarter 2, which were rejected.

During Quarter 3, three new complaints were considered; two have been rejected recently, and one is under investigation.

RESOLVED to note the content of Enclosures 1-6 to the report.

Action: None

6. PUBLISHED FINDINGS BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES FOR ALL COUNCILS IN WALES

Submitted – a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer summarising the PSOW's published findings of alleged breaches of Code of Conduct complaints in Wales between 1 June and 31 December 2025.

The Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (LL) reported that two Quarterly Newsletters have been received from the PSOW, together with the Annual Report for 2024/25.

The following learning points were highlighted from the published findings in the report: -

- Robust discussion and challenges between members and officers are permitted under the Code. The need to be respectful on both sides was highlighted.
- A reminder to members that an early, sincere apology and genuine reflection on any actions is treated positively by the Ombudsman.
- A member's circumstances can be assisted greatly by providing contemporaneous evidence with record keeping and emails.
- With reference to one specific case, the Ombudsman was particularly keen to understand the member training on Standing Orders and Governance Arrangements. Although it was regarded not in the public interest to take any further action, it was clear that the member had not undertaken training in that case.

The Chair suggested that a summary of the key messages from each Standards Committee be forwarded to Town/Community Councils. The Committee discussed and agreed to forward two of the PSOW's published findings i.e. Wrexham County Borough Council and Powys County Council & Welshpool Town Council to the Town/Community Councils.

RESOLVED: -

- **To note the content of the case summaries.**
- **To forward the main points from the PSOW's published findings from the two cases above to Town/Community Councils for information.**

Action: See Resolution above

7. DECISIONS BY THE ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES (APW)

Submitted – a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer summarising decisions published by the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) from 1 January to 31 May 2025.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted learning points from the five cases reported. She referred to two points from the first case; the first only for consideration by the Standards Committee; an appeal was lodged against the Standards Committee's determinations, before the case was forwarded to the APW. The Appeal Tribunal's judgement was that the Standards Committee had not explained its decision in a decision letter and had specifically omitted to show how the Committee had balanced its evidence and not set out clear reasons to support its decisions.

The second learning point is relevant to the Standards Committee and members, in that the Standards Committee did not have the right to force elected members to attend training, only encourage them to participate.

The second case relates to a suspension of four years. The main point in this case is that the Equalities Act takes precedence over Article 10 - 'Freedom of Speech', in a political context, affording considerable protection in this type of complaint.

The fourth case related to a breach of more than one element of the Code. The lesson learned is that the APW concluded that the facts supported the decision of breaching several aspects of the Code. The Panel decided that although the individual was a member, he was not working as a member at the time, the breach happened in his private life. The APW's decision was that the member was bringing the role of Councillor and the Council into disrepute.

RESOLVED to note the content of the case summaries.

Action: None

8. APPLICATION(S) FOR DISPENSATION

Submitted – a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer on the outcome of dispensations considered by the Standards Committee since its last meeting.

The Monitoring Officer reported that applications for dispensation were submitted by Councillors Keith Roberts and Jeff Evans, who are Local Authority appointed Governors of Holyhead High School. Councillor Evans is also Chair of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

On 9 October 2025, the Standards Committee's Dispensation Panel considered both applications for dispensation, which sought to permit the Councillors to participate in discussion and decision making in the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2025 in relation to their interests in a proposal for Holyhead High School.

Councillor Roberts had declared a personal interest in relation to this item.

RESOLVED that the Committee notes the dispensations granted and the grounds and circumstances in which they were granted.

Action: None

9. LEGAL SERVICES MANAGER/DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER UPDATE

Submitted – the report of the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer to update the Committee on matters relevant to the Standards Committee.

The Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (GPW) summarised the following actions undertaken by Legal Services: -

- The Standards Committee's Annual Report for 2024/25 was approved by full Council on 25.9.25. A copy of the report has been forwarded to the PSOW.
- The Standards Committee wrote to all Town/Community Councils on 6.8.25 requesting a copy of their Code of Conduct training plans. To date, only 6 responses have been received.
- The Chair wrote to the PSOW on 16.7.25 expressing the Committee's concerns regarding the time taken to investigate allegations. The PSOW responded, and outlined recent initiatives to improve their timelines, including allocating resources for new posts in the Code of Conduct team.

Concerns were expressed regarding poor responses from Town/Community Councils. Members felt that the message needs to be reinforced that it is statutory for each Council to have a training plan in place. The Chair referred to a previous informal discussion, when the Committee had agreed to develop a training programme to review the work of Town/Community Councils. The Monitoring Officer responded that a training programme is being developed. She stated that a more targeted approach will need to be taken with further oversight from the Standards Committee.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Committee writes to the Clerks of the Town/Community Councils requesting details of training opportunities they have provided to their Councillors over a twelve month period, also ask about future planning arrangements. It was noted that further input on this matter will be discussed informally.

RESOLVED to note the report.

Action: None

10. STANDARDS COMMITTEE BRIEFING NOTES FOR MEMBERS

Submitted – a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer on the above.

The Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (GPW) reported that following consideration of the Audit Wales report in respect of Wrexham County Borough Council's governance issues, it was agreed that members' briefing notes should be reviewed and reissued within the timeline set out in the report. It is considered good practice to refresh and reissue the briefing notes to support and maintain good standards.

Once the review has been completed, the revised briefing notes will be shared with members, Group Leaders and the Standards Committee. The Chair confirmed that the Group Leaders have agreed to promote the briefing notes to their members.

RESOLVED to note the next steps in relation to the review and reissue of the Members' Briefing Notes to members, Group Leaders and the Standards Committee.

Action: None

11. NATIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM FOR WALES

Submitted – the report of the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer on the above.

The Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (GPW) reported that a meeting of the Forum was held on 23 June 2025. Discussion focused on the time taken by the PSOW to investigate allegation of breaches of the Code of Conduct.

It was noted that the next Forum meeting will be held on 26 January 2026, which the Chair will attend. Following the meeting, the Chair will share his observations and minutes from the meeting with the Committee in due course.

The Chair welcomed any items for him to request to be included on the agenda at a future Forum meeting.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

Action: None

12. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (STANDARDS COMMITTEES AND MEMBER CONDUCT) (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) (WALES) REGULATIONS 2025

Submitted - a report by the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer on the above legislation that came into effect on 5 January 2026.

The Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (LL) reported that changes to legislation include the eligibility criteria for lay members on Standards Committees. The changes relate to the period of time before a person who was previously working at a relevant authority can apply to be a lay member of a Standards Committee.

Further changes to the model Code of Conduct (Wales) Order 2008 have been made by adding a definition of '*protected characteristics*' and amending paragraph 4(a). The change broadens protection and brings the Code in line with equality law.

The Monitoring Officer reported that the change in legislation is included in the Head of Democratic Services' Work Programme, working with the Task and Finish Group who deal with equality issues and training.

RESOLVED: -

- **To note the amendments and steps that will be taken to ensure implementation and consistency with the Regulations.**
- **That the Standards Committee writes to members to confirm the change in legislation.**
- **That the Standards Committee raises the issue with the Council's Policy and Welsh Language Manager, to seek clarity on what the requirement involves in terms of legislation, before reporting back to the Committee.**

Action: See Resolution above

13. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to adopt the following: -

"Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during discussion on the following item on the grounds that it may involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act and in the attached Public Interest Test."

14. CONDUCT COMPLAINTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (PSOW)

Submitted - the report of the Director of Function (Council Business)/Monitoring Officer, providing further information on decisions made by the PSOW during Quarters 1, 2 and 3 of 2024/25.

The Legal Services Manager/Deputy Monitoring Officer (LL) reported that the three decision notices discussed in Item 5 of today's agenda against Town/Community Councillors have been summarised for further discussion in Enclosure 1.

It was noted that in the first case, the PSOW had been aware of public accessibility during meetings of this Town/Community Council. She concluded that there had been no evidence of failing to comply within the Code, therefore no further action was taken.

In the second case, the PSOW determined that the complaint did not meet the threshold for investigation. The Complainant was given an opportunity to provide further information, which was submitted and considered. The PSOW concluded

that there was no reasonably strong evidence of breaching the Code, therefore no investigation was instigated.

In the third case, the Complainant was given the option to provide additional information in support of the case, but no further evidence was submitted. The PSOW concluded not to investigate the complaint further.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report.

Action: None

The meeting concluded at 11:40 am

**MR TREFOR OWEN
CHAIR**