

**Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd**

**Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd**

Chief Executive: K.Jones

Date: 14 October 2024

Dear Member,

STANDARDS COMMITTEE - MONDAY, 14TH OCTOBER, 2024

Please find attached the following Appendix (Independent Group, for Item 4 – Meeting with Group Leaders) for consideration at the next meeting of the **Standards Committee - Monday, 14th October, 2024.**

Item

Independent Group - Meeting with Group Leaders (Pages 3 - 6)

Yours sincerely

Tammie Davies

p.p Chief Executive

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<u>Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct</u>					
Report by:	Councillor Steve Hunt				
Political Group:	Independent				
No. of members:	18	No. trained on Code:	18 (100%)		
For the period:	1 st April 2023 to 31 st March 2024				
<u>Number, Source and Level of Complaints</u>					
	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW
		1	2	3	
Public	1 (Member advised to refer matter to PSOW)	-	-	-	2 (No further action by PSOW and one referred to Standards Committee)
Officers	-	-	-	-	-
Councillors	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Steps taken to Promote Compliance (To Be Completed by Group Leader)</u>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to demonstrating personal commitment to and attending relevant development or training around equalities and standards: At the commencement of the new administration, I attended Member Induction Standards Training for Group Leaders. Following the training, I disseminated the content of the training to my independent group members highlighting individual expectations. • In order to encourage group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards, I highlight training opportunities to group members during independent group meetings. Also, my group member, Cllr Simon Knoyle, sits on the Equality and Community Cohesion Group (last meeting held on 15 February 2023), and provides relevant feedback to the group following each Cohesion Group occurrence. The importance of equality and diversity is also incorporated within a module of the Leadership Programme which has and is currently being undertaken by two of my group members. Having personally taken part in this 					

programme, I encourage all eligible group members to attend as I know the huge benefits of doing so.

- I believe all independent group members with the exception of the newly elected member Robert Woolford have attended mandatory Code of Conduct training. Also a number of group members have also attended Equalities training.
- All Independent committee nominees have attended relevant committee training. In addition to this attendance at all training sessions as seminars has been good and where individual members are not compliant I take strong action with them on an individual basis to explain and encourage that it's expected of them to carry out this training in their roles as County Borough Councillors. This is generally a positive indication of the commitment to member development by our members which enhances their ability to discharge their duties effectively.
- To ensure nominees to a Committee have received the recommended training for that Committee, a review of administration issues is conducted on an annual basis at the Annual Meeting of Council. During the review, I take a personal interest to ensure members assigned to Committees have the relevant knowledge and training to fulfil their roles and I encourage all members of our group to attend training provided.
- To promote civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal Council meetings, I encourage group members to raise concerns directly to myself and during group meetings in order to address instances and ensure high standards are maintained.
- To promote informal resolution procedures in the Council, and working with the Standards Committee and monitoring officers to achieve local resolution, I actively promote and engage with relevant parties. As an example, I have recently provided support to a group member in regarding a code of conduct complaint referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. As leader of the independent group, I promote an open door policy to ensure all members of my group have an opportunity to regularly discuss local resolutions.
- To promote a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity, I actively encouraged group members to attend the most recent Members Code of Conduct refresher Seminar held on 8 June 2023. As group leader, I promote conduct and integrity as a priority and reflect this at every opportunity.
- I see attendance of meetings of the Council's Standards Committee, when requested, to discuss Code of Conduct issues as an integral part of my group leader role. I work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee in improving standards and have previously attended meetings of Standards Committee to answer questions. Happy to continue to engage with this process.
- I work together with other group leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the Council on an individual independent basis and via group leaders' briefings held with the Chief Executive on a quarterly basis.

- I also find it helpful to carry out social events where all our independent members have an opportunity to get together, share experiences and support one another to understand their duties better as in the role of a County Borough Councillor, as it's not easy to fully understand what is expected of them in this role.
- I think it's important to also understand that not all our members have the time to get the necessary training because of their work commitments, family lives and other issues that might be going on with them at any moment in time, however as their leader I try to have a one on one with any member to support them with all issues they might be facing.
- I myself as leader always look to get as much training as possible so I am equipped to advice, support and deliver the right information to my members and if I'm ever in doubt of the support needed I will ask for it from Craig Griffiths.
- The last thing I would say is, whilst it's as already been stated that the individual member of the group needs to be responsible for their actions and any breach of standards , code of conduct I feel as a group leader it's important I continue to make sure all my members are well briefed on the ever changing circumstances we are facing where social media now plays a massive part of our lives and we really need to understand what we can and cannot do with that platform.

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