



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

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

**10<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

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

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

To provide the Committee with information about the second 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, in accordance with its terms of reference (Appendix A to this report).

The Standards Committee Chair, attended the second meeting of the Forum, which was held remotely on 30th June 2023.

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 notes of the meeting are attached as Appendix B to this report.

Standards Committee will note that the Forum meeting received a presentation from the Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life Research Advisory Board in relation to the standards regime in England; and an update from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on her annual report for 2022/23. The Forum also discussed various topical issues, including the new statutory duties of political group leaders and the support provided to Town and Community Councils.

In relation to the support provided to Town and Community Councils, the Committee may wish to note that the arrangements adopted in Neath Port Talbot to support and promote high standards of conduct include the following:

- Town and Community Councils Charter – in line with guidance from the Welsh Government and best practice, the Council has adopted a charter with the Town/Community Councils in Neath Port Talbot, which sets out how we will seek to work together for the benefit of local communities, embracing the shared principles of openness, respect and honesty.
- Regular meetings between the Monitoring Officer and Town/Community Council Clerks – the Monitoring Officer continues to hold regular meetings with the Clerks to discuss any issues of concern in relation to Member conduct and associated matters.
- Observation of Community Council meetings – as the Standards Committee will be aware, the members of the Standards Committee continue to attend Town/Community Council meetings to observe standards of conduct and any associated issues and provide feedback, which is then discussed at Standards Committee meetings. The Committee's observations and comments are shared with the Community Councils.
- Presentation for Community Councils –The Monitoring Officer, has developed a presentation on the role of the Standards Committee, explaining the principles of the Members' Code of Conduct and the statutory complaints process and has delivered this to a number of Town/Community Councillors and this work will continue.

The Forum is to meet biannually, and its next meeting is to be scheduled for January 2024.

**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 – Terms of Reference
- Appendix B – Standards Committees Forum – Wales, Notes of meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Officer Contact:**

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**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE  
OBSERVATION OF MEETINGS  
FEEDBACK FORM**

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?	
Were you able to identify the status of individuals in the meeting i.e. officer or member?	
Were you able to hear and see all aspects of the meeting?	

Were you able to access an agenda or copies of reports prior to the meeting?	
How was the meeting managed?	
Were you able to understand the decisions that were being at the meeting and was there clarity in the process?	
Did you have any concerns relating to standards or ethics?	

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

Signed:

Date: