

**GWYNEDD COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013**

Draft

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN

[to follow]

Gwilym Ellis Evans
Chairman of Gwynedd Council's Standards Committee

Draft

FOREWORD BY THE MONITORING OFFICER

[to follow]

**Dilys A Phillips
Monitoring Officer
Gwynedd Council**

Draft

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Although the Standards Committee is one of Gwynedd Council's committees, it contains a majority of members who have no connection with the Council or local government ('Independent Members'). It also includes a member who represents the interests of town/community councils ('the Community Committee Member'), as well as three elected members of Gwynedd Council.

Independent Members

Gwilym Ellis Evans



Gwilym lives in Dolgellau, where he ran a garage business for almost 40 years. He has served on several tribunals including Industrial and Social Services Appeals Tribunals and is currently a member of North Wales Valuation Appeals Tribunal. He is currently Chair of the Gwynedd & De Ynys Môn Citizens Advice Bureau and serves on the Meirionnydd CAB Consultative Committee. He is also a member of the Gwynedd Economic Partnership Steering Group and a Trustee Board Member of Age Concern Gwynedd & Môn.

Samindre (Sam) W. Soysa



Sam lives in Harlech and works as a Health & Safety Consultant in North Wales. He has worked in several senior management and business roles over the past 20 years, including 7 years with the Ministry of Energy in New Zealand. He is currently Vice-Chair & Trustee / Director of Gwynedd & De Ynys Môn Citizens Advice Bureau, and serves on the Consultative Committee of the Meirionnydd CAB. He also serves as an Independent Member on the Standards Committees for Snowdonia National Park Authority and the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.

Linda Byrne

[details and photograph to follow]

Margaret E Jones

[details and photograph to follow]

Einir Young

[details and photograph to follow]

Community Committee Member

Councillor David Clay



David has been an elected member of Barmouth Town Council for 25 years and has held the position of Chair on 4 separate occasions. He is currently Chair of the Meirionnydd Area Committee of One Voice Wales. Now retired, he was an hotelier in Barmouth for 30 years and was an active member of Mid Wales Tourism Council and in latter years a Director of Mid Wales Tourism Partnership.

Gwynedd Council Members

Councillor Eryl Jones-Williams



Eryl is a semi-retired freelance journalist who has represented Dyffryn Ardudwy and Talybont on Gwynedd Council since 2008. He is also a long-standing town and community councillor and has served as both Mayor and Chairman. He takes an active part in disability rights and is vice-chairman of the Meirionnydd Access Group as well as a member of the South Snowdonia Access Forum and the Betsi Cadwalader University NHS Community Health Council. He is currently chairman of the Gwynedd Central Licensing Committee, where is able to draw on his experience as a former licensee. A former Welsh Football referee his hobbies includes golf at Royal St David's Harlech and Dolgellau.

Councillor Charles Wyn Jones

[details and photograph to follow]

Councillor Michael Sol Owen

[details and photograph to follow]

Draft

THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

The Committee's main role is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors and to assist them to observe the Members' Code of Conduct. It is responsible for doing so for members of Gwynedd Council and the county's town and community councils.

The Committee is responsible for considering and deciding upon complaints, referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, that members have breached the Code of Conduct.

It also considers applications made by members for dispensations to allow them to take part in discussions even though they have a prejudicial interest under the Code.

Last year, Gwynedd Council's Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members was added to the Committee's terms of reference.

Work Programme

A copy of the work programme is attached as an **Appendix**.

Dispensations

The Members' Code of Conduct provides that a councillor cannot take part in a discussion if he/she has a 'prejudicial interest' under the Code of Conduct. However, the member does have the right to make an application to the committee for permission to take part in the discussion despite the existence of the interest, i.e. a dispensation.

The committee considered three applications during this period:

Nature of interest	Committee's decision
Member was tenant of applicant for planning permission	Allowed (to speak only – no right to vote in any case)
Member of management committee of village hall – community council to discuss financing the area's village halls.	Allowed
Daughter was temporary head teacher at two primary schools in the Gader eastern catchment area – discussions regarding reorganisation of primary education in that area.	Allow member to take part in local and informal discussions but did not extend to formal meetings within the Council.

Allegations against members

The Committee was informed of the following decisions by the Ombudsman in relation to allegations that members had breached the Code of Conduct:

Allegation	Decision
Councillor using his position improperly	No investigation
Bringing office of councillor into disrepute	Not to continue with investigation
Failure to declare an interest	Member had breached code by not disclosing interest but no further steps were required in circumstances
Unacceptable behaviour towards fellow-member	No evidence of breach of code
Sending e-mail to newspaper making untrue allegations about a policy	No investigation
Verbal attack on member of public and belittling him in public place	The behaviour could be a breach of the code but was not of the opinion that a standards committee would impose a sanction in the circumstances.
Failure to declare an interest	No investigation
Failure to declare an interest	No investigation

The Ombudsman referred one allegation to the Committee for determination:

Allegation	Decision
Making unfounded allegations against a member of the public in his blog.	Suspend the councillor from being a member of Gwynedd Council for a period of three months.

The North Wales Standards Committee Forum

North Wales Standards Committees Forum provides an opportunity for representatives of all the standards committees in north Wales to meet. The purpose of the forum is to enable standards committees to discuss and share ideas, good practice and resources, and also present a collective view on the national level. Forum meetings are attended by representatives from the Committee (usually the

Chair and/or Vice-chair) and officers. This year the Forum was been instrumental in the process of arranging the Wales Standards Conference 2013, which was held in Llandudno in April 2013.

Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members

As part of the work of promoting high standards of conduct within the Council, the Standards Committee looked at the protocol and proposed some amendments. The amended protocol was accepted and adopted by the Full Council as part of the Council's constitution.

Consultations

In its meeting in January 2013 the Committee responded to the Welsh Government's consultation on Local Government (Democracy) Wales Bill, in respect of those aspects relating to standards committees. It also considered and responded to a letter from Carl Sargeant AM, the Minister for Local Government and Communities, regarding a Local Government Ethical Framework,

Code of Conduct Training

The Committee decided on the following matters:

- To give priority to providing training on the Code of Conduct to the county councillors who did not attend the training offered as part of the induction procedure following the May 2012 elections.
- To offer an annual refresher session to all county councillors, looking at different ways of providing the training
- To offer specific sessions to Town and Community Council Clerks and monitor how the training with One Voice Wales proceeds.
- To offer a tailored session for members of the Standards Committee.
- That various and more innovative methods of introducing training in general is needed.
- To ask the Minister for Local Government and Communities to include a condition in the code stating that every councillor has to receive training on the Code of Conduct.

Useful Contacts

- **Dilys Phillips, Monitoring Officer / Siôn Huws, Propriety Officer**
Gwynedd Council, Shirehall Street, Caernarfon, LL55 1SH
E-mail: SionH@gwynedd.gov.uk Tel: (01286) 679168 Website: www.gwynedd.gov.uk
- **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales** - www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- **Panel Dyfarnu Cymru** - www.adjudicationpanelwales.org.uk

APPENDIX

WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

28 January, 2013

- A report on allegations against members
- Minutes of the Chairman and Vice-chairmen North Wales Forum
- Report on training
- Legislation on Promoting Local Democracy (*subject to the consultation period*)
- Links with community and town councils

8 April, 2013

- A report on allegations against members
- Minutes of the Chairman and Vice-chairmen North Wales Forum
- Work programme for the pending year
- Draft annual report of the Standards Committee

July 2013

- Reports on allegations against members
- Minutes of the Chairman and Vice-chairmen North Wales Forum
- The Ombudsman's Annual Report
- Feedback from the Standards Conference

To include a specific item on the work programme to discuss the entire field of social media and how councillors use them.

That members of this committee are able to attend any meetings of the Council as observers and receive a link for every programme that is published.

To send a list of dates and locations of the Planning Committee to members of this committee so that they can be present when the committee meets in their area