

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 17 July 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Standards Committee meeting with Group Leaders in compliance with the Statutory and Non -Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 issued June 2023.
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an update following the publication of Welsh Government Statutory and Non–Statutory Guidance.
Report Owner:	V. Davidson, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	A. Rudman, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	No consultation required.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Standards Committee.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having regard to the duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Standards Committee has a duty to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act. • As such, Political Group Leaders are requested to meet with the Standards Committee on an annual basis, at the start of each municipal year, and to complete a Group Leader Proforma for consideration by the Standards Committee. • All four Political Group Leaders have been invited to the meeting to make comment on the duties placed upon them in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the actions they have taken to comply with the aforementioned duties. • Once each of the Group Leaders have addressed the Committee, and Standards Committee Members have posed any related questions, all Political Group Leaders will be asked to vacate the meeting so that the Standards Committee may deliberate in private based on the threshold criteria on the role of a Political Group Leader in the Vale of Glamorgan Council. 	

Recommendations

1. T H A T both the Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Pro-forma (Appendix A) and Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leader Threshold Criteria (Appendix B) remain fit for purpose.
2. T H A T the verbal representations made by Group Leaders present at the meeting be noted.
3. T H A T the Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Pro-formas, provided by Group Leaders in advance of the meeting, be considered under the Part II report later on the agenda.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. For Committee's consideration.
2. To meet the Standards Committee duty to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act.
3. To meet the duties placed upon Political Group Leaders in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

1. Background

- 1.1 In June 2023 the Authority received the published Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The guidance covered a number of aspects including the guidance for Standards Committees.
- 1.2 The aspects of the Guidance that fell within the remit of the Standards Committees terms of reference were reported to the Committee on 13th July 2023 and could be found within Part 2 - Guidance for elected members' support, training and development, sections:
 - 4.0 – Statutory Guidance on duties of leaders of political groups in relation to standards of conduct.
 - 5.0 – Statutory guidance on the functions.
 - 6.0 – Duty of a Standards Committee to monitor Group Leaders' compliance with the duties, and provision of advice and training, and
 - 7.0 – Duty of Standards Committee to make an annual report.

As such, the Committee resolved that delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer, in conjunction with the Chair, to amend the pre-existing

Group Leaders proforma, as considered appropriate and having regard to Part 2 section 4 paragraphs 4.24, 4.29 and 4.36 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance issued by Welsh Government in June 2023. In order that the proforma could be updated as required in line with the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance received from Welsh Government

- 1.3** On the 28th September 2023, the Committee was presented with an update report and subsequently agreed that the Group Leader amended proforma be agreed and that delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee to prepare a document, to be shared with Standards Committee Members and Group Leaders, discussions at the meeting and the threshold which the Standards Committee would use to establish whether it was content that political group leaders had complied with the duties of the 2021 Act. Having regard to the amendments reflected in the WG Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance published in June 2023 and discussions of the Committee to date.

On the 23rd November 2023, the Committee was presented with a draft Threshold Criteria for approval and subsequently resolved that the presented document be approved for use in compliance with the duty of a Standards Committee to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act. Having regard to the duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Point 2 of the Threshold Criteria states that: “Group Leaders to meet with the Standards Committee on an annual basis at the start of each Council year. However, should areas of concern arise regarding a Group during the year the relevant Group Leader may be required to attend before Standards Committee as advised by the Monitoring Officer.”

The last Annual Meeting between Political Group Leaders and the Standards Committee took place on the 10th of June 2024. All four Political Group Leaders were present at the meeting to make comment on the duties placed upon them in line with Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Having regard to discussions held at the meeting with political Group Leaders on the completion of the Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Pro-formas and the Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leader Threshold Criteria, the Standards Committee resolved that the Standards Committee Annual Report be amended to reflect the Committee’s satisfaction, following assessment, that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders had been met.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Welsh Government Guidance advises that “at the beginning of each council year Political leaders should meet with the standards committee to agree the following:
- How group leaders and the Standards Committee will work together to ensure appropriate standards of behaviour.
 - Frequency of meetings between Group Leaders and the Standards Committee throughout the year.
 - The threshold which the Standards Committee will use to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act, and mechanism for Political Group Leaders to provide reports to the Standards Committee about the actions they have taken to comply with the duties within the 2021 Act.”
- 2.2** The guidance further advises that it is essential that Leaders of a political group co-operate and ensure that Members within their group co-operate with the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee when an issue is referred to the Standards Committee.
- 2.3** Leaders of a political group should build good relations and work constructively with the Monitoring Officer seeking advice from them and the Standards Committee on matters of behaviour and conduct when required promoting positive behaviours and addressing inappropriate ones. Group Leaders should also report compliance with their duty to the Standards Committee. Group Leaders should also report any serious concerns about Members’ behaviour which have not been remedied by informal actions in line with the requirement in the Code of Conduct to report such breaches.
- 2.4** If a Member is found by the Standards Committee to be in breach of the Code of Conduct and is disciplined by the Committee, the Leader of the political group must support the action in order to maintain the high standards of conduct expected in public life and the Code. Group Leaders should also observe the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales’ guidance and the Sanctions Guidance issued by the President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales.
- 2.5** With regard to Vale of Glamorgan Elected Independent Members, as they are not members of a Group, the Monitoring Officer has agreed to inform Independent Members of any changes / amendments to guidance or processes as required.
- 2.6** In compliance with the Group Leader duty, Group Leaders for the Vale of Glamorgan Council i.e. Labour, Conservative, Plaid Cymru and Llantwit First Independents have been invited to this meeting of the Standards Committee and requested to complete a pro-forma for presentation to the Standards Committee.
- 2.7** To assist with the Group Leader duty the Standards Committee approved the Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Proforma to be used and a copy of the proforma approved by the Committee is attached at **Appendix A** to this report.

- 2.8** The threshold criteria which the Standards Committee has previously agreed and will use to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act is attached at **Appendix B** to this report.

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** Independent Members of the Standards Committee 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. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

Employment

- 5.2** There are no employment implications in relation to this report.
- 5.3** Independent Members are Members who are not either a Councillor or an Officer of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the spouse of a Councillor or an Officer of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or any other relevant Authority as defined by legislation, appointed in accordance with the procedure set out in the Standards Committees (Wales Regulations) 2001 (as amended) and the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.
- 5.4** Independent Members are appointed for a period of not less than 4 no more than 6 years in accordance with Regulation 18(i) of the Standards Committees (Wales Regulations) 2001 (as amended) as amended by Regulation 28a of the Local Government (Standards Committees Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2016 and may be re-appointed for one further consecutive term not exceeding 4 years.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.5** The Council has a duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation as set out in the Standards Committees Rules and Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2006.
- 5.6** Having regard to the duty under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Standards Committee has a duty to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act.

6. Background Papers

Published Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales - <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-07/statutory-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-principal-councils-in-wales.pdf>.

Report – Standards Committee 13th July 2023 - [Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – supporting provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021.](#)

Report – Standards Committee 28th September 2023 - [Standards Committee meeting with Group Leaders in Compliance with the Statutory and Non -Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales – Supporting Provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021 Issued June 2023.](#)

Report – Standards Committee 23rd November 2023 - [Duty to Co-operate with the Council’s Standards Committee \(and any Sub-Committee\) in the Exercise of the Standards Committee’s Functions – Threshold Criteria.](#)

Report – Standards Committee 10th June 2024 - [Standards Committee meeting with Group Leaders in Compliance with the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance for Principal Councils in Wales. Supporting Provisions within the Local Government Act 2000, the Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021 Issued June 2023.](#)

Appendix A – Group Leader Code of Conduct Compliance Pro-forma.

Appendix B – Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leader Threshold Criteria.

<u>Promoting Compliance With the Code of Conduct</u>					
Report by:					
Political Group:					
No. of members:		No. trained on Code:	(Y%) 100%		
For the period:					
<u>Number, Source and Level of Complaint(s) / Concern(s)</u>					
	Informal	Local Resolution (Stage)			PSOW
		1	2	3	
Public					
Officers					
Councillors					
<u>Steps taken to Promote Compliance</u> <u>(To Be Completed by Group Leader)</u>					
Include matters such as:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using influence to support a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in the group and addressing issues of alleged non – compliance as soon as they arise; - demonstrating personal commitment to and attending and participating in relevant development or training around equalities and standards including on the Code of Conduct; - actively encouraging group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards including in relation to the Code of Conduct; - ensuring nominees to a Committee have received the recommended training for participating on that Committee; 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promoting civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal Council meetings; - supporting informal resolution procedures in the Council, and working with the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer to achieve local resolution; - encouraging a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity; - attend a meeting of the Council's Standards Committee if requested to discuss Code of Conduct issues;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - drive forward work to implement any recommendations from the Standards Committee about improving standards; - work with the Standards Committee to proactively identify, consider and tackle patterns of inappropriate behaviour; - work together with other group leaders, within reason, to collectively support high standards of conduct within the Council and when any issues identified involve more than one political group.

N:B Part 2 section 4.29 of the Welsh Government Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance states: Political group leaders will want to ensure they are able to evidence the steps they have taken to help create an environment in which members demonstrate appropriate standards of behaviour, undertake appropriate training and address, with members, instances where standards of behaviour falls short of that expected. It is a matter for individual group leaders how they choose to evidence their compliance with this guidance, but it may include notes of meetings, copies of correspondence, audits of member training on issues such as equality and the Code of Conduct and action taken to address any gaps in that training.

Signed :

Dated :

Statutory and Non - Statutory Guidance issued June 2023 (and updated in July 2023 and August 2023.)

Threshold Criteria - Role of Leader of Political Group -

Section 52 of the Local Government 2000 Act as amended by section 62 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, requires that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a County Council or County Borough Council in Wales –

1. must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group, and
2. must co-operate with the council's standards committee (and any sub - committee of the committee) in the exercise of the standards committee's functions.

The Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance includes at Part 2 the requirements to establish -

“the threshold which the Standards Committee will use to establish whether it is content that Political Group Leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act” .

Following discussions with Group Leaders and the Standards Committee at the Vale the following suggestions have been put forward with regard to the threshold to be used it being noted that the threshold would not have regard to historical matters which arose before the duty was in place:

1. Group Leaders to make themselves available to meet with the Monitoring Officer, Chair of the Standards Committee and Standards Committee as required,
2. Group Leaders to meet with the Standards Committee on an annual basis at the start of each Council year. However, should areas of concern arise regarding a Group during the year the relevant Group Leader may be required to attend before Standards Committee as advised by the Monitoring Officer,
3. Group Leaders to meet with the Monitoring Officer and Chair of Standards Committee on a six monthly basis,
4. Group Leaders to take reasonable steps to ensure that Members within their Group make themselves available to meet with the Monitoring Officer as required,
5. Group Leaders to take reasonable steps to ensure that Members within their Group co-operate with the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee when an issue is referred to the Monitoring Officer and or the Standards Committee,
6. Group Leaders to record any areas of concern in their Groups and raise them with the Monitoring Officer in a timely manner including identifying any areas requiring training by any Members of the Group,
7. Group Leaders to take reasonable steps to ensure Member attendance at mandatory training events,

8. Group Leaders to take reasonable steps to ensure that where there is a policy decision by the Council or Cabinet that this is adhered to by Members of their respective Groups,
9. Group Leaders to take reasonable steps to ensure that factually inaccurate information is not put into the public domain by their Members so as not to damage the reputation of the Council,
10. Group Leaders to ensure that the relevant DBS checks are applied for by Members, as and when required, in line with Cabinet resolution and that Members engage with the process in a timely manner,
11. Group Leaders to complete the Group Leader proforma, promoting compliance with the Code of Conduct, as required,
12. Group Leaders to support within their Group's decisions of the Standards Committee and /or Adjudication Panel for Wales.
13. Group Leaders to support within their Groups decisions of the Local Dispute Resolution Panel.