

**GWYNEDD COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2013/2014**

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN

[to follow]

Gwilym Ellis Evans
Chairman of Gwynedd Council's Standards Committee

FOREWORD BY THE MONITORING OFFICER

[to follow]

**Dilys A Phillips
Monitoring Officer
Gwynedd Council**

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

Linda has lived in north Wales for ten years and now works at the Citizens Advice Bureau in Caernarfon as a volunteer. Her husband is Welsh and 3 of her grandchildren are Welsh speaking. She has lectured in colleges of further education in the north east of England and in Wales, before becoming a Student Disability Adviser at Durham University and subsequently Bangor University. She served as a Town Councillor for six years and a Borough Councillor for eight years in Sedgefield, Co. Durham.

Margaret E Jones

Originally from Llandrillo yn Rhos, Margaret has spent most of her life in Chwilog. She taught at Ysgol Abersoch for 32 years, including 14 as headmistress. She is a

deacon in Eglwys yr Annibynwyr Siloh, Chwilog, was Chairman of the Council of the Union of Welsh Independents for 3 years and is also a former President of the Union. She was a member of Gwynedd Community Health Council and Vice Chairman until the reorganisation in 2010. She is also Chairman of the Chwilog Eisteddfod.

Dr Einir Young

Einir is the Director of the Welsh Institute for Natural Resources at Bangor University and works to translate the vision of Bangor as 'The Sustainable University' into reality. Einir is particularly interested in promoting debate on the conflicts associated with achieving and maintaining an integrated balance of concerns for people, planet and prosperity in everything we do as businesses, organisations of all kinds and individually. Maintaining standards is as important to sustainability as recycling and saving energy and she welcomes the opportunity to contribute to Gwynedd's Standards Committee.

Community Committee Member

Councillor David Clay

David has been an elected member of Barmouth Town Council for 28 years and has held the position of Chair on 4 separate occasions. He is immediate past 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 later 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

Charles was born in Llanrug, where he still lives. He has served on Llanrug Community Council, Arfon Borough Council and, since 1996, Gwynedd Council, where he was Chairman of the Council in 2004/5. He is a member of the governing bodies of Llanrug Primary School and Ysgol Brynrefail. He worked for British Telecom for 30 years, where he was planning manager for Gwynedd and head of the BT planning department in north Wales. After retiring he studied divinity through the University of Gloucestershire and has been a preacher for many years. He served on the North Wales Police Authority between 2003 and 2012, and was a member of the Authority's Standards Committee.

Councillor Michael Sol Owen

Michael lives in Pwllheli and has represented North Pwllheli on Gwynedd Council since May 2012. He holds a degree in Physics and Material Science and was managing director of a company in Pwllheli and also worked as a business consultant for the Assembly. He has been a member of Pwllheli Town Council for over 30 years and is chairman of the Pwllheli Youth Project charity. Currently he is Vice-chairman of Gwynedd Council's Planning Committee and also serves on the Management Board of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd.

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.

Additionally, the Committee is responsible for overseeing Gwynedd Council's Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for Members.

Work Programme

A copy of the work programme is attached as an Appendix to this report.

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
A member of a town council was also a member of a local chamber of trade and tourism. Matters relating to that body were to be discussed by the council.	Granted.

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
That a councillor had used his Facebook page to try to elicit negative comments from the public regarding a particular school.	Not to continue with investigation
Failure to declare an interest.	No investigation
That a councillor had stated on his Facebook page that an establishment had received a score of zero under the food hygiene scheme.	No investigation
Unacceptable behaviour by a councillor towards his neighbour.	No investigation
Passing on a financial offer on behalf of a local company, whilst aware that it was higher than an offer by another company.	No investigation.

Cases before the Committee

No cases were referred for a decision by the Committee during the year, but the Adjudication Panel for Wales turned down an appeal by Councillor AM Jones, Gwynedd Council against the Committee's decision, in September 2012, to suspend him for 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.

Protocol on the Use of Social Media by Councillors

The Standards Committee and the Council's Democratic Services Committee agreed on the need for a protocol on the use of Social Media by councillors. A joint Task Group of three members of the two committees was established to draft such a protocol, which was adopted by the Council on 6 March 2014.

Code of Conduct Training

The Monitoring Officer held training sessions for community and town council clerks. The sessions were arranged jointly with the Association of Local Committee Clerks and were held in Caernarfon and Dolgellau.

The members of the Committee received training from the Monitoring Officer on the role of the Standards Committee, the Code of Conduct, applications for dispensations and conducting hearings.

Useful Contacts

- **Dilys Phillips, Monitoring Officer / Siôn Huws, Compliance & Language Manager**
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

STANDARDS COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2013-14

1 July 2013

- Application for dispensation
- Creating a Work Programme for 2013-14
- Approval of the Committee's Annual Report
 - Feedback from the Wales Standards Conference

30 September 2013

- Meeting with the leaders of the Council's political groups
 - Establish a sub-group to draft a Social Media Protocol

27 January 2014

- The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality for Members
- The Monitoring Officer's Annual Report on the Members' register of Interests
- The Monitoring Officer's Report on the operation of the Gwynedd Standard and the Local Resolution Procedure
- Approval of a new form for the Member/Officer Protocol
- Approval of the Social Media Protocol