

MEETING	Standards Committee
DATE	22 February 2021
TITLE	Public Service Ombudsman Wales Consultation – New draft Guidance on the Code of Conduct for members of County and Community/Town Councils
AUTHOR	Monitoring Officer

Background

1. The Ombudsman is currently consulting on New draft Guidance on the Code of Conduct for members of County and Community/Town Councils. The Ombudsman's current Guidance on the Code of Conduct for Members was published in August 2016. Their purpose was noted as being to :

“....help you as a member to understand your obligations under the Code.”

This continues to be the stated purpose in the latest draft.

2. As Monitoring Officer I have found them to be useful from a number of perspectives including the provision of a readable medium in relation to the nature and content of the Code for both members and the public. As they include examples of previous cases it's a document which can provide context and a convenient explanation to interpret a Code which is quite legalistic in its nature. However, it is now over 4 years since the publication of the current version and having regard to such matters as the climate around political debate it could be argued that the world has changed considerably.
3. The consultation provides an opportunity to consider the Draft Guidance and comment on them. As their purpose is to assist members and not lawyers in their understanding of the Code it's appropriate that the response to the consultation reflects the views of the users.
4. The consultation does not pose specific questions but having regard to the purpose of the documents I would suggest these perhaps obvious matters for your consideration:
 - Is the guidance provided understandable and of use?
 - Are there any aspects which are not as good and could be improved and how?
 - Does anything else need to be included? What?

The consultation closes on the 21st of March. The Democratic Services Committee is also considering the consultation and I will report orally on their comments.

Recommendation

Provide comment and feedback on the consultation and delegate to the Monitoring Officer to collate and submit a response on behalf of the Council

Appendix 1

1. New draft Guidance on the Code of Conduct for members of County Councils
2. New draft Guidance on the Code of Conduct for members of Community/Town Councils