



## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**2.00 PM - MONDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2024**

**MULTI-LOCATION MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBER, PORT TALBOT  
& MICROSOFT TEAMS**

**ALL MOBILE TELEPHONES TO BE SWITCHED TO SILENT FOR THE  
DURATION OF THE MEETING**

### **PART 1**

1. Welcome and Chair's Announcements
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 5 - 8*)
4. Meeting with Group Leaders (*Pages 9 - 22*)
5. Review of Member Officer Protocol (*Pages 23 - 36*)
6. Local Resolution Procedure Update (*Pages 37 - 50*)
7. Standards Committees Forum - Wales (*Pages 51 - 60*)
8. Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2023/2024  
(*Pages 61 - 78*)
9. Attendance at NPT Council and Town/Community Council Meetings  
(*Pages 79 - 98*)
10. Forward Work Programme (*Pages 99 - 100*)

11. Urgent Items

Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**K.Jones**  
**Chief Executive**

**Civic Centre**  
**Port Talbot**

**7 October 2024**

## Committee Membership:

**Chairperson:** L.Fleet

**Vice** T.Ward

**Chairperson:**

**Independent** A.Davies and D.Lewis  
**Members:**

**NPTCBC** S.Thomas and W.Carpenter  
**Members:**

**Community** C.Edwards  
**Committee**  
**Member:**

## Substitutes

**NPTCBC** A.Lodwig and S.Grimshaw  
**Substitutes:**

**Community** Vacant  
**Committee**  
**Substitute:**

- Notes: (a) The Quorum for the Standards Committee is at least three Members including the Chairperson (or in absence Vice Chairperson). At least half the Members present (including the Chair) must be Independent Members. (e.g. if only two Independent Members attend, there must **only** be two other Members of the Committee present.)*
- (b) In view of the above, can all Members please inform the Monitoring Officer/Democratic Services Officer as soon as possible, if there is a problem with attendance.*

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## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

(Multi-Location Meeting - Council Chamber, Port Talbot & Microsoft Teams)

**Members Present:**

**9 September 2024**

**Chairperson:** L.Fleet

**Independent Members:** A.Davies

**NPTCBC Members:** Councillor S.Thomas

**Community Committee Members:** Councillor C.Edwards

**Officers In Attendance:** C.Griffiths and N.Jones

**Apologies:** T.Ward and D.Lewis

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1. **WELCOME AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

There were apologies from T.Ward and D.Lewis.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**RESOLVED:** The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 23 April, and 17 June 2024 be agreed as an accurate record.

4. **INTERNAL AUDIT IN RESPECT OF MEMBERS ETHICS**

Officers updated the Committee with a report in relation to Internal Audit in respect of Members Ethics.

It was discussed that there were appropriate internal processes in place to ensure members are acting in an ethical manner.

Officers mentioned that training had been undertaken in relation to declaration of interest, use of social media and is currently in the process of finalising a report to come back to the Committee on Conflict Resolution.

**RESOLVED:** That the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Internal Audit Report, be noted.

5. **REFERRAL FROM THE OMBUDSMAN**

Officers gave the Committee an update on the circulated report.

**RESOLVED:** That the Decision Notice in respect of the investigation into the conduct of Councillor Dean Lewis, County Borough Councillor representing the Resolven and Tonna ward of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, be noted.

6. **PLANNING PROTOCOL FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

Members discussed the circulated report and Officers explained the rules and principles on the Planning Protocols. Officers suggested they will undertake a training session for all elected members on the Planning Protocol.

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the Neath Port Talbot Council Planning Protocol for elected Members, be noted.

7. **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Officers updated the Committee with the circulated report.

**RESOLVED:** That the contents of the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Whistleblowing Policy, be noted.

8. **RECENT DECISION OF THE ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES AND PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES RELATING TO MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT BREACHES**

Officers updated the Committee with the circulated report.

**RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

9. **SOUTH WEST WALES CORPORATE JOINT COMMITTEE**

Officers gave the Committee an update on the circulated report.

Officers updated the Committee they would bring a report to the meeting in relation to the advisers appointed and an invite will be sent to the Chair of South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee to attend to an upcoming meeting.

**RESOLVED:** That the delegation of the Standards Committee function of the South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee to Neath Port Talbot Council Standards Committee, and the work programme to date, be noted.

10. **TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT MATTERS**

Officers gave the Committee an update on the circulated report.

Officers were advised they attend Town and Community Council in the future, dates of this meeting will be brought to the next Standards Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That the findings from the survey undertaken of Town and Community Councils, be noted.

11. **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were advised that the Forward Work Programme could be amended or added to any time Members felt necessary.

As discussed, a report will come back to the Committee on Conflict Resolution and the advisers appointed in relation to South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

The main focus in the October meeting will be with the group leaders and get the opportunity to hear from them directly.

**RESOLVED:** That the Standards Committee Forward Work Programme be noted.

12. **URGENT ITEMS**

No urgent items were received.

## **CHAIRPERSON**





Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS

14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Group Leaders of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

1. To discharge the legal obligation on Standards Committees to ensure leaders of political groups take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their groups and agree methods of monitoring.

#### **Background:**

##### Duty on Group Leaders

2. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”) included some new obligations for Standards Committees. The Act imposes specific duties on political leaders to promote and maintain standards of conduct within members of their group, and to cooperate with the Standards Committee in the exercise of its functions. This requires leaders of political groups to take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their groups.
3. The duty does not make leaders of a political group accountable for the behaviour of their members as conduct must be a matter of individual

responsibility. However, they do have a role in taking reasonable steps in maintaining standards, setting an example, using their influence to promote a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in their group and addressing issues as soon as they arise.

4. Reasonable steps the group leader *may* undertake include:
  - a. demonstrating personal commitment to and attending relevant development or training around equalities and standards;
  - b. encouraging group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards;
  - c. ensuring nominees to a committee have received the recommended training for that committee;
  - d. promoting civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal council meetings;
  - e. promoting informal resolution procedures in the council, and working with the standards committee and monitoring officers to achieve local resolution;
  - f. promoting a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity;
  - g. attend a meeting of the council's standards committee if requested to discuss Code of Conduct issues;
  - h. work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee about improving standards;
  - i. work together with other Group Leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the council.
5. The purpose of the new duties is to build on and support a culture which is proactive, acts on and does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour.
6. A leader of a political group who fails to comply with the new duty in a meaningful way, may potentially be regarded as bringing their office into disrepute, and likely to be in breach of the Code.
7. A political group's internal disciplinary procedures remain a matter for that group or any associated political party's own rules on discipline. However, it is expected that the group leader will take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members within group communications and meetings as well as their 'public' conduct outside of the group setting.

8. The provision imposes an additional function on the Standards committee to monitor political leaders' compliance, and to advise, train or arranging to train leaders of political groups about matters relating to the above duties. It is essential the leaders of a political group co-operate, and ensure the members within their group co-operate, with the monitoring officer and standards committee when an issue is referred to the standards committee.
9. Leaders of a political group should build good relations, and work constructively with the monitoring officer, seeking advice from them and the standards committee on matters of behaviour and conduct when required, both promoting positive behaviours and addressing inappropriate ones. Group Leaders should also report compliance with their duty to the standards committee. This can take the form of a short letter or report at a frequency agreed by the political Group Leaders in the council and its standards committee. Group Leaders should also report any serious concerns about members' behaviour which have not been remedied by informal actions, in line with the requirement in the Code for councillors to report breaches.

#### Role of Standards Committee

10. The functions of the Standards Committee include monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups with the new duty imposed on them to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group. A council's political Group Leaders and its standards committee should agree on the form and frequency of a report from each group leader to the standards committee to demonstrate how compliance with the duty is achieved. The standards committee should then consider each report and provide feedback to the Group Leaders. A standards committee must also provide advice and training, or arrange to train Group Leaders on the new duty. The Standards Committee may wish to meet with Group Leaders periodically to review behaviour.
11. In the last year, the Standards Committee has met with all Group Leaders to discuss compliance with this duty and received reports from them at their meeting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2024 – copies of which are enclosed at Appendix 1.

12. It is recommended that at the beginning of each council year political group leaders should meet with the standards committee to agree the following:
- to reflect on any particular challenges within the last year and how they were overcome
  - how group leaders and the standards committee will work together to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour and what assistance would group leaders require from the Standards Committee
  - to agree a frequency of meetings between group leaders and the standards committee throughout the year – it is currently proposed that there be one meeting at the start of the year and those present can confirm whether this is an acceptable frequency
  - the mechanism for political group leaders to provide reports to the standards committee about the actions they have taken to comply with the duties within the 2021 Act and whether there is a wish to update the current templates.
13. The following group leaders will attend the meeting of the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024.
- Cllr Steve Hunt
  - Cllr Alun Llewelyn
  - Cllr Rob Jones
  - Cllr Helen Ceri Clarke

**Financial Impacts:**

14. No implications.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

15. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

16. No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

17. No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

18. There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

**Consultation:**

19. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**Recommendations:**

20. That Members meet with political group leaders to discuss the relationship with the Standards Committee and what steps are in place to assist them in discharging their duties.

**Appendices:**

21. Appendix 1 – Reports of Group Leaders

**List of Background Papers:**

22. None

**Officer Contact:**

Mr Craig Griffiths  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Telephone 01639 763767  
Email: c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk

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## Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct

Report by:	Councillor Rob Jones (Leader of Welsh Labour Group)		
Political Group:	Welsh Labour		
No. of members:	26	No. trained on Code:	26 (100%)
For the period:	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024		

### Number, Source and Level of Complaints

	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW
		1	2	3	
Public	3	-	-	-	5 (No further action)
Officers	2 (Members spoken to and no further action taken)	-	-	-	-
Councillors	-	-	-	-	-

### Steps taken to Promote Compliance (To Be Completed by Group Leader)

- I engage with the monitoring officer on a regular basis and have attended all the relevant training surrounding the Members Code of Conduct.
- I regularly raise Standards and code of conduct issues with members of my own group, reminding them of their duty to comply with the code.
- I meet with my group councillors on an individual basis to discuss conduct matters, I require from them early notification of potential issues and to link with the monitoring officer for appropriate advice and courses of action should the need arise such as self-referral to the ombudsman.
- I remind my members of my group that they can not disassociate themselves from their role as a Councillor to become a private citizen when it suits them, they while in office will always be a Councillor and actions they perform must always be seen in that light.
- I remind members of the need to respect their working relationship with officers and the separate boundaries that are required between both roles.
- I have attended the Standards committee to express my views on promoting its role within the council and many of my ideas have been adopted.
- I emphasize the need for all members to comply with the code to ensure that trust is maintained by the public in elected members.

- I am aware of the lack of use of local resolution, and suggest its use to members where appropriate.
- I remind my group occasionally that in order to comply with the code the Severn principles of public life (The Nolan principles) should be looks at and act as a guide to them



## Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct

Report by:	Councillor Alun Llewelyn		
Political Group:	Plaid Cymru		
No. of members:	11	No. trained on Code:	11 (100%)
For the period:	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024		

### Number, Source and Level of Complaints

	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW
		1	2	3	
Public	2 (Advised to refer the matter to PSOW)	-	-	-	1 (No further action by PSOW)
Officers	-	-	-	-	-
Councillors	1 (No further action taken following discussion with member)	-	-	-	-

### Steps taken to Promote Compliance (To Be Completed by Group Leader)

- I demonstrate a personal commitment by attending relevant development or training around equalities and standards either in person or online. By keeping abreast of the training or refresher sessions I can advise other members of the group on the importance of attending their own relevant training.  
I also regularly read the reports of the Standards Committee and Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
- Following the May 2022 election I encouraged both new and returning group members to attend induction training specifically on equalities and standards as well as more general induction sessions, marketplace events etc to be aware of the work and structures of the local authority. I draw the group's attention to updates and continuous training opportunities.
- It is made clear that nominees to a Committee should receive the recommended training for that Committee. I liaise periodically with senior officers, the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services if there are any concerns about members non-attendance for training or committee meetings. A review of administration issues is conducted on annual basis for approval at the Annual Meeting of Council.

- To promote civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal Council meetings, I encourage group members to raise concerns with myself or in group meetings so that issues can be resolved and standards maintained. I will also address any concerns raised eg contents of social media messages.
- To promote informal resolution procedures in the Council, and work with the Standards Committee and monitoring officers to achieve local resolution, I have met with the Monitoring Officer and individual group members who have been subject of complaints by members of the public. The nature of the complaint, responses, and lessons learned were discussed. None of the complaints led to action by the PSOW.
- To promote a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity, I encouraged all group members to attend the Members Code of Conduct refresher session, last held in June 2023. I also share advice and information from the Monitoring Officer eg. compliance with pre-election period guidance, pre-determination guidance etc.
- I have attended a meeting of the Council's Standards Committee as requested to discuss Code of Conduct issues. I will work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee about improving standards, and see leadership on standards as a key part of my group-leader role.
- I work together with other group leaders to collectively support high standards of conduct within the Council such as scheduled meetings with the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer to discuss common issues.

## Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct

Report by:	Councillor Rob Jones (Leader of Welsh Labour Group)		
Political Group:	Welsh Labour		
No. of members:	26	No. trained on Code:	26 (100%)
For the period:	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024		

### Number, Source and Level of Complaints

	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW
		1	2	3	
Public	3	-	-	-	5 (No further action)
Officers	2 (Members spoken to and no further action taken)	-	-	-	-
Councillors	-	-	-	-	-

### Steps taken to Promote Compliance (To Be Completed by Group Leader)

- I engage with the monitoring officer on a regular basis and have attended all the relevant training surrounding the Members Code of Conduct.
- I regularly raise Standards and code of conduct issues with members of my own group, reminding them of their duty to comply with the code.
- I meet with my group councillors on an individual basis to discuss conduct matters, I require from them early notification of potential issues and to link with the monitoring officer for appropriate advice and courses of action should the need arise such as self-referral to the ombudsman.
- I remind my members of my group that they can not disassociate themselves from their role as a Councillor to become a private citizen when it suits them, they while in office will always be a Councillor and actions they perform must always be seen in that light.
- I remind members of the need to respect their working relationship with officers and the separate boundaries that are required between both roles.
- I have attended the Standards committee to express my views on promoting its role within the council and many of my ideas have been adopted.
- I emphasize the need for all members to comply with the code to ensure that trust is maintained by the public in elected members.

- I am aware of the lack of use of local resolution, and suggest its use to members where appropriate.
- I remind my group occasionally that in order to comply with the code the Severn principles of public life (The Nolan principles) should be looks at and act as a guide to them

## Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct

Report by:	Councillor Helen Ceri Clarke		
Political Group:	Coedffranc, Liberal and Green Group		
No. of members:	4	No. trained on Code:	4 (100%)
For the period:	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023		

### Number, Source and Level of Complaints

	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW
		1	2	3	
Public	-	-	-	-	-
Officers	-	-	-	-	-
Councillors	-	-	-	-	-

### Steps taken to Promote Compliance (To Be Completed by Group Leader)

- I have attended a meeting of the council standards committee as requested.
- At the commencement of the new administration, I attended Member Induction Standards Training for Group Leaders. Following the training, I discussed the content of the training to my group members highlighting individual expectations.
- We aim to meet as a group every fortnight to discuss committee or casework issues with the intention to use best practice to resolve issues.
- I promote the work of the Standards Committee and the reports that are considered.
- I forward any documentation received from the Monitoring Officer to all members so they are aware of latest updates and guidance.
- I have met with other group leaders, the Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer to discuss matters relating to standards across our respective groups.
- Members of the group are encouraged to attend all training and seminars or to catch up on recording of them when they can.
- I am available to the members of the group on the phone if they want to contact me to discuss anything that they are having problems with, be it constituents, officers or other members. We discuss the best way forward in these matters always bearing in mind standards and equality.





Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS**

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

#### **Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Member Officer Protocol**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

1. To consider an updated draft of the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Protocol on Member and Officer Relationships

#### **Background:**

2. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Members have adopted a Protocol on Member and Officer Relationships (a copy of which is enclosed at Appendix 1 of this Report).
3. The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Members and Employees of the Council in their relations with one another.

4. Mutual respect between Members and Employees is essential to good local government. However, close personal familiarity between individual Members and Employees can damage this relationship and prove embarrassing to other Members and Employees.
5. The relationship has to function without compromising the ultimate responsibilities of Employees to the Council as a whole, and with due regard to such technical, financial, professional and legal advice that Employees can legitimately provide to Members. The Protocol seeks to set a framework that assists the working relationships between Members and Employees.
6. It is hoped that, by following good practice and securing sensible and practical working relationships between Members and Employees, we can provide one of the cornerstones of a successful local authority and thereby enhance the delivery of high value quality services to the people of the Neath Port Talbot locality. Mutual understanding, openness and respect are the greatest safeguard of the integrity of the Council, its Members and Employees.
7. Consideration has been given to updating the current iteration of the protocol following some benchmarking against other local authorities and accordingly an updated draft is attached for members to consider,
8. The protocol covers a number of different areas
  - (a) The role of members;
  - (b) The role of officers/employees of the Council;
  - (c) Dealing with disputes;
  - (d) Respect and courtesy
  - (e) Provision of advice and information to members
  - (f) The relationship between officers and members
  - (g) Confidentiality



- (h) Provision of support services
- (i) Political restrictions

**Financial Impacts:**

9. No implications.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

10. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

11. No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

12. No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

13. There are no legal impacts associated with this report.

**Consultation:**

14. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**Recommendations:**

15. That Members consider the draft updated Member Officer Protocol enclosed at Appendix 1 and comment accordingly prior to further consideration by elected members and onward approval at Full Council.

**Reason for Decision**

**16.** To ensure appropriate governance arrangements are in place to reflect the relationship between elected officials and officers of the Council.

**Appendices:**

**17.** Appendix 1 – Draft Updated Member Officer Protocol

**List of Background Papers:**

**18.** None

**Officer Contact:**

Mr Craig Griffiths  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Telephone 01639 763767  
Email: c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk

## **Protocol on Member/Officer Relations**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The general principles of good Member/Officer relations is based on mutual trust and respect and consideration for others. Good working relationships between Members and Officers leads to good decision making, enhanced performance, confidence and community leadership. Mutual respect between Officers and Members is essential to good local government and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis and conducted in a positive and constructive way. It is important that any dealings between Members and Officers should observe standards of courtesy
- 9.3.1 Members are bound by the Code of Conduct and Nolan Principles and are expected to maintain the highest standard of ethical behaviour when acting in their capacity as a Member and, in certain circumstances, at all times. Officers are bound by the Code of Conduct (Qualifying Local Government Officers) (Wales) Order 2001 which provides that the public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from Officers. When performing their duties Officers must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity. It is essential that both are familiar with the detailed obligations in their respective Codes of Conduct which will prevail in the event of any conflict between the Codes and this Protocol.
- 1.2 The relationship has to function without compromising the ultimate responsibilities of Officers to the Council as a whole, and with due regard to such technical, financial, professional and legal advice that Officers can legitimately provide to Members.
- 1.3 To support high performance it is essential that both Members and Officers know and respect their different roles and perspectives.
- 1.4 The Protocol seeks to set a framework that assists the working relationships between Members and Officers.

### **2.0 Roles of Members**

- 2.1 Members undertake many different roles. Broadly these are:
  - 2.1.1 Members express political values and support the policies of the party or group to which they belong (if any).
  - 2.1.2 Members are responsible to the electorate. Members undertake important community work within their ward and act as community advocates. They also deal with individual casework within their wards..
  - 2.1.3 Members are involved in active partnerships with other organisations as community leaders.

- 2.1.4 Members contribute to the decisions taken in Full Council and in its various bodies on which they serve, as well as joint committees, outside bodies and partnership organisations.
- 2.1.5 Members help develop and review policy and strategy.
- 2.1.6 Members help develop, monitor and review policy implementation and service quality.
- 2.1.7 Some Members are also involved in quasi-judicial decisions when sitting on regulatory committees such as planning and licensing. Other Members will have responsibility for holding the Cabinet to account and scrutinising the performance of the council. Those Members who form part of the Cabinet will undertake the majority of the Council's functions and will decide policy and make policy decisions

### **3 Roles of Officers**

#### 3.1 Officers have the following main roles:

- 3.1.1 Officers are responsible to the Council and answerable to their managers, Heads of Service/Corporate Directors and ultimately the Chief Executive. Their role is to give impartial advice to all Members and to implement decisions, agreed policy and corporate priorities. Officers have operational responsibilities as set out in the scheme of delegation and Constitution and are responsible for day to day management and being accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of their services.
- 3.1.2 The Member Code of Conduct provides that Members must reach decisions having regard to any relevant advice from Officers. In providing advice Officers are free to give their professional advice wherever appropriate. Such advice should be clear, impartial and timely.
- 3.1.3 Responsibility for drafting reports to committees, providing advice and, where appropriate, setting out options for decision making
- 3.1.4 Initiating policy proposals and Implementing agreed policy
- 3.1.5 Ensuring that the Council always acts in a lawful manner.

### **4. Dealing with Disputes**

- 4.1 Members should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer in a public forum. This will include all meetings at which the public are present whether in person or via remote means. An Officer has no means of responding to such criticism in public.
- 4.2 If a Member feels that he/she has not been treated with respect, courtesy or has a concern about the conduct or capability of an Officer then the

- Member should raise it with the relevant Head of Service/Corporate Director or Chief Executive.
- 4.3 There will be an expectation that the Member will also raise with their Group Leader any concerns about Officer conduct.
  - 4.4 The appropriate officer will look into the matter and report back to the Member.
  - 4.5 Where it is felt that there is a breakdown in the relationship between both the Officer and the Member then with the consent of all parties the Chief Executive and Group Leader may resolve to consider mediation as a way forward. Any action taken against an Officer will be in accordance with the Council's relevant HR policies and upon advice of HR Officers.
  - 4.6 An Officer should not raise with a Member matters relating to the conduct or capability of another Officer or the internal management of their section in a manner which is incompatible with the overall objectives of this Protocol.
  - 4.7 If an Officer feels that he/she has not been properly treated with respect and courtesy by a Member he/she should raise the matter with his/her Head of Service who will notify the relevant Director. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the relevant Head of Service or Director will speak to the Member with a view to facilitating resolution of any issues that have arisen between the Member and Officer.
  - 4.8 If the Member has a Group Leader the Head of Service/Director will also notify the Group Leader that a complaint has been made.
  - 4.9 There will be an expectation that both parties will, in the spirit of this Protocol, engage in meaningful discussions to resolve any issues amicably. If the matter cannot be resolved at the initial stage by the Head of Service or Director then the relevant Political Group Leaders and the Chief Executive will seek to resolve by mediation and conciliation any unresolved problem or breakdown in working relationships between Members and Officers.
  - 4.10 Both parties will be expected to agree to and engage with mediation with a view to resolving the matter.
  - 4.11 If the alleged misconduct is of a serious nature the matter should be reported to the Monitoring Officer who will discuss initially with the Chief Executive and then, if appropriate, with the Corporate Directors Group as to whether it is appropriate for referral to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
  - 4.12 In their dealings with Officers, Members should recognise and have regard to the Council's role as employer. Members should be aware that Officers could rely on inappropriate behaviour of a Member in an employment case against the Council.

## 5. Respect and Courtesy

5.1 For the effective conduct of Council business there must be mutual respect, trust and courtesy in all meetings and contacts, both formal and informal, between Members and Officers. This plays a very important part in the Council's reputation and how it is seen in public. It is very important that both Members and Officers remember their respective obligations to enhance the Council's reputation and to do what they can to avoid criticism of other Members, or other Officers, in public places.

### 5.2 Undue Pressure

5.2.1.1 It is important in any dealings between Members and Officers that neither should seek to take unfair advantage of their position.

5.2.1.2 In their dealings with Officers (especially junior Officers) Members need to be aware that it is easy for them to be overawed and feel at a disadvantage. Such feelings can be intensified where Members hold senior official and/or political office.

5.2.1.3 A Member should not apply undue pressure on an Employee either to do anything that he is not empowered to do or to undertake work outside normal duties or outside normal hours. Particular care needs to be taken in connection with the use of Council property and services.

5.2.1.4 Similarly, an Employee must neither seek to use undue influence on an individual Member to make a decision in his favour, nor raise personal matters to do with their job, nor make claims or allegations about other Officers. *(The Council has formal procedures for consultation, grievance and discipline, and Officers have the right to report possible wrongdoing under the Council's Confidential Reporting Code.)*

### 5.3 Familiarity

5.3.1 Close personal familiarity between individual Members and Officers can damage the principle of mutual respect. It could also, intentionally or accidentally, lead to the passing of confidential information or information which should not properly be passed between them, such as personal details.

5.3.2 Such familiarity could also cause embarrassment to other Members and/or other Officers and even give rise to suspicions of favouritism.

5.3.3 For these reasons close personal familiarity must be avoided.

## **6 Provision of Advice and Information to Members**

- 6.1 In discharging their duties and responsibilities, Officers serve the Council as a whole and not any political group, combination of groups or any individual Member of the Council. Members should respect the political neutrality and integrity of Officers.
- 6.2 Members are free to approach Officers of the Council to provide them with such information and advice as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as a Member of the Council. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent. Such requests must be reasonable and not seek information relating, for instance, to case work of a similar nature, e.g. Social Services, employment etc. Requests will be met subject to any overriding legal considerations (which will be determined by the Monitoring Officer), or if the recipient of any request considers the cost of providing the information requested or the nature of the request to be unreasonable. If a Member requesting such information is dissatisfied by such a response s/he should raise the matter in the first place with the relevant Corporate Director, and if still dissatisfied should raise the matter with the Chief Executive who will discuss the issue with the relevant Group Leader(s).
- 6.3 Officers should always endeavour to respond to requests for information promptly and should in any event inform the Member if there is likely to be any appreciable delay in dealing with an enquiry. As a minimum the timescale for responding to correspondence should be observed ie either a full response or, if this is not possible, an acknowledgement that fully explains what is happening within five working days of the receipt of the enquiry.
- 6.4 The legal rights of Members to inspect Council documents are covered partly by statute and partly by common law. The Access to Information Procedure Rules and Scrutiny Procedure Rules of the Constitution explain the position with regard to access to papers relating to the business of a Member body. The exercise of the common law right depends upon a Member's ability to demonstrate a "need to know". In this respect a Member has no right to "a roving commission" to examine any documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient. Members may be entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to receive information which falls outside their common law rights based on the "need to know". Officers are encouraged to supply documents to Members without the need for a formal FOI request if it is apparent from the Member's enquiry that any individual would be entitled to receive such documentation.
- 6.5 It is important for Services and their staff to keep Members informed both about the major issues concerning the Council and, more specifically, about issues and events affecting the area that they represent. Whenever a public meeting is organised by the Council to consider a

local issue, all the Members representing the Ward or Wards affected should as a matter of course, be invited to attend the meeting. Any publicity afforded to Cabinet members on visits to wards may include Ward members as well as Cabinet members as long as the provisions of the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity is taken into account.

- 6.6 If a Member asks for specific information relating to the work of a particular Service, and it appears possible or likely that at a subsequent meeting an issue could be raised or question asked on the basis of the information provided, then the appropriate Cabinet Member or Committee Chair concerned should be advised about the information provided.
- 6.7 Officers have to advise Members from time to time that a certain course of action cannot be carried out. Members sometimes assume that this is a case of Officers deliberately obstructing the wishes of politicians. In fact this is hardly ever the case. Officers are employed to give unbiased professional advice even if it is not what Members want to hear. They do this as much for the protection of Members as for any other reason. However, the mark of an effective Officer is that if they do have to give negative advice, this will be accompanied by suggestions as to how Members might achieve some or all of their objectives in other ways. Such Officers are invaluable to any Council.

## **7. Relationship between Officers and Cabinet Members**

- 7.1 It is clearly important that there should be a close working relationship between Cabinet members and the Officers who support and/or interact with them. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the Officer's ability to deal impartially with other Members and other party groups.
- 7.2 Whilst Cabinet Members will routinely be consulted as part of the process of drawing up proposals for consideration or the agenda for a forthcoming meeting, it must be recognised that in some situations an Officer will be under a professional or statutory duty to submit a report. Similarly, a Head of Service or other senior Officer will always be fully responsible for the contents of any report submitted in his/her name. This means that any such report will be amended only where the amendment reflects the professional judgement of the author of the report. This is to be distinguished from a situation where there is a value judgement to be made. Any issues arising between a Cabinet Member and a Head of Service in this area should be referred to the Chief Executive for resolution in conjunction with the Leader of the Council.
- 7.3 Where functions which are the responsibility of the Cabinet are delegated to Officers or other structures outside the Cabinet, the Cabinet will nevertheless remain accountable to the Council, for the discharge of those functions. That is to say, the Cabinet will be held to account for



both its decision to delegate a function and the way that the function is being carried out.

- 7.4 The Council has in place mechanisms/protocols which ensure that (as with the Council, its Committees and Sub Committees, and the Cabinet and its Committees) or an individual Cabinet Member seeks advice from relevant Officers before taking a decision within her or his delegated authority. This includes taking legal advice, financial advice and professional officer advice (particularly about contractual matters) as well as consulting the Monitoring Officer where there is doubt about vires.

## **8. Confidentiality**

- 8.1 In accordance with the Code of Conduct for Members, a Member must not disclose information given to him/her in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which he/she believes, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where:

8.1.1 he/she has the consent of a person authorised to give it;

8.1.2 he/she is required by law to do so;

8.1.3 the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

8.1.4 the disclosure is: reasonable and in the public interest; and made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the authority.

- 8.2 Confidential Committee papers are to be treated as confidential information unless the relevant Committee resolves not to exclude press and public. Members are reminded that the author of the report makes the initial decision as to whether or not the papers are to be treated as confidential. The decision as to whether they remain confidential is for the Committee. Other information may be confidential because to disclose it would be against the Council's or the public interest. Information may also be confidential because of the circumstances in which it was obtained.

- 8.3 Information and correspondence about an individual's private or business affairs will normally be confidential.

- 8.4 Officers should make it clear to Members if they are giving them confidential information. If a Member is not sure whether information is confidential, he or she should ask the relevant Officer, but treat the information as confidential in the meantime.

- 8.5 Any Council information provided to a Member must only be used by the Member in connection with the proper performance of the Member's duties as a Member of the Council.

- 8.6 If a Member receives confidential information and considers it should be disclosed to another person because it is reasonable and in the public interest to do so then he or she must first consult with the Monitoring Officer and shall not disclose the information without having regard to any advice given by that Officer.

## **9 Provision of Support Services to Members**

- 9.1 The only basis on which the Council can lawfully provide support services (eg stationery, word processing, printing, photocopying, transport, etc) to Members is to assist them in discharging their role as Members of the Council. Such support services must therefore only be used on Council business. They should never be used in connection with party political or campaigning activity or for private purposes.

### **9.2 Correspondence**

- 9.2.1 Official letters on behalf of the Council should be sent in the name of the appropriate Employee, rather than over the name of a Member. There are circumstances where a letter sent in the name of a Member is perfectly appropriate, for example, in response to a letter of enquiry or complaint sent direct to that Member. Letters which, for example, create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a Member.

- 9.2.2 Correspondence between an individual Member and an Officer should not normally be copied (by the Officer) to any other Member. Where exceptionally it is necessary to copy the correspondence to another Member, this should be made clear to the original Member. A system of 'silent copies' should not be employed

### **9.4 Media**

- 9.4.1 Local authorities are accountable to their electorate. Accountability requires local understanding. This will be promoted by the Authority, explaining its objectives and policies to the electors and rate-payers. In recent years, all local authorities have increasingly used publicity to keep the public informed and to encourage public participation. Every Council needs to tell the public about the services it provides. Increasingly, local authorities see this task as an essential part of providing services. Good, effective publicity aimed to improve public awareness of a Council's activities is, in the words of the Government, to be welcomed.

- 9.4.2 Publicity is, however, a sensitive matter in any political environment because of the impact it can have. Expenditure on publicity can be significant. It is essential, therefore, to ensure

that local authority decisions on publicity are properly made in accordance with clear principles of good practice.

9.4.3 The Local Authority is prohibited by s 2 Local Government Act 1986 from publishing or assisting to publish material which appears to be designed to affect public support for a political party. Welsh Government have published a Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity which Officers and Members should have regard to in making decisions around publicity. If in any doubt the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officer should be consulted. Particular care should be taken during the pre-election period around publicity

9.3.4 Communication with the media can be an important part of a Member's workload. In general, Members provide comment and views while Officers provide factual information. If a Member is unsure about the circumstances of a particular issue he should contact the appropriate head of service or director.

## **10. Political Restrictions**

10.1 **There are a number of constraints that apply to an employee who occupies a post that is designated as "politically restricted" under the terms of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.** In summary, such Officers are prevented from:

10.1.1 being a Member of Parliament, Member of the Senedd or local authority;

10.1.2 acting as an election agent or sub-agent for a candidate for election as a Member of any the bodies referred to in 10.1.1 being an Officer of a political party or any branch of a political party or a Member of any committee or sub-committee of such a party or branch, if his duties would be likely to require him to participate in the general management of the party or branch; or act on behalf of the party or branch in dealings with persons other than Members of the party;

10.1.3 canvassing on behalf of a political party or a candidate for election to any the bodies referred to in 10.1.1;

10.1.4 speaking to the public with the apparent intent of affecting public support for a political party; and

10.1.5 publishing any written or artistic work of which he is the author (or one of the authors) or acting in an editorial capacity in relation to such works, or to cause, authorise or permit any other person to publish such work or collection - if the work appears to be intended to affect public support for a political party.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 It is hoped that, by following good practice and securing sensible and practical working relationships between Members and Officers, we can provide one of the cornerstones of a successful local authority and thereby enhance the delivery of high value quality services to the people of the area. Mutual understanding, openness and respect are the greatest safeguard of the integrity of the Council, its Members and Officers.



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS**

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

#### **Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Local Resolution Process**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

1. To consider the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Resolution Procedure and whether any amendments may be required.

#### **Background:**

2. Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Members have adopted a Local Resolution Procedure (a copy of which is enclosed at Appendix 1 of this Report) which is supplemental to the Procedure on Member/Employee Relations and the Code of Conduct requirements of the Constitution.

3. The Welsh Government and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“PSOW”) have indicated that Member against Member complaints should be dealt with locally and informally by the Council.
4. This Procedure recognises that the freedom of expression enjoyed by Members is not absolute and the exercise of the freedom incurs responsibilities and may be subject to restrictions, notably the protection of the reputation and other rights of other Members and preventing unauthorised disclosure of information. The freedom to express their political opinions is not restricted by agreeing to this Procedure.
5. The Local Resolution Process is intended to deal with low level & trivial complaints, for example allegations of a failure to show respect and consideration at the very lowest level and which the right to free speech may indicate are not breaches of the code (For example, One Voice Wales’s LRP for Town & Community Council’s states “Serious complaints – breaches of the Code of Conduct, failure to disclose interests/bullying/abuse of position or trust/repeated breaches” should not be considered under the process.
6. The PSOW indicates that where a Local Resolution Process has been adopted by a council, she may not accept a complaint for consideration of an investigation relating to a low level complaint until or unless the Member has used the Local Resolution Procedure. If the complaint is not of a low level nature the Member may be referred to the PSOW. This is an informal process and no indemnity will be granted to any Member for representation at the Local Resolution Panel.
7. It is important to note that this procedure does not preclude anyone from referring any complaint to the PSOW if they so wish. However Members should note that the Ombudsman has made clear that, in normal circumstances, it is expected that in

the first instance Members should exhaust the procedures set out in this procedure before referring low-level complaints to the PSOW.

8. The procedure comprises two processes:
  - a. Informal mediation to find ways to resolve a complaint; and
  - b. The establishment of a Local Resolution Panel which will comprise three members to consider the complaint and make a determination on the factors and if they consider it appropriate make recommendations to address the complaint.
  
9. By way of examples, the following are matters which are likely to be considered under this process:
  - a. Minor complaints from members about members
  - b. Minor complaints from officers about members
  - c. Members alleged to have not shown respect and consideration for others either verbally or in writing.
  
10. Issues which are unlikely to be considered under this process include:
  - a. Complaints which must be directed to the PSOW such as complaints from the public or serious complaints i.e. bullying, failure to disclose interests etc.
  - b. Vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints
  - c. Members' complaints about officers which should be dealt with using the Council's internal complaints process
  - d. Repetitive low level complaints
  
11. Local Resolution Processes are drafted on the basis that the complainant and the subject of the complaint agree to participate (i.e. upon consent) with both agreeing to participate

and agreeing to be bound by its outcome. Although, it is reasonable that a complaint to PSOW will bring the Local Resolution Process to a stop, the parties should not be precluded by that agreement from making a referral if they consider it is appropriate to do so after the process has started.

- 12.** In the last 10 years, there has only been one referral to the Local Resolution Procedure, which saw a mediation exercise carried out by an officer appointed by the Monitoring Officer.
- 13.** In the report to members of the Standards Committee of January 2022, it was highlighted that in March 2021 the then Minister for Housing and Local Government announced her intention to commission an independent review of the Ethical Standards Framework for Local Government (ESF) in Wales that was established by the Local Government Act 2000. The review sought to ensure that it remained fit for purpose, was open and transparent, and that it commanded the confidence of all involved with the framework. Richard Penn, an Independent Consultant was commissioned to undertake the review with the aim to report to Welsh Government Ministers by the end of June 2021 with the intention that any agreed changes to be made ahead of the Local Government elections in May 2022. Mr. Penn is a former Chief Executive of two major local authorities in England and was the first NAW Commissioner for Standards from 2000 - 2012.
- 14.** One of the recommendations that came from this report is that there should be an increase in the use of local resolution of complaints, by requiring that any complaint should be considered for local resolution before it can be referred subsequently to the Public Services Ombudsman, in order to speed up the complaints process and ensure that the Ombudsman's resources are devoted to the investigation of serious complaints. Therefore, it is feasible that future years may see greater use of this procedure, which could negate



complaints having to be considered by the PSOW and allow a more informal approach of resolution. It has also been suggested that the PSOW will incorporate Local Resolution Processes into their guidance at some point in future years.

**Financial Impacts:**

15. No implications.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

16. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

17. No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

18. No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

19. The powers of Standards Committees under a Local Resolution Process remain legally uncertain given that there is no statutory basis for it in the Local Government Act 2000 or other statute/secondary legislation and any consideration is voluntary, though encouraged. No decision under a Local Resolution Process can oust the PSOW's power to investigate a potential breach of the Code under s69(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000. This is a statutory power with the purpose of maintaining high standards of conduct in public life in Wales and cannot be and isn't limited by the private agreement of two individuals who submit to an Local Resolution Process.

20. This approach is also consistent with the High Court decision of *Bishop v The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales [2020] EWHC 1503 (Admin)*. The councillor sought an injunction from the High Court restraining the PSOWs investigation on the grounds that the complaint should have been dealt with pursuant to an Local Resolution Process. The court rejected that argument. Any complaint received by the PSOW triggers the Ombudsman's powers under s69 of the LGA 2000 – upon receipt of a 'written allegation', the PSOW 'may investigate'.

**Consultation:**

21. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**Recommendations:**

22. That Members consider the appropriateness of the Local Resolution Procedure and agree the amendments which are shown underlined in the Local Resolution Procedure at Appendix 1 and consider whether any additional amendments should be made.

**Appendices:**

23. Appendix 1 – Local Resolution Procedure

**List of Background Papers:**

24. None

**Officer Contact:**

Mr Craig Griffiths  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Telephone 01639 763767  
Email: c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk



## **Appendix 1**

### **Local Resolution Procedure Member Complaints of Breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members**

#### **Scope of Procedure**

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Members have adopted this Protocol which is supplemental to the Protocol on Member/Employee Relations and the Code of Conduct requirements of the Constitution. The Welsh Government and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“PSOW”) have indicated that Member against Member complaints should be dealt with locally and informally by the Council.

This Procedure recognises that the freedom of expression enjoyed by Members is not absolute and the exercise of the freedom incurs responsibilities and may be subject to restrictions, notably the protection of the reputation and other rights of other Members and preventing unauthorised disclosure of information. The freedom to express their political opinions is not restricted by agreeing to this Protocol.

This Local Resolution Procedure may be utilised for low level disputes by a Member before a complaint is referred to the PSOW. The PSOW indicates that where a Local Resolution Process has been adopted by a council, he may not accept a complaint for consideration of an investigation relating to a low level complaint until or unless the Member has used the Local Resolution Procedure. If the complaint is not of a low level nature the Member may be referred to the PSOW.

Matters that suggest a breach of the Code of in respect of declarations of interests, bullying, disreputable conduct should be referred to the PSOW for consideration and are expressly excluded from this Local Resolution Procedure.

This Local Resolution Procedure is drafted on the basis that the complainant and the subject of the complaint agree to participate (i.e. upon consent) with both agreeing to participate and agreeing to be bound by its outcome. Although, it is reasonable that a complaint to PSOW will bring the Local Resolution Procedure to a stop, =the parties should not be precluded by that agreement from making a referral if they consider it is appropriate to do so after the process has started. No decision under this Local Resolution Procedure can oust the PSOW's power to investigate a potential breach of the Code of Conduct under s69(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000. This is a statutory power with the purpose of maintaining high standards of conduct in public life in Wales and cannot be and isn't limited by the private agreement of two individuals who submit to this Local Resolution Procedure.

This is an informal process, and no indemnity will be granted to any Member for representation at the Local Resolution Panel.

## Standards of Behaviour

1. Members should:
  - 1.1 Show personal respect to each other: when disagreeing with another Member's views, opinions or councillor actions, e.g. as Mayor, Cabinet Member or Committee Chairman. A Member should not engage in abusive, insulting or improper personal comments about other Members or their family but, having regard to the Code of Members' Conduct ("the Code") requirement that decisions are made on the merits of the circumstances, should focus on the arguments put forward by other Members or the effectiveness of their actions. It is accepted that feelings can run high in debate but should the standards of behaviour have been breached, the culpable Member should apologise to the meeting when the breach is brought to their attention when the matter will be considered closed.
  - 1.2 Not publish malicious or false allegations or information or insulting personal comments against a Member: The growing propensity for personal comments to be made electronically to the world at large require a greater degree of control by the author, as once made it is difficult for the comments to be rescinded. The truth is only a defence if it is the whole truth and puts matters in context.
  - 1.3 Not release confidential information to the press or members of the public: there is no defence of public interest in the Code and there are avenues that should be explored to provide transparency in decision-making that would not disclose confidential/personal information which may cause harm to an individual or a company/organisation. The Council is a regulatory body but also has powers to enhance the prospects of the community which may be harmed by unauthorised disclosure.

2. Member's Representative behaviour:
  - 2.1 Members should seek to work with Members of adjoining electoral divisions for the benefit of the locality.
  - 2.2 A Member who becomes involved in matters specifically related to another electoral division or representing a constituent in another electoral division should:
    - 2.2.1 Explain to the members of the public that they are not the Local Member for that electoral division and identify who is. However, it is the member of the public's choice as to which Member they wish to represent their interests.
    - 2.2.2 If the Member continues to act in the matter, inform the Local Member of their involvement (but not disclose any confidential information without authorisation) and if possible seek to work with the Local Member if the objective is shared.
3. The behaviour described in the paragraphs above are examples or illustrations of behaviour which may constitute a breach of the Code; they are not additional to the Code.

### **Local Resolution Procedure**

- 4.1 In the event of a dispute arising, a Member who complains that another has breached the Code will be provided with the contact details of a Mediator appointed by the Monitoring Officer.
- 4.2 The complainant Member will notify the Member who is the subject of the complaint of his intention to seek mediation of the dispute. Both Members will supply the Mediator with dates of availability, but with the intent that the mediation meeting will

take place within six weeks from the date of the complaint being made.

- 4.3 The mediation meeting(s) will be confidential. It is hoped that this process will encourage the Members to attain consensus on resolving the complaint. Whatever is agreed will be confirmed by them to the Mediator but will not be further published unless agreed by both the Members.
- 4.4 If the mediation stage does not resolve the complaint, then the complaining Member may request that the matter be referred to the Local Resolution Panel within six weeks of the last mediation meeting. The Mediator will be asked to confirm whether resolution was attained but nothing further.
- 4.5 The Local Resolution Panel will comprise three members, namely: an independent Member of the Standards Committee and elected Members appointed by the Leader of Council and the Leader of the largest non-executive political group. No Member shall serve who has had a previous involvement with the matter. The Panel will meet in private.
- 4.6 Both the complaining Member and the Member who is subject of the complaint will be entitled to appear and/or produce written or oral information relevant to the facts of the matter complained of. Either Member may be accompanied by a friend but shall not be represented by a Solicitor or Barrister.
- 4.7 The Local Resolution Panel will consider the information and have discretion to determine the facts and if they consider it appropriate to make such recommendation as would address the complaint, either there is:
  - 4.7.1 No basis for the complaint
  - 4.7.2 A basis for the complaint but no further action is necessary or



- 4.7.3 A basis for the complaint and an apology should be provided to the complainant Member in an appropriate manner or such other action that is within the power of the Council.
- 4.8 The complainant Member may refer the matter to the PSOW and the PSOW will consider whether to investigate.
- 4.9 The Local Resolution Panel may also make recommendations to the Standards Committee regarding training or changes to any procedures which may have contributed to the complaint arising.
- 4.10 If the complaint is referred to the PSOW and an investigation report is produced the independent Member on the Standards Committee who was appointed to the Local Resolution Panel will not take part in any proceedings relating to that investigation report.

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS

14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Standards Committees Forum - Wales**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

To provide the Committee with information about the fourth meeting of the national Standards Committees Forum – Wales, and an opportunity to consider the issues raised.

#### **Background:**

One of the recommendations made following the independent review of the ethical standards framework for Wales ('the Independent Review Report', published on 14th October 2021) was that there should be an All-Wales Forum for Independent Chairs of Standards Committees, to encourage consistency of approach and the adoption of best practice across Wales.

Standards Committee received a report on the proposed establishment of a National Standards Committee Forum, comprised of the Chairs of each Standards Committee in Wales, and its terms of reference previously. The purpose of the Forum is to share best practice and provide a forum for problem solving across the twenty two principal councils, three fire and rescue authorities and three national park authorities, in relation to the work of Standards Committees.

The Standards Committee Chair, attended the second meeting of the Forum, which was held remotely in June 2024. The agenda of that meeting and minutes are enclosed at Appendix A.

At the meeting, the Chairs confirmed their wish to share as much information as possible with their standards committees and the public and it was therefore agreed that the notes would be circulated to standards committees, provided that no individual complainant or councillor complained of could be identified.

The Forum is to continue to meet biannually.

**Financial Impacts:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any relevant payments and allowances associated with the activities of the Standards Committees Forum – Wales would be payable in accordance with the rates set by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and met from the allocated budget

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

The Forum has no formal decision making powers, which means that any formal decisions required would need the approval of each individual Standards Committee.

In relation to Town and Community Councils and their Members, the Standards and Committee has the same statutory functions as it has in relation to Neath Port Talbot Council and its Members (pursuant to section 56(1) of the Local Government Act 2000).

There are no other direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

**Consultation:**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**Recommendations:**

The Standards Committee is recommended to note the information set out in the report and its appendices and make any appropriate comments

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – Standards Committees Forum – Wales, Minutes

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Officer Contact:**

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## Standards Committees Chairs Forum - Wales

Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2024 @ 2pm, via Teams

Notes

### 1. Chairs Announcements

The chair welcomed:

- Judge Claire Sharp the outgoing president of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APL) and her successor Judge Meleri Tudur.
- Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive of One Voice Wales (OVW) the principal organisation for community and town councils in Wales.
- Michelle Morris – Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

Newly appointed Standards Committee Chairs.

- Peter Easy, recently appointed as Chair of Standards Committee for Monmouthshire Council.
- Sue Maughan, recently appointed as Chair of Standards for Bridgend Council.
- Rhys Davies, recently appointed as Chair of Standards for the Isle of Anglesey Council.

### 2. Notes from the previous meeting – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed, and actions confirmed as completed. The following points were highlighted.

- Chairs of Corporate Joint Committee Standards Committees to be invited to the Forum if they do not already attend as a member of one of their constituent councils' standards committees.
- Payments to co-opted members was a matter for local determination and the Forum must work within its terms of reference.
- Standards Committee Members are not required to be DBS checked.

### **3. Judge Claire Sharp, the outgoing president of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APL) and her successor Judge Meleri Tudur.**

Judge Claire Sharp talked about the issues she looked for when deciding whether to permit an appeal against a decision by a standards committee and common failings.

She did not discuss the reasons why certain Judgments were made. She said that the legal test was whether there was no reasonable prospect of success but noted that this was not defined within APW legislation or regulations. Judge Sharp adopted the tests from other jurisdictions using the same wording. Judge Sharp added that she took the Appellant's case at its highest when reviewing an application to appeal, unless it was conclusively disproved by the evidence before her, unsupported by reasonable argument or fanciful allegations have been made.

Her decision cannot be appealed other than JR. APW have recommended to the Penn Review that the process altered because timescales are not practical and excludes the PSOW.

Points to consider are:

When setting out a decision notice, state:

- what the committee decides are the key points and findings of fact,
- what arguments are put forward,
- what led you to that decision.

In other words, show your workings/reasoning.

- State who attended and if they left during the hearing. A summary of key points would be helpful.
- You cannot conflate two matters and only provide evidence of one e.g., you cannot state that there was bullying and harassment and just provide the reasoning for a finding of harassment. This could lead to an appeal.
- Helpful to state what are agreed facts and what are disputed and found by the committee.



- Remember the Sanctions Guidance is there to assist and it is sensible to refer to it – it will help the President to know if the correct process was followed.

APW cannot provide legal advice. All the information is on the website. Same as with the court service.

The judge was asked, if the standards committee meeting was recorded, would she look at the recording? She said that the appellant could forward it and it would be admissible however in reality she would not look at the whole meeting. Normally if it's key, a transcript should be provided, but that is unlikely at the permission to appeal stage. However, it was an option available if the recording was provided by the Appellant, and she would personally look at it if referred to the precise time code of whatever was being complained about and it related to an issue in the appeal. It is unlikely that the whole recording would be viewed.

Judge Meleri Tudur concurred with the points made and looked forward to taking up the role as president of the APW.

#### **4. Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive of One Voice Wales (OVW) the principal organisation for community and town councils in Wales.**

The presentation and Q&A were in response to a request made at a previous meeting of the Forum and included the following:

- Information about the support offered by One Voice Wales to its community and town councils.
- The resources and support it had to offer Town and Community Councils in relation to standards of behaviour.
- The training offered on behaviour / code of conduct for members. Including method of delivery, frequency of sessions held, and the cost.
- The support offered to community and town council clerks and members with reference to a local resolution protocol that is encouraged by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

#### **5. Michelle Morris, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – Update**

- Casework Update (2023/24 and Q1)

- Independent Review (update)
- Local Resolution Procedures (review)

### **Casework 2023/24**

- Another busy year – more complaints than before across both Code and Public Service Complaints – but no additional resources to deal with them.
- Code Complaints form about 10% of total caseload for the office.
- 328 code complaints - 16% increase.
- Investigated a higher proportion of complaints than last year (48) up 13%.
- Referred 21 cases (most in one year) up 43%.
- 85% of breaches upheld (by SC or APW).
- Majority (55%) about 'Promotion of Equality & Respect' which is lower than last year (61%).

### **Current Year (end of May)**

Caseload is 79 (highest caseload we have ever held) (10 Suspended e.g., police investigations, medical reasons).

Focus on reducing time taken to investigate (within 12 months) and closed significant number of Aged Cases last year.

However, caseloads remain high, and we are continuing to take action to reduce these and close cases within 12 months. (Bank Workers, Extra IOs).

Code Team also support Hearings & Appeals, so these too impact on investigation times.

### **Independent Review**

- Terms of reference on PSOW Website.
- Lead by Dr Melissa McCullough (Standards Commissioner for NI Assembly).
- Aim to publish final report in Autumn.
- Final report to be presented to Senedd Finance Committee (likely report back to Senedd).
- Continue to engage with NSCF & MOG regarding outcomes and any actions arising – prior to publication of the report.

### **Local Resolution Procedures**

- Plan to work with Councils and MOs to review existing LRPs and to review and reissue PSOW Guidance in Autumn.
- Intention is to ensure a consistent approach and understanding of issues which are appropriate for LR and the 'serious' issues which should be referred to PSOW.

## **6. AOB**

Experiences to date indicated that the group leader's duty (and the need to report thereon) had been embraced. There was some complexity with independent members who were not part of a group.

## **7. Date of next meeting**

- Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025, 2pm – 4pm on Teams.
- Monday 23 June 2025, 2pm – 4pm on Teams.

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Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS

14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2023/2024**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

1. To advise Members of the receipt of the Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2023/2024 in respect of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

#### **Executive Summary:**

2. The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales ("the Ombudsman") has two specific roles:
  - (a) To consider complaints about public service providers in Wales; and
  - (b) To consider complaints that members of local authorities or town and community councils have breached their Code of Conduct.
3. The Ombudsman sends letters on an annual basis to county borough councils and local health boards concerning the complaints they have received and considered during the previous financial year. The aim of the Annual Report is to provide the relevant bodies with information to help them improve their complaint handling and the services that they provide.

#### **Background:**

4. In recent years the Ombudsman has adopted the practice of sending an annual letter to each local authority which comes within their jurisdiction. A

full copy of the letter and Factsheet is reproduced for Members at Appendix 1.

5. Members should note that this letter relates to the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Information received during this year will, bring insights on how public services reacted in the face of unprecedented demand and the most difficult of circumstances.
6. Comparatively little commentary is required on the Annual Letter. The number of service complaints received by the Ombudsman is set out in Table A of the Factsheet. This Council received thirty five (35) complaints – a decrease from thirty nine (39) in the previous financial year. Therefore, the number of complaints received is slightly less of the national average, compared with what one would expect from the population size of the Council area. However, it should be noted that when considering complaints per 1,000 residents, the Council is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of the 22 local authorities in Wales in the number of complaints received.
7. The mix of complaints is dealt with in Table B of the Factsheet. The numbers in the various categories are similar to the Welsh average overall.
8. The percentage of cases requiring intervention from the Ombudsman is comparatively low (see Table C), with only five of the thirty five complaints being marked as early resolution. The intervention provided the opportunity with the Council to look again at the issue and ensure that remedies could be achieved which met the needs of the complainant. In a lot of cases the Council's position did not change but the complainant was satisfied that a fresh view had been taken. The comparison of complaint outcomes with average outcomes is again broadly in line with the national average (as shown in Table D).
9. Table E indicated that the PSOW made 14 recommendations to the Council during the year but only 29% were complied with in the timescale specified. In respect of two of the early resolution cases, the reason for this is that the complaints in question took longer to investigate and prior agreement was achieved with the complainant, which was inadvertently not notified to the PSOW. All complaints though were resolved in timescales agreed with the complainant. Steps have been put in place to ensure the PSOW is aware of such extensions where appropriate. In addition, in the other cases the recommendations were complied with, and a copy of the final response was not issued to the PSOW in the timescale required.

10. The number of national Code of Conduct complaints increased slightly in 2023/2024 in respect of Local Authority elected members. In the Neath Port Talbot locality, the number of Code of Conduct complaints against County Borough Councils is low, there being just eight (8) (Table F), and in each case, bar one, the PSOW determined there was no case to answer. On however, was referred to the Standards Committee which saw the said Councillor suspended for a period of four (4) calendar months. In addition, there was a decrease in the number of complaints against town and community councils (Table G) (going from eleven (11) to four (4)), but as can be seen no further action was taken in respect of these matters and they were either closed after initial consideration, discontinued or withdrawn.
11. Overall, cuts in public expenditure create an environment in which there can be a mismatch between public expectations and the service which can be provided. This will make it even more important to deal promptly with any complaints which arise and look for practical and achievable solutions. The Council continues to work collaboratively with the PSOW to resolve any matter that might be referred to them by a member of the public whether that be via an early settlement or to provide clarification and documentation to assist in any investigation being undertaken.
12. The Complaints Standards Body has now implemented a model complaints policy with nearly 56 public bodies, and delivered 140 training sessions, completely free of charge, during the last financial year. The feedback has been excellent, and the training has been very popular and officers of the Council have engaged with this training process and found it extremely beneficial. The model complaints policy has now been adopted by Neath Port Talbot Council
13. Officers will continue improvement work in 2024/2025 and onwards and steps will be taken to try and reduce the number of cases which require intervention by the Ombudsman. This will include:
  - (a) Ensuring officers are aware of their obligations in responding to complaints and how the Council's Complaints Process functions to reduce the prospect of complaints being made to the Ombudsman stemming from process related issues.
  - (b) Ensuring systems are in place to keep the PSOW office aware of any extensions of time needed, which will be controlled via the Monitoring Officer. This will ensure they are aware that all recommendations had been complied with.

- (c) Ongoing review of the Council complaints process and the guidance provided to the public on how complaints can be made – including an easy read guide will be developed and publicised, with information on such processes in our Participation Strategy.
- (d) Further facilitating a working group of officers to consider complaints handling and steps that should be taken in responding to complaints and to consider the Ombudsman response to any complaints so that lessons can be learnt. These officers are also involved in Data Protection and Freedom of Information Act responses so training will also be provided in these areas to ensure compliance in those fields. Taking the opportunity to learn from complaints can contribute to the development of services that meet the needs and expectations of our citizens. In this way, citizens can be involved in improving services and ensuring that they meet long term needs and are sustainable. The ability to identify causes of complaint and service failure can also present an opportunity to design in service features which have a preventative impact.
- (e) Liaising with the Ombudsman to determine whether resources such as training are available from them to assist in complaint handling process.
- (f) Undertaking further training with Local Authority Elected Members on Code of Conduct matters and in particular the use of social media, which appears to be the source of numerous complaints to the Ombudsman. Training was provided in May 2022 and as part of member induction and will continue to form part of Code of Conduct Training in refresher sessions, on a bi annual basis
- (g) Specific sessions of training have been undertaken to group leaders in light of the new duties to ensure compliance with the code of conduct within political groups and Group Leaders have attended the Standards Committee to provide an overview of their approach to standards throughout 2023/2024
- (h) Continuing our Standards and Code of Conduct forum with Town and Community Council Clerks to ensure that standards and ethics of decision makers is considered actively within that setting and officers of those organisations are aware of key legal obligations.
- (i) The Standards Committee have implemented a Forward Work Programme (contained in their 2023/2024 Annual Report) to continue to enshrine the importance of the standards regime in the Council
- (j) Providing opportunities for members of the Standards Committee to attend meetings of Town and Community Councils to observe meetings and feedback any matters relevant to standards.
- (k) A review of the Constitution has recently been concluded (imbedding the Codes of Conduct further into documents) to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to meet any obligations in respect of



complaints and this review will continue in future years via the Democratic Services Committee.

14. It should also be noted that the Ombudsman is now in receipt of a number of additional powers of investigation, recently granted by the Welsh Government. These include the ability to undertake “own initiative” complaints. These investigations are not instigated by a complaint from a resident but may occur where the Ombudsman suspects potential systemic failures of services or where residents feel unable to complain due to the fact that they are dependent on Council services or because they are vulnerable.

**Financial Impacts:**

15. No implications. Though it should be noted the Ombudsman has legal powers to require the Council to make payments to complainants where they have suffered financial loss or in compensation for “time and trouble”.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

16. An Integrated Impact Assessment is not requirement for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

17. No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

18. No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

19. No implications

**Consultation:**

20. There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

**Recommendations:**

21. That Members note the content of the Public Service Ombudsman Annual Report for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council for 2023/2024

enclosed at Appendix 1 and the steps that officers will continue to embark on as part of general improvement work.

**Appendices:**

22. Appendix 1 – Annual Letter of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

**List of Background Papers:**

23. None

**Officer Contact:**

Mr Craig Griffiths  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services



**Ombwdsmon  
Ombudsman**  
Cymru · Wales

Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 9 September 2024

Councillor Steve Hunt  
Neath Port Talbot Council

**By email only**  
cllr.s.k.hunt@npt.gov.uk  
chiefexecutive@npt.gov.uk

## Annual Letter 2023/24

Dear Councillor Hunt

### Role of PSOW

As you know, the role of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is to consider complaints about public services, to investigate alleged breaches of the councillor Code of Conduct, to set standards for complaints handling by public bodies and to drive improvement in complaints handling and learning from complaints. I also undertake investigations into public services on my own initiative.

### Purpose of letter

This letter is intended to provide an update on the work of my office, to share key issues for local government in Wales and to highlight any particular issues for your organisation, together with actions I would like your organisation to take.

### Overview of 2023/24

This letter, as always, coincides with my Annual Report – “A New Chapter Unfolds” – and comes at a time when public services continue to be in the spotlight, and under considerable pressures. My office has seen another increase in the number of people asking for our help – a 17% increase in overall contacts compared to the previous year, with nearly 10,000 enquiries and complaints received. Our caseload has increased substantially - by 37% - since 2019.

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ombwdsmon.cymru  
holwch@ombwdsmon.cymru  
0300 790 0203  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ  
Rydym yn hapus i dderbyn ac  
ymateb i ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.

ombudsman.wales  
ask@ombudsman.wales  
0300 790 0203  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ  
We are happy to accept and respond  
to correspondence in Welsh.

During 2023/24 we considered and closed more enquiries and complaints than we ever have done before, and we reduced the average cost for each case and investigation. We started the year with a focus on reducing our aging cases, those over 12 months old, by 50% by the end of the year. These cases are often the most complex and distressing for the people making the complaint. I am extremely pleased to say we exceeded this target, reducing our aged investigations by over 70%. We are now well on track to meeting our objective to complete investigation of complaints within 12 months.

### **Public Services Complaints and compliance with recommendations**

In total 1,108 complaints about local authorities were made to us last year – broadly the same number as the previous year. During this period, we intervened in (upheld, settled or resolved at an early stage) 14% of local authority complaints – a similar proportion to recent years.

We received 35 complaints about Neath Port Talbot Council in 2023/24 and closed 34. Neath Port Talbot Council's intervention rate was 15%. Further information on complaints about your organisation can be found in the appendices.

We made 14 recommendations to your council during the year. To ensure that our investigations and reports drive improvement, we follow up compliance with the recommendations agreed with your organisation. In 2023/24, 14 recommendations were due and 29% were complied with in the timescale agreed. The remainder were complied with, but outside the timescales agreed, or remain outstanding as at 9 April 2024.

Recommendations and timescales for complying with recommendations are always agreed with the public body concerned before being finalised, and we therefore expect organisations to comply within the timescales agreed.

### **Our Code of Conduct work**

My role is to investigate allegations that councillors have breached their Code of Conduct. Where an investigation finds evidence to support the complaint on a matter which is serious enough to require a referral in the public interest, these cases are referred either to the local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for consideration.

In 2023/24, we received 16% more Code of Conduct complaints than the previous year, relating to both Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils. My office made 21 referrals – to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales, an increase from 12 the previous year.

I am grateful to your Monitoring Officer for their positive engagement with my office over the last year. We will continue to engage with them on matters relating to the ethical standards framework, including Local Resolution Procedures this year.

## **Independent Review**

As you will be aware, I became aware of inappropriate comments, of a political nature, made by a member of my staff via social media. These comments were widely reported in the media. The member of staff in question was suspended and subsequently resigned. However, the comments prompted questions about my office's work on councillor Code of Conduct cases.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, I commissioned Dr Melissa McCullough to conduct an independent review of our Code of Conduct work, and I have published the full [Terms of Reference](#) for that review. I and my staff are engaging closely with the Monitoring Officer Group and the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs in relation to this matter. I will be publishing Dr McCullough's final report on completion of the review and sharing it with the Senedd's Finance Committee this Autumn.

## **Supporting improvement of public services**

We continued our work on supporting improvement in public services last year and worked on our second wider Own Initiative investigation. The investigation includes four local authorities and considers carers' needs assessments. I am grateful to the investigated authorities for their co-operation and candour throughout the year, and we look forward to sharing our finalised report this Autumn. This will make recommendations to the investigated authorities and will ask all local authorities across Wales to make similar improvements.

We have continued our work on complaints handling standards for public bodies in Wales and now have 56 public bodies following our model complaints handling policy. These public bodies account for around 85% of the complaints we receive. We have continued our work to publish complaints statistics, gathered from public bodies, with data published twice a year.

We continued our work to publish complaints statistics into a third year, with data now published twice a year. This data allows us to see information with greater context - for example, last year 17% of complaints made to Neath Port Talbot Council's went on to be referred to PSOW.

## **Action we would like your organisation to take**

Further to this letter can I ask that your Council takes the following actions:

- Present my Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Consider the data in this letter, alongside your own data, to understand more about your performance on complaints, including any patterns or trends and your organisation's compliance with recommendations made by my office.

- Inform me of the outcome of the Council's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to thank you, and your officers, for your continued openness and engagement with my office. Our information shows that local authorities are looking into more complaints than ever before and are using information from complaints to deliver better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michelle Morris in black ink.

**Michelle Morris**  
Public Services Ombudsman

Cc. Karen Jones, Chief Executive, Neath Port Talbot Council



**Factsheet**

Appendix A - Complaints Received

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>Received per 1,000 residents</b>
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	15	0.22
Bridgend County Borough Council	59	0.41
Caerphilly County Borough Council	56	0.32
Cardiff Council*	149	0.41
Carmarthenshire County Council	69	0.37
Ceredigion County Council	32	0.45
Conwy County Borough Council	36	0.31
Denbighshire County Council**	31	0.32
Flintshire County Council	51	0.33
Cyngor Gwynedd	38	0.32
Isle of Anglesey County Council	38	0.55
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	12	0.20
Monmouthshire County Council	29	0.31
Neath Port Talbot Council	35	0.25
Newport City Council	52	0.33
Pembrokeshire County Council	40	0.32
Powys County Council	54	0.41
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	64	0.27
Swansea Council	81	0.34
Torfaen County Borough Council	14	0.15
Vale of Glamorgan Council	77	0.58
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	0.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>1108</b>	<b>0.36</b>
* inc 2 Rent Smart Wales		
** inc 1 Wales Penalty Processing Partnership		



Appendix B - Received by Subject

<b>Neath Port Talbot Council</b>	<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>% share</b>
Adult Social Services	4	11%
Benefits Administration	1	3%
Children's Social Services	2	6%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	0%
Complaints Handling	7	20%
Covid-19	1	3%
Education	2	6%
Environment and Environmental Health	2	6%
Finance and Taxation	0	0%
Housing	3	9%
Licensing	0	0%
Planning and Building Control	6	17%
Roads and Transport	4	11%
Various Other	3	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	





# Ombwdsmon Ombudsman

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## Appendix C - Complaint Outcomes (\* denotes intervention)

<b>Neath Port Talbot Council</b>		<b>% Share</b>
Out of Jurisdiction	6	18%
Premature	9	26%
Other cases closed after initial consideration	14	41%
Early Resolution/ voluntary settlement*	4	12%
Discontinued	0	0%
Other Reports - Not Upheld	0	0%
Other Reports Upheld*	1	3%
Public Interest Reports*	0	0%
Special Interest Reports*	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	



Appendix D - Cases with PSOW Intervention

	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	16	6%
Bridgend County Borough Council	8	59	14%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	3	48	6%
Cardiff Council	28	144	19%
Cardiff Council - Rent Smart Wales	0	3	0%
Carmarthenshire County Council	8	60	13%
Ceredigion County Council	7	32	22%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	37	0%
Denbighshire County Council	2	32	6%
Denbighshire County Council - Wales Penalty Processing Partnership	0	1	0%
Flintshire County Council	8	57	14%
Cyngor Gwynedd	6	39	15%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	10	41	24%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	3	14	21%
Monmouthshire County Council	3	32	9%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	34	15%
Newport City Council	5	51	10%
Pembrokeshire County Council	7	38	18%
Powys County Council	7	53	13%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	63	17%
Swansea Council	12	77	16%
Torfaen County Borough Council	2	14	14%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	15	71	21%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	79	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>1095</b>	<b>14%</b>



## Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

Local Authority	Number of recommendations made in 2023-24	Number of recommendations falling due in 2023-24	% of recommendations, complied with on time
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	1	1	100%
Bridgend County Borough Council	18	20	35%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	9	9	11%
Cardiff Council	74	75	92%
Carmarthenshire County Council	25	25	52%
Ceredigion County Council	23	23	78%
Swansea Council	29	32	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	0	1	0%
Denbighshire County Council	5	6	67%
Flintshire County Council	17	17	59%
Cyngor Gwynedd	12	19	74%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	26	24	92%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	11	9	56%
Monmouthshire County Council	4	4	25%
Neath Port Talbot Council	14	14	29%
Newport City Council	10	7	43%
Pembrokeshire County Council	24	23	96%
Powys County Council	18	16	31%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	26	26	77%
Torfaen County Borough Council	3	3	67%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	50	48	92%
Wrexham County Borough Council	16	19	42%



Appendix F - Code of Conduct Complaints

**Neath Port Talbot Council**

<b>Decision not to investigate</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Discontinued</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>No evidence of breach</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>No action necessary</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Refer to Adjudication Panel</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Refer to Standards Committee</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>



Appendix G - Town/Community Council Code of Complaints

Town/Community Council	Decision not to investigate	Investigations				Total	
		Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Adjudication Panel		Refer to Standards Committee
Blaengwrach Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Briton Ferry Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cilybebyll Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glynneath Town Council	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Onllwyn Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pontardawe Town Council	1	0	0	0	0	0	1



## Information Sheet

**Appendix A** shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2023/24. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

**Appendix B** shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

**Appendix C** shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2023/24. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

**Appendix D** shows Intervention Rates for all Local Authorities in 2023/24. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

**Appendix E** shows the compliance performance of each Local Authority.

**Appendix F** shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2023/24. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

**Appendix G** shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2023/24. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – MR CRAIG GRIFFITHS

14<sup>th</sup> October 2024

#### **Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Attendance at NPT Council and Town/Community Council Meetings**

#### **Purpose of the Report:**

To agree a protocol in respect of the observation of Neath Port Talbot Council meetings and Town and Community Council meetings and to provide an overview of dates of meetings

#### **Background:**

There are a number of roles and functions of the Standards Committee, one of which is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives of the Council.

As part of the Committee's work programme for the forthcoming year, members have identified that they wished to continue to observe proceedings at Council and Committee meetings and to give feedback and observations to help inform its work priorities.

To this end a list of Neath Port Talbot Council meetings is included at Appendix 2 of this report along with a list of Town and Community Council meetings that are

to take place throughout 2024/25 (Appendix 3) for members to identify if there would be any they wish to attend to observe.

Following attendance at each meeting, Standards Committee members will be asked to complete a feedback form, which is enclosed at Appendix 1, which will be brought before the Standards Committee for further discussion on a quarterly basis. A copy of the same will also be forwarded to any Town/Community Council that is visited.

In the event that members wish to attend, they should advise the Monitoring Officer who will assist in facilitating an invite.

**Financial Impacts:**

Members will be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Council's Member Remuneration Policy.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required for this report.

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

The Council has a duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation as set out in the Standards Committees Rules and Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2006. The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives.

**Consultation:**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item



**Recommendations:**

That Members approve the draft feedback form for usage contained at Appendix 1 and note the timetable of meetings that take place.

**Appendices:**

Appendix 1- Draft Feedback Form  
Appendix 2 – List of meetings

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Officer Contact:**

Mr Craig Griffiths  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
Telephone 01639 763767  
Email: [c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk](mailto:c.griffiths2@npt.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1

Council Name	
Name of Meeting i.e. Full Council / Cabinet/ Scrutiny Committee	
Meeting Date	

Please provide feedback on the following areas:

Question	Commentary
Were you able to access the meeting either virtually or in person and were there any difficulties?	<p><u>Answer</u>  <u>Please highlight which of the three options below was applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not able to access or attend the meeting</li> <li>• Accessed/attended the meeting but difficulties viewing and hearing matters</li> <li>• Accessed/attended the meeting and was able to view and observe without difficulty</li> </ul> <p><u>Comment</u></p>
Were you able to identify the status of individuals in the meeting i.e. officer or member?	<p><u>Answer</u>  <u>Please highlight which of the three options below was applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not possible to determine the status of individuals in the meeting</li> <li>• Determination of some individuals but not all</li> <li>• Able to identify all members and officers and present</li> </ul>

	<p><u>Comment</u></p>
<p>Were you able to access an agenda or copies of reports prior to the meeting?</p>	<p><u>Answer</u>  <u>Please highlight which of the three options below was applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to agenda and reports not provided</li> <li>• Access to agenda only</li> <li>• Access to both agenda and all public papers under discussion</li> </ul> <p><u>Comment</u></p>
<p>How was the meeting managed?</p>	<p><u>Answer</u>  <u>Please highlight which of the three options below was applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious concerns that meeting did not function appropriately and no controls in place.</li> <li>• Some concerns about manner of meeting and the general conduct of business</li> <li>• No concern and meeting managed appropriately</li> </ul>

	<p><u>Comment</u></p>
<p>Were you able to understand the decisions that were being at the meeting and was there clarity in the process?</p>	<p><u>Answer</u>  <u>Please highlight which of the three options below was applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not able to understand decision being taken and the process followed</li> <li>• Able to understand decision making but process seemed confusing</li> <li>• No concerns and able to understand decision making and process</li> </ul> <p><u>Comment</u></p>
<p>Did you have any concerns relating to standards or ethics?</p>	<p><u>Answer</u>  <u>Please highlight which of the three options below was applicable:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant concerns that will require future consideration by members of the Standards Committee and the Town/Community Council</li> <li>• Some concerns but these were addressed by the Clerk or Councillors themselves and no further action necessary.</li> <li>• No concerns</li> </ul> <p><u>Comment</u></p>

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I agree that my feedback can be shared both with the Standards Committee and the Council to whom this feedback relates.

Signed:

Date:



## Appendix 2

Committee	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
All Members Seminar - 10:00AM Thursday	9 <sup>th</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> 18 <sup>th</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup> 21 <sup>st</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup> 30 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup> 27 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup> 27 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup> 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Annual Meeting of Council – 2.30PM Monday	15 <sup>th</sup>												
Cabinet Members Briefing 2.00pm Tuesday	21 <sup>st</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> 16 <sup>th</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>		7 <sup>th</sup> 28 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> 22 <sup>nd</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>
Cabinet – 2.05pm Wednesday	8 <sup>th</sup> 29 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>		11 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup> 30 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>
CBC/ Community Councils Liaison Forum 10.00am													6 <sup>th</sup>
Community, Finance and Strategic		14 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>		5 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>		9 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>

Leadership Scrutiny Committee – 2.00PM Thursday													
Corporate Directors Group - 9:15AM Wednesday	1 <sup>st</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> 29 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 10 <sup>th</sup> 17 <sup>th</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup> 31 <sup>st</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup> 14 <sup>th</sup> 21 <sup>st</sup> 28 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> 11 <sup>th</sup> 18 <sup>th</sup> 25 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> 9 <sup>th</sup> 16 <sup>th</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup> 30 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> 13 <sup>th</sup> 20 <sup>th</sup> 27 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> 11 <sup>th</sup> 18 <sup>th</sup> 25 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup> 15 <sup>th</sup> 22 <sup>nd</sup> 29 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 12 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> 9 <sup>th</sup> 16 <sup>th</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup> 30 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup> 14 <sup>th</sup> 21 <sup>st</sup>
Corporate Parenting Panel - 1:00PM Thursday	30 <sup>th</sup>				5 <sup>th</sup>		14 <sup>th</sup>			6 <sup>th</sup>			8 <sup>th</sup>
Council - 2:00PM Wednesday	12 <sup>th</sup>		31		4 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>		8 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>		2 <sup>nd</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>
Democratic Services Committee – 2PM Monday			22 <sup>nd</sup>				11 <sup>th</sup>			3 <sup>rd</sup>		28 <sup>th</sup>	
Education Skills and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee - 2:00PM Thursday		13 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>		5 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>		6 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>
Environment, Regeneration	3 <sup>rd</sup>		5 <sup>th</sup>		20 <sup>th</sup>		8 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	31 <sup>st</sup>		14 <sup>th</sup>		2 <sup>nd</sup>

and Streetscene Scrutiny Committee - 10:00AM Friday													
Governance and Audit Committee - 10:00AM Friday			12 <sup>th</sup>		6 <sup>th</sup>		29 <sup>th</sup>			21 <sup>st</sup>			16 <sup>th</sup>
Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee - 10:00AM Monday	13 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup>
Licensing and Gambling Acts Sub Committee - 10:05AM Monday	13 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 19 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	20 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup>
Margam Crematorium Joint Committee - 2:00PM Tuesday		17 <sup>th</sup>				29 <sup>th</sup>		10 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>			15 <sup>th</sup>	
Neath Port Talbot/Youth Council		5 <sup>th</sup>				2 <sup>nd</sup>				5 <sup>th</sup>			



Liaison Forum - 6:00PM Wednesday													
Personnel Committee - 2:00PM Monday		4 <sup>th</sup>			2 <sup>nd</sup>		18 <sup>th</sup>			10 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>		
Planning Committee - 10:00AM Tuesday	21 <sup>st</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> 23 <sup>rd</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup> 24 <sup>th</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	18 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup> 22 <sup>nd</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>
Public Services Board - 2:00PM Tuesday			11 <sup>th</sup>			1 <sup>st</sup> 17 <sup>th</sup>			28 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>		29 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>
Registration and Licensing Committee - 10:00AM Monday	13 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> 30 <sup>th</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>		20 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
School Standards Partnership Group - 1:00PM Monday			15 <sup>th</sup>			7 <sup>th</sup>			20 <sup>th</sup>		24 <sup>th</sup>		
Shadow Cabinet - 3:00PM Monday	27 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>		9 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>		2 <sup>nd</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>		7 <sup>th</sup>	19 <sup>th</sup>

Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee - 2:00PM Thursday	2 <sup>nd</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>			19 <sup>th</sup>		7 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>	23 <sup>rd</sup>		13 <sup>th</sup>		1 <sup>st</sup>
South West Wales, Corporate Joint Committee – Economic Wellbeing and Regional Economic Development Sub-Committee - 2:00PM Monday			22 <sup>nd</sup>		23 <sup>rd</sup>				20 <sup>th</sup>				6 <sup>th</sup>
South West Wales, Corporate Joint Committee – Energy Sub Committee -	13 <sup>th</sup>		29 <sup>th</sup>		30 <sup>th</sup>				27 <sup>th</sup>			28 <sup>th</sup>	

2:00PM Monday													
South West Wales, Corporate Joint Committee – Overview and Scrutiny Committee	16 <sup>th</sup>		16 <sup>th</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup>	14 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>		9 <sup>th</sup>		11 <sup>th</sup>		
South West Wales, Corporate Joint Committee – Regional Transport Sub – Committee - 2:00PM Monday			2 <sup>nd</sup>			8 <sup>th</sup>					4 <sup>th</sup>		
South West Wales, Corporate Joint Committee – Strategic Planning Sub- Committee - 2:00PM Monday		24 <sup>th</sup>				7 <sup>th</sup>					3 <sup>rd</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup>

South West Wales, Corporate Joint Committee - 10:00AM Tuesday	23 <sup>rd</sup>		30 <sup>th</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>		3 <sup>rd</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>		18 <sup>th</sup>		
Special Appointments Committee	8 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	17 <sup>th</sup>										
Staff Council - 10:00AM Monday	14 <sup>th</sup>				9 <sup>th</sup>		4 <sup>th</sup>		27 <sup>th</sup>			28 <sup>th</sup>	
Standards Committee - 10:00AM Monday		17 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>			14 <sup>th</sup>			13 <sup>th</sup>			7 <sup>th</sup>	
Swansea Bay City Region Joint Scrutiny Committee - 2:00PM Tuesday		25 <sup>th</sup>			17 <sup>th</sup>			3 <sup>rd</sup>			18 <sup>th</sup>		13 <sup>th</sup>
Tata Steel Joint Consultative Group - 10:30AM Tuesday	28 <sup>th</sup>				10 <sup>th</sup>		12 <sup>th</sup>			4 <sup>th</sup>		29 <sup>th</sup>	
UK Shared Prosperity	10 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>			19 <sup>th</sup>			12 <sup>th</sup>			20 <sup>th</sup>		1 <sup>st</sup>

Fund Member Briefing – 10.00am Thursday													
Voluntary Sector Liaison Forum			9 <sup>th</sup>				12 <sup>th</sup>				25 <sup>th</sup>		
Wildfox Liaison - 12:00PM Thursday		20 <sup>th</sup>			12 <sup>th</sup>			5 <sup>th</sup>		27 <sup>th</sup>			

Appendix 3



Town/Community Council	Dates of Meeting
Blaengwrach Community Council	Face to Face or Zoom 18:30 On <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> November</li> <li>• 16<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> April</li> </ul>
Blaenhonddan Community Council	Face to Face or Virtual 18:30 On <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> October</li> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> April</li> </ul>
Briton Ferry Town Council	Face to Face or Zoom 18:00 On <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 30<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 27<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 29<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 26<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 26<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 30<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> May</li> <li>• 28<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Cilybebyll Community Council	Face to Face or Zoom 18:00 On <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> September</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> November</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> December</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> April</li> </ul>
Clyne and Melincourt Community Council	<p>Face to Face 18:00</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 23<sup>rd</sup> September</li> <li>• 28<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 25<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 27<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 24<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 24<sup>th</sup> March</li> </ul>
Coedffranc Town Council	<p>Face to Face or Virtual 18:30</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 16<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 18<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 15<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 23<sup>rd</sup> April</li> </ul>
Crynant Community Council	<p>Face to Face 18:30</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 31<sup>st</sup> October</li> <li>• 28<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 30<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 27<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 27<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 24<sup>th</sup> April</li> </ul>
Cwmllynfell Community Council	<p>Face to Face or Virtual 18:00</p> <p>On</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 21<sup>st</sup> November</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 19<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 16<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 20<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 17<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 22<sup>nd</sup> May</li> </ul>
Dyffryn Clydach Community Council	<p>Face to Face 18:30 On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 12<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 13<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Council	<p>Face to Face 18:30 On</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 12<sup>th</sup> May</li> <li>• 26<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Neath Town Council	<p>Face to Face or Virtual 18:00 On</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> October</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> March</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> April</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Onllwyn Community Council	<p>Face to Face 19:00</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 13<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 12<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Pelenna Community Council	To be confirmed
Pontardawe Town Council	<p>Virtual via Zoom 18:45</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 9<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 13<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 12<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Resolven Community Council	<p>Face to Face 18:00</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> October</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> December</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> April</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Seven Sisters Community Council	<p>Face to Face 18:30</p> <p>On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> September</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> December</li> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> February</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> March</li> <li>• 7<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Tonna Community Council	<p>Face to Face 19:00 On:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> September</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> October</li> <li>• 12<sup>th</sup> November</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> December (Commences at 18:30)</li> <li>• 14<sup>th</sup> January</li> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> February</li> <li>• 11<sup>th</sup> March</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> April</li> <li>• 13<sup>th</sup> May</li> </ul>
Ystalyfera Community Council	To be confirmed

Meeting Date	Agenda Item
October 2024	Review of Member Officer Protocol
	Local Resolution Protocol Update
	Meeting with Group Leaders
	Forum Update
	Ombudsman Code of Conduct Casebook
	Council, Town and Community Council Observations
January 2025	Declarations of Interest and Dispensation Updates
	Member Training and Development
	Provision of Case Studies on Ethical Behaviour
	Engagement with Elected Members – Additional Session
	Conflict Resolution Training
	Learning and Development Opportunities – Equality Act 2010
April 2025	Review of Code of Conduct
	Group Leader Duties
	Candidates for Council and guidance to be issued
	Standards Committee Annual Report

**As Needed:**

- Ombudsman Code of Conduct Casebook
- Complaints from Public Service Ombudsman
- Dispensation Reports
- Code of Conduct Updates
- Case Law Update
- CJC Updates

- Member Training