

Meeting of:	<b>Standards Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 15 May 2025</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Standards Committee: Procedures Working Group – Terms of Reference.
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with a draft Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee: Procedures Working Group.
Report Owner:	Victoria Davidson, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
Responsible Officer:	Amy Rudman, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report does not require consultation to be undertaken.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Standards Committee.
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b>  The Standards Committee met on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 and agreed that a small working group be established to review Standards Procedures as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the motion approved by Full Council on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2025, a review of the Protocol of the Standards of Conduct expected by Members under Section 19 of the Council's Constitution; the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure (LDRP) for handling low-level allegations of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• Following a review by the PSOW, the Monitoring Officer's Group (MOG) prepared a model protocol to address identified issues, with advice from the Public Service's Ombudsman for Wales and a checklist provided as considered by the Committee under Part II of the agenda</li> <li>• A review of the Procedure for Dealing with Allegations made against Councillors, as agreed by the Standards Committee in January 2016, was also deemed timely.</li> </ul> <p>A draft Terms of Reference ("ToR") at Appendix 1. Committee are requested to consider and approve, subject to any agreed amendments and a timescale for reporting back to the Standards Committee for members' consideration.</p>	

## Recommendations

1. T H A T the contents of the report be noted.
2. T H A T the draft Terms of Reference (“ToR”) be approved with an agreed timescale for reporting the outcome of the review to the members of the Standards Committee.

## Reasons for Recommendations

1. To apprise Committee.
2. To agree a Terms of Reference for the review of the Standards Procedures by the Standards Procedures Working Group and timescale within which to present a further report for consideration by the Standards Committee.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 On the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025, the Committee considered the [Monitoring Officer’s update report](#) in respect of the following matters, with particular reference to:

- Arrangements for the Review of Standards Committees Procedures to be undertaken following a Motion at Full Council on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024.
- A review by the Monitoring Officers’ Group in respect of the Local Dispute Resolution procedure in respect of low level complaints.
- A review of the Procedure for Dealing with Allegations made against Councillors, as agreed by the Standards Committee in January 2016, was also deemed timely.

Following consideration of the report, the Committee resolved:

(1) T H A T both the contents of the report and the Monitoring Officer’s verbal update on the same be noted.

(2) T H A T the membership of the Standards Procedures Working Group be confirmed as follows:

Name	Capacity
Richard Hendicott	Independent Member Standards Committee Chair
Gerwyn Watkins	Independent Member Standards Committee Member
Councillor Phil Summers	Town and Community Council Representative
Councillor Rhiannon Birch	Vale of Glamorgan Elected Member Standards Committee Member

(3) T H A T terms of reference be drawn up for the Standards Procedures Working Group for future consideration.

(4) T H A T the conclusions of the Monitoring Officers Group be referred to the established Working Group for consideration when reviewing the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure (LDRP).

#### Reasons for decisions

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions held at the meeting.

(2&3) In order that a working group of Standards Committee Members can be established to undertake a review of the Council Procedures.

(4) To assist the review.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** Following a meeting of the Standards Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, members of the Committee are requested to consider and approve the draft ToR at [Appendix 1](#) and agree a timescale within which the review will be undertaken by the Standards Committee Procedures Working Group. The Working Group are requested to consider a suitable time to bring a further report to the Committee for its consideration.
- 2.2** The membership of the Working Group is as set out in the report.
- 2.3** The Working Group are invited to consider a convenient date for the first meeting of the Working Group.
- 2.4** In respect of the review of the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure (LRDP) in respect of low-level concerns, the Monitoring Officers Group has produced examples of procedures in place from other Local Authorities (LAs) and a suggested checklist to inform a model LDRP document, which has been informed by advice received from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
- 2.5** In respect of the review of the Procedure for dealing with Allegations made against Councillors, Gerwyn Watkins, Independent Member, has submitted his comments and observations which will be shared with the Working Group and considered as part of their review.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives. It is intended that the process adopted within this report will aim to promote that role with the sharing of good practice.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** None as a direct result of this report.

### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 5.1** Members are able to be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution for approved duties. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

#### **Employment**

- 5.2** Members will be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

#### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3** The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives.

### **6. Background Papers**

Standards Committee – 27th March 2025 Report and Minutes: [Monitoring Officer Update Report re Independent Review by PSOW, Review of Standards Committee Procedures and WLGA event held on 5th March 2025.](#)

Appendix 1 – Draft Terms of Reference

## Standards Committee

### Procedures Working Group

1. The Standards Committee Procedures Working Group ("Working Group") shall consist of:

- (a) Two "independent" members of the Standards Committee, and
- (b) One Vale of Glamorgan Councillor; and
- (c) A Community Council Committee Member.

2. Terms of Reference

- (a) Following a resolution of Full Council on the motion presented to a meeting of Full Council on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2024:

#### Motion on Notice - Debate not Hate

This Council notes with concern the Local Government Association's "Debate not Hate" survey (August 2024), which found that:

- Over 70% of Councillors experience abuse, threats, and harassment as part of their role.
- While debate and disagreement are essential to a healthy democracy, abuse and intimidation which goes beyond acceptable discourse and pose a serious threat. It is crucial that we engage respectfully and disagree constructively. This Council further notes the Jo Cox Civility Commission's "No Place in Politics: tackling abuse and intimidation" recognition that:
  - Intimidation: language or actions designed to hinder, manipulate, or discourage participation in public debate, or to cause fear or distress, potentially leading someone to withdraw from public life; and
  - that all elected representatives, particularly those in leadership roles, should model respectful behaviour.

This Council recognises that residents of the Vale of Glamorgan rightly expect high standards of conduct from their elected representatives – whether in how we directly support them, or in the way we interact with each other in meetings, on social media and within this Chamber.

This Council therefore resolves that:

1. Members of this Council should role model respectful political discourse and foster civility and regard in all interactions with one another and with members of the public; and

**2. The Council undertakes a review of Appendix 2 Protocol 'Standards of Conduct expected by Members under Section 19 of the Council's**

**Constitution and the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure for dealing with low level allegations of breaches of the Members Code of Conduct and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Protocol – Standard of conduct expected by members under Appendix 3 to Section 19 of the Constitution, to align with this Motion.**

- (b) To consider the conclusions of the Monitoring Officer's Group, as part of the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure review,
  - (c) To meet the request of the Vale of Glamorgan Monitoring Officer, as submitted to the Standards Committee on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025, that a review be undertaken of the Procedure for Dealing with Allegations made against Councillors and referred to the Standards Committee.
3. Meetings of the Working Group shall be called on an ad hoc basis in agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan Monitoring Officer and all Working Group Members.
4. The Working Group will elect a Chair selected from the independent members of the Standards Committee.
5. Each meeting of the Working Group shall be supported by the Vale of Glamorgan Monitoring Officer and Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, or their appointed deputies.