



CYNGOR GWYNEDD

PROTOCOL FOR POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS AND THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

"The ethical standards framework in Wales aims to promote the observance of consistent standards of conduct by local government members, as these underpin public confidence in democratic governance. For any organisation to be effective it must respect diversity and treat everyone with respect. In order to maintain high standards of conduct, local members and all elected members should accept responsibility for their actions, as individuals and collectively."

~Welsh Government, '*Consultation on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021*'

General

- Gwynedd Council has adopted: Principles of Conduct, Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members and the Gwynedd Standard in order to establish an ethical framework within the Council.
- The Council has adopted an Internal Resolution Procedure to deal with internal concerns and complaints in relation to the conduct of elected members.
- This system is underpinned by the Monitoring Officer and the Team with executive responsibility for its administration and the promotion of high standards of conduct through the provision of advice and guidance on the interpretation and administration of the system. They also act as a link with the Council's senior management.
- This system forms part of the Ethical Framework for Local Authorities that is led by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and which supports the Ethical Framework.
- The Council has a Standards Committee, which has the following duties under the Local Government Act 2000: Promote and maintain high standards of conduct, and advise the authority on observing the code of conduct, monitor the implementation of the code of conduct, provide advice or arrange training on the code of conduct.

- Building on the current arrangements, a new duty has been introduced by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. A new duty has been placed upon the Leaders of Political Groups ("Leaders") in Principal Councils to 'promote and maintain high standards of conduct of their members', while at the same time setting a good example themselves.
- Leaders must co-operate with the Council's Standards Committee and ensure that all group members also co-operate in the same manner.
- Leaders will report on compliance with their duty to the Standards Committee in the form of a report, one annual report and one interim report. Leaders should keep a record of any activities to accompany SC report.
- The specific functions of the Standards Committee extend to include the monitoring of Leaders' compliance with the new duty outlined above. The Standards Committee must also provide advice or provide or arrange training to Leaders on the new duty.
- The Standards Committee must submit an annual report to the authority, to include a report on how the Leaders comply with the new duty, and what advice or training has been provided.

Implementation

Statutory Guidance	Actions
<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate personal commitment to and attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards. • Encourage group members to attend relevant development or training opportunities around equalities and standards. • Ensure that nominees to a committee have received the recommended training for that committee. 	<p>Attend relevant training. Ask the Monitoring Officer for guidance and support.</p> <p>Work with the MO to arrange that all Group members have attended Code of Conduct training at the beginning of the term and encourage them to attend further opportunities.</p> <p>Arrange to promote information about training within the groups. Some, such as Planning and Licensing are mandatory, but others, such as scrutiny, are optional.</p> <p>Promote courses that support the ethical framework e.g. equality, social media use, constitution.</p>
<p>Promotion of Good Conduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal Council meetings. Prevent the escalation of the complaint. • Promoting informal resolution procedures in the council; and work with the standards committee and Monitoring Officers to achieve local resolution. • Promote a culture within the Group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity. 	<p>Be willing to have a quiet word with members through early informal conversations, and ask members to consider apologising or delete messages where appropriate.</p> <p>Ensure that members take part in such arrangements and support the process. Contribute towards the development and reviewing of arrangements. Monitoring Officer to include Leaders in discussions regarding procedures and their review with the Standards Committee.</p> <p>Have a standing item at Group meetings around the ethical framework, issues. Have a conversation with MO about questions, complaints, outcomes or any issue that arises.</p>
<p>Co-Operation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend a meeting of the Council's Standards Committee if requested to do so, in order to discuss Code of Conduct issues. 	<p>Ask for any recommendations and training requirements from the committee.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee about improving standards.• Work together with other group leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the council?	Establish an arrangement of holding informal meetings with the other Group Leaders Chair and Vice-chair of the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer every six months.
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** In relation to Ombudsman complaints, Leaders will be informed about the existence of the complaint by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with arrangements approved by the Ombudsman.*

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