

**ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
GWYNEDD COUNCIL  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**2019 - 2020**

## FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR

It's rather a cliché these days to note that the past year has been an unprecedented one and the global pandemic has changed our lives for months and possibly for years to come. But it is impossible to ignore the widespread impact that Covid-19 has had. Officers, elected members and front line staff have all had to respond swiftly to ensure that the needs of the County's residents are met. From the outside, for those of us who rely on the services provided by Gwynedd, this seems to have been achieved seamlessly but I know that there's a huge amount of hard work and dedication behind the scenes which needs to be recognised. Thanks to everyone involved.

The Standards Committee was affected too. The June meeting was cancelled but we were able to meet in October through Zoom. Whilst not being able to meet face to face is not entirely satisfactory, the normalisation of virtual meetings is to be welcomed as one of the unexpected benefits of the crisis, saving time and money.

We as a Committee have reported for several years that no cases have been passed on to us and therefore conclude that Standards in Gwynedd are high. But, every year at the Council's plenary session members note that a number of cases are referred to the Ombudsman but that the process is long-winded and the threshold for an investigation is high as invariably in his opinion there is no case to answer. This is disappointing for people who believe they have a genuine grievance.

Please note that the Committee does not receive details of individual cases – because if there was a case to answer it would be sent back to us. Being aware of the details in advance would prejudice the committee. We wish, however, to assure Members and residents alike that maintaining standards is of paramount importance and that we must all take responsibility for our own conduct.

We live in turbulent times in terms of standards (or lack of) in public life. The news is full of reports from several countries of politicians and their officers breaking rules, being guilty of bullying and of lying – without any redress. Former President Obama claims in his book 'The Promised Land' that we are witnessing what some people call 'truth decay' – not only do public office holders no longer believe that they are obliged to tell the truth but that the 'truth' does not count at all.

These are challenging times for everyone. But to end on a more optimistic note I would like to share some wise advice from the late Jan Morris that applies to all of us:

“If you are not sure what you think about something, the most useful questions are these,” she says. “Are you being kind? Are they being kind? That usually gives you the answer.”

Let’s work together towards a kinder, more respectful society over the coming year.

**Dr Einir Young**  
**Chair of the Standards Committee**

## **FOREWORD BY THE MONITORING OFFICER**

In reflecting on the year that has gone by it's impossible to disregard the crisis which started in the final quarter of 2019/20. Looking back it was difficult at the time to comprehend the changes and impacts that were occurring. However, once again the report reflects a positive pattern in relation to Code of Conduct complaints. It's worth bearing in mind for context that the scope of the report covers not only members of Gwynedd Council but also over 700 members of Town and Community Councils.

During the year a pilot training model for Town and Community Councils was started in Tywyn by providing a trainer and a simple interactive course. One key message which was conveyed in the training was the ownership that the council, members and officers have of standards of conduct. I am aware of concerns in relation to decisions to investigate or not. Nevertheless it needs to be emphasised that the Code of Conduct and related standards and protocols are adopted by the councils and signed up to by all members. It reflects a public expectation of standards of conduct and propriety. A responsibility of everyone who is involved in local government and not just the Monitoring Officer and Ombudsman. There is a recognition also that the political forum can be difficult. However, there needs to be a willingness to identify when a line is crossed and to create a culture which does not provide succour for inappropriate conduct.

The picture in relation to formal complaints is positive. That is not down to policing but rather to the culture which exists across the county. This needs to be highlighted and promoted.

**Iwan Evans**  
**Monitoring Officer**  
**Gwynedd Council**

## INTRODUCTION

The Committee was established in 2001 under the Local Government Act 2000. The main role of the Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the councillors and co-opted members of Gwynedd Council, and community and town councils in Gwynedd. It does so in many ways:

- Assisting the councillors and co-opted members to follow the Members' Code of Conduct
- Advising the authority regarding adopting or amending the Members' Code of Conduct
- Monitoring the implementation of the Members' Code of Conduct
- Advising, training or arranging training for councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Code of Conduct
- Determining complaints referred to it by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that members have breached the Code of Conduct
- Considering applications made by members for dispensations to allow them to participate in discussions despite them having a prejudicial interest under the Code
- Considering complaints referred to it under Gwynedd Council's local resolution procedure.
- Overseeing the Gwynedd Council Members Gifts and Hospitality Policy

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Though the Standards Committee is one of the committees of Gwynedd Council, the majority of its membership does not have any connection with the Council or local government ('Independent Members'). It also has a member who represents the interests of the community councils ('Community Committee Member'), as well as three elected members from Gwynedd Council. The Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee must be Independent Members.

### Independent Members

#### **Margaret E Jones (member since 2012)**

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 an active member of the Chwilog Eisteddfod and in charge of the Chairing Ceremony.

#### **Dr Einir Young (member since 2012)**

Born in the Rhondda and raised in Llanelli and Cwmtwrch Einir has been living in Gwynedd for more than thirty years. She lived in California for a while and has travelled extensively in Africa mainly, working with marginal communities in semi-arid regions. Wales is her current priority but the challenges faced by communities are similar. We need a long term vision and plan, to ensure that the actions we take are for good or prevent things from getting worse. Integration and collaboration is critical and possibly more important of all to involve everyone. These are the principles are encapsulated in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and as Bangor University's Director of Sustainability Einir and her Sustainability Lab team are promoting the ways of working promoted in the Act across the institution and beyond. Maintaining standards is as important to sustainability as recycling and saving energy and Einir Welcomes the opportunity to contribute to and chair Gwynedd's Standards Committee. Amongst her many interests Einir is a passionate walker and she, her sister and her dog are currently walking the Wales Coastal Path. They have reached Marloes in Pembrokeshire, but sadly the pandemic has prevented them from making further progress for the time being. They have completed the Snowdonia Slate Trail.

### **David Wareing (member since 2015)**

In 2014 David relocated from Lancashire to Groeslon following his retirement from Merseyside Police. He served for 26 years in a variety of roles with his last posting being to the Force Operations Department at HQ. This position involved the planning and delivery of large-scale public events, public safety during major Police operations and the reduction of police support to outside agencies through greater partnership working. David specialised in risk assessment and ensuring compliance of relevant Health and Safety legislation working within the legal framework. David represented Merseyside Police on all five Safety Advisory Groups that covered the Force Area. He firmly believes that the actions of those in public office must be both transparent and accountable.

### **Aled Jones (member since 2016)**

Aled is originally from Lampeter, Ceredigion. He read Welsh and Geography at Aberystwyth University. Having graduated in 1999, he moved to Caernarfon to work for Cymen translation company. He became a joint-owner of the company in 2007 and now heads a team of 20 members of staff and employs over 15 other freelance translators. He lives in Bangor with Tegwen, and their two children Cai and Beca. He has a keen interest in sport and can often be seen on the touchline supporting Bethesda Rugby Club and Bangor City Football Club. As a result of his work as a simultaneous translator he is privy to observe conduct and standards at all levels of governance and to identify best practice.

### **Hywel Eifion Jones (member since 2019)**

Born and educated in the Vale of Clwyd, Eifion was a senior manager with Barclays Bank serving 34 years in numerous branches throughout North and Mid Wales. He has undertaken many public service roles including County Councillor with Ynys Mon Council and member of North Wales Police Authority. He is currently a Magistrate on North West Wales bench, and a member of Gwynedd Pension, Betsi Cadwaladr and Adra Boards. He is also a member of the Adjudication Panel of Wales which determines alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by elected members of County and Community Councils.

### **Community Committee Member**

#### **Councillor Richard Parry Hughes (member since 2017)**

Richard was educated at Llanaelhaearn farm and went to Pwllheli Grammar School, Glynllifon Agricultural College, and Seale Hayne College (Plymouth University). He has a degree in Farm Management. He worked for a vet partnership in Chwilog for three years and as a part-time lecturer at Glynllifon College, before buying the Upper

Penfras Llwyndyrys farm where his family had been tenants for over three hundred years. He is married to Eleri and they have three sons. A former leader of Gwynedd Council, he still farms. He has extensive experience of committees, holding positions as chair of the Wales Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs before being elected as a member of public bodies. He served as a member of Gwynedd County Council from 1992 to 1996 and was a member of Gwynedd Council from 1996 to 2008. He led Gwynedd Council from 2003 to 2008 and was the Welsh Local Government Association spokesman on Environment and Planning during this period. He is an enthusiastic member of the Llwyndyrys Drama Company and a supporter of many other local societies such as Antur Aelhaearn and Friends of Carnguwch Church. He works voluntarily as a caseworker for the Farm Community Network. He is a member of Llannor Community Council since 1992.

## **Gwynedd Council Members**

### **Councillor Dewi Roberts (member since 2017)**

Dewi lives in Llanengan near Abersoch with his wife Bethan, and they have 5 children who are all grown up. He was an engineer and a lectured in engineering at Bangor Technical College before joining North Wales Police. There he worked as a Detective, locally, regionally and nationally, before retiring after 29 years of service.

He was elected in May 2017 as gwynedd Councillor representing Abersoch. Since his election he has chaired the Democratic Service Committee, is Chair of the Care Scrutiny Committee, Chair of the Dwyfor Area Committee, a member of the Audit and Governance Committee and Chair of the Gwynedd Community Health Council.

As well as being a member of the Standards Committee, he is also a member of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, the Warden of Llanengan Church and sits on the Church Parish Council. He also serves as Governor of Ysgol Abersoch and Ysgol Botwnnog.

### **Councillor Beth Lawton (member since 2017)**

Beth lives in Brynchrug and owns a local factory. She is a County Councillor for the Brynchrug / Llanfihangel area which includes the village of Brynchrug and Abergynolwyn. She is also a Community Councillor and chair of the School Governors of Craig y Deryn. She is active on several community-based committees including the Abergynolwyn Carnival, Brynchrug Rural Fair, Tywyn Hospital Appeal Committee and many others. She is Vice- chair of the Gwynedd Council Care Scrutiny Committee and is a director of the new leisure company.



### **Councillor Anne Lloyd-Jones (member since 2017)**

Anne lives and runs a farm tourism business in Tywyn and has represented Tywyn on Gwynedd Council since 1995 and prior to that was a member of Meirionnydd District Council for eight years. She was first elected as a member of Tywyn town Council in 1985 and became the first Lady Mayor in 1991, and again in 2004, and was Chairman of Gwynedd Council in 2009. She is the former Chairman of Gwynedd Council's Planning Committee and is a founder member of the management Board of Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd. She was a member of Meirionnydd Community Health Council, and is the present Chairman of Tywyn and District Hospital Appeal Fund.

She is a member and past Chairman of Ysgol Penybryn and a member on the Governing body of Ysgol Uwchradd Tywyn.

Anne was Chairman of Mid Wales Tourism from 2001-2016, was a founder member and past President and Treasurer of the Tywyn Inner Wheel Club and has been the Treasurer of the local branch of the NSPCC since 1989.

Anne is married to John and they have three daughters and twin granddaughters.

### **The Monitoring Officer**

The Council's Monitoring Officer, Iwan Evans, along with officers from the Legal Service and the Democratic Service support the Standards Committee in its work. The Monitoring Officer has a statutory role to ensure that the Council, its members and its officers act appropriately and lawfully.

#### **Contact Details**

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## **THE COMMITTEE’S WORK DURING 2019-2020**

The Committee’s work over the year has included the following (the Committee’s full work programme can be seen in **Appendix 1**):

### **Cases heard by the Standards Committee**

No complaints that elected members had breached the Code of Conduct were referred to the Committee during the year

### **Other Complaints**

The Committee is also informed of those complaints not referred to it for decision. Summaries can be found in **Appendix 2**.

### **Dispensations**

The Code of Conduct for Members provides that a councillor cannot participate in a discussion if he/she has a ‘prejudicial interest’. However, a member has a right to apply to the Committee for permission to participate despite having this interest, i.e. dispensation.

One application for dispensation was considered during this period. The Committee decided to refuse the application.

### **North Wales Standards Committee Forum**

The North Wales Standards Committee Forum gives representatives of all north Wales authorities’ standards committees the opportunity to meet. The purpose of the forum is to enable the area’s standards committees to discuss and share ideas, good practices and resources and also provide a joint opinion on a national level. The Chair and Vice—chair of the Committee attend the meetings.

Ceredigion and Powys Standards Committees are by now also members of the Forum.

## THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

**17 JUNE 2019**

- **Determine an application for dispensation**
- **Undertook Self Evaluation and drew up a Work Programme**
- **Discussed the Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life**
- **Discussed issues identified in the Ombudsman's Code of Conduct Casebook**
- **Received a report on allegations against members**
- **Approved the Standards Committee Annual Report for 2018/19**

**4 NOVEMBER 2019**

- **Received the Monitoring Officer's Report on the Gifts and Hospitality Register**
- **Received a report on allegations against members**
- **Considered the Ombudsman's Annual Report**
- **Received the minutes of the North Wales Standards Committee Forum for information**

**27 JANUARY 2020**

- **Received the Monitoring Officer's report on Standards and Ethics in Outsourcing and Collaboration Arrangements**
- **Considered the authority's procedure for registering members' interests**
- **Received a report on allegations against members**

The Committee was informed of the following decisions by the Ombudsman in relation to allegations that county and community and town councillors had breached the Code of Conduct:

Allegation	Decision
<p>Complaint that a town councillor had breached the following provisions of the Code:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to show respect and consideration for others</li> <li>• Not to use bullying behaviour or harass any person</li> <li>• Not to conduct yourself in a manner that could be regarded as bringing your office or authority into dispute</li> <li>• Not to use your position improperly to confer on or secure a benefit for yourself or any other person</li> </ul>	<p>The Ombudsman decided not to investigate for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He was not persuaded that the remarks made by others on Facebook regarding the complainant’s family could be attributed to the councillor or his obligations under the code.</li> <li>• The remarks, which were of a political nature, were not considered to be so egregious as to warrant an investigation</li> <li>• Even if the breach regarding improper use of position were to be proved it would not be sufficiently serious that a Standards Committee would be likely to consider or impose a sanction.</li> </ul>

<b>Analysis of Complaints against members</b>	
<b>Member against whom complaint was made</b>	
Member of community council	1
Member of Gwynedd Council	0
Member of Gwynedd Council and community council	0
<b>Nature of complainant</b>	
Councillor	1
Member of public	0
Officer	0
<b>Natur of allegation</b>	
General conduct	1
Declaration of interests	0
General behaviour & Declaration of interests	0
<b>Result</b>	
No investigation	1
Investigation – no evidence of breach of code	0
Investigation – no further steps	0
Investigation - reference to Standards Committee	0
Investigation - reference to Adjudication Panel for Wales	0