

Meeting of:	<b>Standards Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 17 July 2025</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
Purpose of Report:	To provide Members of the Committee with a summary of number and type of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
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 involve any consultation with other parties.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Standards Committee.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide Members with a summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at the end of Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26.</li> <li>The Monitoring Officer will provide an update to the Standards Committee at the meeting under Part II of this agenda in relation to recent correspondence and matters arising.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

1. To provide Members with a summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the 'Ombudsman') for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.
2. To consider the contents of the report and provide any comments/feedback on the complaints received by the Ombudsman during the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> June.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To update Members of the Committee of the summary of complaints made against Members and submitted to the Ombudsman.
2. To permit Members to consider the report and provide comments/feedback on the complaints received during 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1** In line with the Committee's Forward Work Programme the Committee receives regular updates from the Monitoring Officer of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Councils within its area, alleging a breach of the Members Code of Conduct. There are 26 Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan. These reports provide information to assist the Committee to discharge its functions, in particular:
- (a) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and parent governor representatives,
  - (b) assisting Councillors, co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Members Code of Conduct,
  - (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members Code of Conduct,
  - (d) monitoring the operation of the Members Code of Conduct,
  - (e) advising, training, or arranging to train Councillors, Co-Opted members and Church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members Code of Conduct,
  - (f) granting dispensations to Councillors, Co-Opted members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interest set out in the Members Code of Conduct,
  - (g) Dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that officer by the Ombudsman,

- (h) The exercise of (a) to (g) above in relation to the Town and Community Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those Town and Community Councils,
- (i) overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations,
- (j) make an Annual Report to Full Council describing how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year, and
- (k) monitor compliance by political leaders of the above duties and provide advice, training or arrange to train leaders of political groups.

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

- 2.1** In determining whether to investigate a breach of the Code of Conduct, the Ombudsman initially applies a two-stage test. At the first stage, she will aim to establish whether there is direct evidence that a breach of the Code has occurred. At the second stage the Ombudsman considers whether an investigation or a referral to a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales is required in the public interest. This involves the consideration of a number of public interest factors such as whether the Members has deliberately sought a personal gain at the public's expense for themselves or others, misused a position of trust, whether an investigation is required to maintain public confidence in elected members and whether an investigation is proportionate to the circumstances.
- 2.2** At the end of the Quarter 4 (31<sup>st</sup> March 2025) for the period 2024/25, two complaints had been received. During the period between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 and the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2024 covering Quarter 1 and 2 2025/26 a total of 12 complaints were notified to the Monitoring Officer by the Ombudsman.
- 2.3** The number and type of complaints are outlined in the table below.
- 2.4** The Committee will recall that the Ombudsman recently changed their notification procedure to notifying a Councillor complained about and the Monitoring Officer only after the Ombudsman has assessed a complaint and decided whether or not the complain is to be investigated. The timing of the notification was reviewed following the independent review of Ombudsman investigation, which recommended that the Ombudsman should revert to the previous practice of notifying parties of a complaint when it is received. Following consultation on this issue, the Ombudsman accepted the recommendation and confirmed its intention to revert to the previous procedure of notifying Councillors who were complained about as soon as reasonably practicable after a complaint is received.
- 2.5** The Monitoring Officer will provide an update to the Standards Committee, at the meeting, under Part II of this agenda in relation to recent correspondence and matters arising in line with the procedures of the Ombudsman and which are confidential at this stage.

	April 2024/March 2025	Q1 April- June 2025	Q2 July- September 2025	Q3 October – December 2025	Q4 – January – March 2025
Local Resolution*	0	0	-	-	-
Ombudsman**	2	12			
Total	2	12			

\*Not including concerns raised which may potentially be raised in the future as complaints

\*\*Reported on the basis of the date upon which the complaint is notified to the Monitoring Officer

	Q4 January – March 2025	Q1 April – June 2025	Q2 July – September 2025	Q3 October – December 2025	Q4 January – March 2025
Member on Member	0	0	-	-	-
Public on Member	0	2	-	-	-
Officer on Member	0	0	-	-	-
Community Councils	2	10	-	-	-
Total	2	10			

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

**3.1** The Standards Committee shall have the following roles and functions:

**(a)** promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives.

- (b) assisting Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (c) advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (d) monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (e) advising, training, or arranging to train Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (f) granting dispensations to Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (g) dealing with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that officer by the Public Services Ombudsman.
- (h) the exercise of (a) to (g) above in relation to the Community Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those Community Councils.
- (i) overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations.
- (j) make an Annual Report to Full Council describing how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year, and
- (k) monitor compliance by political leaders of the above duties and provide advice, training or arrange to train leaders of political groups.

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

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

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

### **Financial**

- 5.1** None as a result of this report.

### **Employment**

- 5.2** None as a result of this report.

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

- 5.3** None as a result of this report.

## **6. Background Papers**

N/A