

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 17 July 2025
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>Executive Summary:</p> <p>At its meeting on 27th March 2025, the Standards Committee agreed to establish a small Working Group to review various Standards-related procedures, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Protocol on the Standards of Conduct expected of Members under Section 19 of the Council's Constitution and the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure (LDRP), following a motion approved by Full Council on 2nd December 2024. The model protocol and checklist developed by the Monitoring Officers Group (MOG), informed by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), and reviewed by the Committee under Part II of the agenda. The Procedure for Dealing with Allegations Made Against Councillors, last reviewed in January 2016. <p>At the Committee meeting on 15th May 2025, it was agreed that the report be deferred to a future meeting to allow clarification on the consultation process for the review. A draft Terms of Reference (ToR), attached at Appendix 1, is now presented for consideration and approval, alongside a proposed timescale for reporting the outcomes back to the Standards Committee.</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”) for the revised Standards Procedures Working Group be approved subject to any agreed amendments, along with an appropriate timescale for reporting back to the Standards Committee.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To inform the Committee of the background and context of the review.
2. To formulate the scope and process for the Working Group’s review and agree on a reporting timeline. timescale within which to present a further report for consideration by the Standards Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 On the 27th 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 2nd 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.

- 1.2** At the 15th May 2025 Committee meeting, a draft ToR for the Working Group was presented. During discussion, Independent Members sought clarification regarding the order and ownership of the review, suggesting that Elected Members should lead the initial review and agree on the ToR, with the Standards Committee providing comment and oversight thereafter. This was consistent with the Committee's role to uphold, rather than set, standards.
- 1.3** As such, Members were not comfortable with the reference to the Full Council motion being included in full within the ToR (point a), but agreed to retain points (b) and (c), along with the remainder of the document.
- 1.4** The ethical framework for the conduct of Members is set under Part 3 of the Local Government Act 2000. Under powers granted in the Act, the National Assembly for Wales has made an order specifying principles governing the conduct of Members ('the Principles of Conduct' SI 2001/2276); and issued a model code regarding the conduct expected of Members, reflecting the Principles of Conduct.
- 1.5** The model statutory code as adopted by Vale of Glamorgan Council (with permitted variations to clarify certain duties) is enshrined, as the Members' Code of Conduct, within the Council's Constitution and available on the Council's website. Members must comply with the duties set out in the Members 'Code of Conduct. Sanctions may be imposed on any Member found to be in breach of the Code.
- 1.6** The Conduct of Members – the Principles, Protocol – Standards of Conduct expected by Members and the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure are appended to Section 19 of the Constitution as Appendix 1, 2 and 3 respectively, link here: [25-04-30 Section 19](#)
- 1.7** The Standards Committee comprising both Elected and Co-opted Members, role and function includes:

- promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives.
- assisting Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- monitoring the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- the exercise of the above in relation to the Community Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the members of those Community Councils.
- overview of complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations.
- make an Annual Report to Full Council describing how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year.
- 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** Members are requested to consider and approve the revised draft Terms of Reference for the Standards Procedures Working Group (Appendix 1) and agree on a suitable timescale for reporting findings to the Committee.
- 2.2** The membership of the Working Group has been confirmed (as per 1.1), and members are invited to identify a convenient date for the Group's first meeting.
- 2.3** The Monitoring Officers Group has developed a model LDRP document and checklist for reviewing local procedures. This has been shaped by advice from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and by comparisons with approaches in other Local Authorities. This guidance will be available to the Working Group as part of their terms of reference.
- 2.4** As part of the review of the Procedure for Dealing with Allegations Made Against Councillors, feedback submitted by Independent Member Gerwyn Watkins will be shared with the Working Group for consideration.

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.](#)

Standards Committee – 15th May 2025 Report and Minutes: [Procedures Working Group – Terms of Reference.](#)

Appendix 1 – Draft Terms of Reference

Standards Committee
Procedures Working Group

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.

1. Scope and Purpose

The purpose of the Working Group is to support the Standards Committee in fulfilling its role and functions under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Council’s Constitution by reviewing the relevant standards related procedures and protocols, advising on improvements in line with current expectations of conduct in public life.

2. Terms of Reference

Following a resolution of Full Council on the motion presented to a meeting of Full Council on the 2nd 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.

The Working Group on behalf of the Standards Committee will:

- (a) Consider the conclusions of the Monitoring Officers Group and any supporting guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding best practice in handling low-level conduct complaints. The Working Group will review the current LDRP with the aim of aligning it with national expectations and local procedural fairness.
- (b) Review the procedure adopted by the Standards Committee in January 2016 for dealing with allegations of misconduct made against councillors, to ensure it remains clear, accessible, fair, and effective in practice.

3. Reporting and Recommendations

The Working Group will report its findings and draft recommendations to the Standards Committee, who will:

- Review and refine the proposals in line with its statutory remit, and
- Provide formal advice to Council and its political leadership on potential amendments to the relevant constitutional documents and protocols, including through engagement with Group Leaders and independent elected members, as appropriate.

This approach reflects the Standards Committee’s role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct, and in supporting and advising members on the Code of Conduct and related protocols, while respecting the democratic responsibility of elected members to own and *implement* constitutional change.

4. Meeting Arrangements

- Meetings of the Working Group shall be held on an ad hoc basis as agreed with the Vale of Glamorgan Monitoring Officer and all Working Group Members.
- The Working Group will elect a Chair from among its independent members.
- Meetings will be supported by the Vale of Glamorgan Monitoring Officer and the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, or their nominated deputies.