



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

### **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF LEGAL SERVICES – C.GRIFFITHS**

**13 March 2020**

#### **Matter for Decision**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

#### **Invitation to Group Leaders of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to attend Standards Committee**

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

1. To seek approval from members of the Standards Committee to invite the respective group leaders of Neath Port Talbot Council to attend Standards Committee to discuss Code of Conduct matters.

#### **Background:**

2. As indicated in previous reports, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill addresses some new obligations for Standards Committees.
3. S67(2) of the Bill 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. S67(3) imposes an additional function on the Standards committee to monitor political leaders' compliance, and to advise, train or arrange to train leaders of political groups about matters relating to the above duties.

4. Rather than await the implementation of this legislation, the Monitoring Officer would suggest that members of the Standards Committee invite the respective three group leaders in Neath Port Talbot Council to attend a Standards Committee during the 2020-2021 year to provide the Standards Committee with the opportunity to discuss code of conduct matters with them and how such approaches are considered within their political groups.
5. To that extent it would be suggested that members invite one Group Leader to each meeting of the Standards Committee over the coming year and the Monitoring Officer will make suitable arrangements to undertake this.
6. Questions would be provided in advance to Group Leaders to afford the opportunity to consider the issues that the Standards Committee would like to raise and a draft set of questions is set out below:
  - (a) *Do you consider that it is still appropriate to have a Code of Conduct in Wales, which applies to all councillors and co-opted members?*
  - (b) *What do you understand the role of the Standards Committee to be?*
  - (c) *Is there any work you feel the Standards Committee should be undertaking over the next year?*

- (d) How can Political Group Leaders / Committee Chairs promote standards and good governance through Leadership?*
- (e) How can the Standards Committee become more active in promoting ethical conduct among Councillors / Co-opted Members?*
- (f) The Ombudsman, Adjudication Panel for Wales and the High Court has taken a view on politicians (and in some cases senior officers) having a “thick skin” and on political banter being part of the political landscape. What are your own views and how would you as a Political Group Leader/Committee Chair ensure that the line is not crossed.*
- (g) What are your views on the Authority’s Code of Conduct training? How could it be improved so as to raise the ethical standards of Councillors / Co-opted Members?*
- (h) Training for Councillors / Co-opted Members is vitally important. How can the Standards Committee tackle those that do not see training as important?*
- (i) The Authority’s Local Resolution Process (LRP)(Cllr v Cllr) is capable of being used by Councillors. In the event of a dispute will you be encouraging your party to use the process? Do you consider the lack of referrals to the LRP demonstrates that councillors are behaving within the Code?*
- (j) What is the future role of the Standards Committee?*

7. Members are invited to make representations as to whether additional questions might wish to be asked

**Financial Impacts:**

8. No implications.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

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

**Valleys Communities Impacts:**

10. No implications

**Workforce Impacts:**

11. No implications

**Legal Impacts:**

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

**Consultation:**

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

**Recommendations:**

14. That Members extend an invite to Group Leaders of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to attend a meeting of the Standards Committee to discuss code of conduct related matters.

**Appendices:**

15. None

**List of Background Papers:**

16. None

**Officer Contact:**

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