

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 30 July 2026
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Item which the Chair has decided is urgent (Part I) (If yes, why)	Not applicable
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (15.14 of the Constitution) (If yes, why)	Not applicable
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	Standards Committee Annual Report
Portfolio Holder:	Executive Leader and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources
Strategic Leadership Team:	Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Lead Officer:	Principal Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer

1.0 What is this report about?

- 1.1 To present the draft Standards Committee Annual Report for 2025/26 for consideration and approval. The Annual Report is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 The report fulfils the requirements of Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, which requires Standards Committees to produce an Annual Report following the end of each financial year.
- 1.3 Following approval by the Standards Committee, the report will be submitted to Full Council for consideration in accordance with legislative requirements.

2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2.1	T H A T the draft Annual Report attached at Appendix A be approved and presented to Full Council.	To comply with the requirements of Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
2.2	T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Chair of the Standards Committee to incorporate any amendments arising from the meeting and finalise the report prior to submission to Full Council.	To enable any comments made at the Standards Committee meeting to be incorporated into the final version of the Annual Report.
2.3	T H A T a copy of the finalised report, following consideration by Full Council, be forwarded to each Vale of Glamorgan Town and Community Council Clerk and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.	For information and dissemination of good governance practice.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

- 3.1 Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty upon Standards Committees to produce an Annual Report as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year.
- 3.2 The Annual Report must describe how the Committee has discharged its statutory functions during the reporting period and provide a summary business undertaken.
- 3.3 Principal Council Standards Committees are also required to include an assessment of the extent to which political group leaders have complied with their duties under Section 52A of the Act.
- 3.4 Local Authorities are required to consider the report within three months of receiving it.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

- 4.1 The Committee is invited to consider the content of the draft Annual Report attached as Appendix A.
- 4.2 The report summarises the work undertaken by the Standards Committee during the 2025/26 financial and municipal year. The report reflects the Committee's consideration of governance, ethical standards and statutory responsibilities during the reporting period and

provides commentary on matters considered throughout the year.

5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

- 5.1 The draft Annual Report has been informed by reports submitted to and considered by the Standards Committee during the 2025/26 municipal year. The Committee maintained and regularly reviewed its Forward Work Programme throughout the year to ensure it discharged its statutory responsibilities effectively. A copy of the programme is included within Appendix A.
- 5.2 Minutes and decisions of Standards Committee meetings have been used to identify actions undertaken and outcomes achieved during the year.

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

- 6.1 The Annual Report will be finalised by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee.
- 6.2 The final version will be submitted to the 28th of September 2026 Full Council meeting for consideration.
- 6.3 Following consideration by Full Council, and subject to any changes and approval, copies of the report will be sent to each Vale of Glamorgan Town and Community Council Clerk and to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

- 7.1 The work of the Standards Committee supports effective governance, ethical conduct and accountability within the Council.
- 7.2 Promoting high standards of conduct contributes to maintaining public confidence in local democracy and decision-making.
- 7.3 The report demonstrates transparency and accountability through publication of the Committee's activities and achievements during the year.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

- 8.1 Long Term - The Standards Committee promotes and maintains high standards of conduct, helping to embed a culture of integrity, accountability and good governance that supports public confidence in the Council over the long term.
- 8.2 Prevention - The Committee's work has a preventative focus, promoting compliance with the Members' Code of Conduct and ethical standards to reduce the likelihood of complaints,

governance issues and reputational risk.

- 8.3 Integration - Effective standards and ethical governance underpin all Council functions and decision-making, supporting the delivery of corporate priorities and ensuring transparency and accountability across the organisation.
- 8.4 Collaboration - The Committee works with elected Members, political group leaders, Town and Community Councils, the Monitoring Officer and external bodies to promote good practice and maintain high standards across local government.
- 8.5 Involvement - Through its meetings, reporting arrangements and engagement with stakeholders, the Committee supports openness and transparency, helping to maintain public confidence in democratic decision-making.

Resources

9.0 Finance

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

10.0 Workforce

- 10.1 There are no direct workforce implications arising from this report.

11.0 Legal and Equalities

- 11.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed because the report concerns the consideration of a statutory Annual Report and does not propose a new policy, service change or decision with direct equality impacts.
- 11.2 The Standards Committee is required by Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to prepare and present an Annual Report. Compliance with this statutory requirement is the principal legal consideration arising from the report.

12.0 Key Contacts

- 12.1 Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?

Lead Officer: Victoria Davidson Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services vdavidson@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk	Democratic Services Officer: Amy Rudman Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer. 07784 239 277 arudman@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
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Appendix

Appendix A – Draft Standards Committee Annual Report 2025/26.

Background Documents

[Section 63, Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021.](#)

[Agendas, Reports, Minutes and Recordings of Standards Committee meetings \(available on the Vale of Glamorgan Council website\).](#)

[Report to Full Council, 29 September 2025 – Draft Standards Committee Annual Report.](#)

[Report to Full Council, 15 July 2024 – Draft Standards Committee Annual Report.](#)

[Report to Full Council, 24 July 2023 – Draft Standards Committee Annual Report.](#)

STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2025 - 2026

VALE of GLAMORGAN



BRO MORGANNWG

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Appendix A – Forward Work Programme 2025/26.

Appendix B – Forward Work Programme 2026/27.

1. Foreword by the Chair of the Standards Committee

This is the fourth annual report of the Standards Committee's Annual Reports as required under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act").

Section 63 of the Act provides that as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year the Standards Committee of a relevant Authority must make an Annual Report to the Authority in respect of that year. The relevant Authority must consider each Annual Report before the end of three months beginning with the day on which the Authority received the Report.

To also align with the Committee's timetable of meetings, this report has been drafted in time for consideration at the July Standards Committee meeting ahead of presentation to the September Full Council meeting.

The Annual Report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year. "The Act" also states that the Annual report must also include the Committee's assessment of the extent to which Leaders of Political Groups on the Vale Council have complied with their duties under Section 52(a)(i) during the financial year and may include recommendations to the Authority about any matter in respect of which the Committee has functions.

This Annual Report, which therefore covers the period from April 2025 to March 2026 provides information to the Vale of Glamorgan Council about the work carried out by the Committee during the period and identifies particular issues that have arisen.

The Standards Committee is committed to promoting high standards of ethical conduct among Elected Members, Co-opted Members and Officers in order to maintain public confidence in local government. The Standards Committee also has a responsibility for Code of Conduct matters for Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members of the Standards Committee, Elected Members and Officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, as well as Elected Members and Clerks of Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan for their advice, co-operation and support throughout the last 12 months.

Finally, I hope that this report proves an interesting read.

Richard Hendicott

Chair of Standards Committee 2025/26 (and returning for 2026/27).

2. Terms of Reference

The Committee's work is centred around the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Code of Conduct that can be found at Section 19 of the Council's Constitution.

Appendix 1 to Section 19 provides details of the principles of public life which are: Selflessness, Honesty, Integrity and Propriety, Duty to Uphold the law, Stewardship, Objectivity in Decision-Making, Equality and Respect, Openness, Accountability and Leadership.

Appendix 2 of Section 19 details the protocol of standards of conduct expected by Members within the Vale of Glamorgan Council in dealing with each other in relation to: Public behaviour, Behaviour in meetings, Confidentiality and Local Members. This protocol is to be read in conjunction with the Members' Code of Conduct and the Member/Officer Protocol.

Appendix 3 of Section 19 details the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to deal with complaints which are made by a Member against a fellow Member which may not otherwise be investigated by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Therefore, as per Section 8 of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution, the Committee's terms of reference are:

- 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.

The references throughout the Constitution to church and parent governor representatives reflect the statutory categories specifically identified within the legislative framework governing standards arrangements in Wales. The Council is reviewing the wording of related constitutional provisions to ensure that the categories of persons subject to the Members' Code of Conduct and the Standards Committee's remit are clearly described and that there is no ambiguity regarding the position of co-opted members and other applicable office holders.

3. Membership and Attendance

The composition and membership of the Standards Committee is prescribed by the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 (As Amended).

The Standards Committee comprises of:

Five Independent Members (persons who have no connection with the Local Authority):

R. Hendicott
G. Watkins
R. Alexander
G. Olphert
J. Evans

Town and Community Council (TCC) Representative:

Councillor P. Summers

Three Vale of Glamorgan Council Members:

R.M. Birch
J.E. Charles
C.P. Franks.

The Standards Committee under legislation is required to meet at least once annually in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. The Committee meets on a scheduled quarterly basis or as business is required, for example where additional special meetings are arranged to deal with specific matters, including hearings.

During the financial and municipal year 2025/26 the Standards Committee met on six occasions:

15th May 2025
17th July 2025
25th September 2025
20th November 2025
29th January 2026
26th March 2026

Meeting agenda papers are published five clear days (including weekends) ahead of the date of the meeting and all meetings of the Committee are livestreamed as well as recorded for future viewing, subject to confidentiality, and available on the Council's YouTube Channel.

Municipal Year 2025/26							Total
	<u>15/05</u>	<u>17/07</u>	<u>25/09</u>	<u>20/11</u>	<u>29/01</u>	<u>26/03</u>	<u>/6</u>
R. Hendicott	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>6/6</u>
G. Watkins	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>5/6</u>
R. Alexander	<u>Y</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>3/6</u>
G. Olphert	<u>A</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>4/6</u>
J. Evans	<u>N/A*</u>	<u>N/A*</u>	<u>N/A*</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>3/3</u>
P. Summers	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>6/6</u>
R.M. Birch	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>5/6</u>
J.E. Charles	<u>Y</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>4/6</u>
C.P. Franks	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>6/6</u>

Y	In attendance
A	Apologies provided
N/A*	Not yet appointed to Committee

During the preparation of the Committee's Annual Report for 2024/25, a governance review identified that the Standards Committee's previous interpretation of quorum requirements under the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001 required clarification. It was subsequently confirmed that, whilst the Town and Community Council (TCC) representative is a co-opted member of the Committee, that representative cannot be counted as an Independent Member for the purposes of satisfying the statutory quorum requirements.

During 2024, attendance by Independent Members was on occasion affected by personal circumstances and technical issues, and several meetings proceeded on the good faith assumption that the presence of the TCC representative satisfied the Independent Member element of the quorum. The correct interpretation was clarified in November 2024, and all subsequent meetings, which were held remotely, were convened in accordance with that clarification.

Following the finalisation of the Committee's Annual Report 2024/25, the issue was revisited to ensure that all historical decisions and records were fully compliant and accurately reflected the procedural requirements. To provide full reassurance, a comprehensive review of all Standards Committee meetings held during 2024/25 and 2025/26 Municipal years (to date) was undertaken in October 2025. The review confirmed that only three pre-November 2024 meetings were

inquorate under the clarified interpretation.

It emerged that the May 2025 meeting of the Committee was quorate at the outset but became inquorate when an Elected Member joined the meeting late. The meeting was not adjourned at that point; however, the affected agenda item was later re-confirmed at a subsequent properly constituted meeting in September 2025 to ensure procedural compliance.

The process provided assurance that all Standards Committee decisions held during the Municipal years 2024/25 and 2025/26 were transparent, procedurally sound, and compliant with the statutory quorum requirements under the Regulations. All affected decisions were taken in good faith based on the Committee's previous understanding of the quorum requirements and required formal confirmation to ensure full procedural validity. A report was presented to the Committee on the 20th November 2025 to seek the Committee's approval to ratify and confirm the dispensations granted at two of the affected meetings in respect of two Members. The Committee subsequently resolved that the dispensations granted at the 29th July and 21st November 2024 Committee meetings be confirmed to ensure that the relevant decisions were properly ratified and had full legal effect.

4. Forward Work Programme

The Committee's forward work programme for the municipal year 2025/26 was approved by the Committee on the 30th January 2025 and can be found as **Appendix A** to this report.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Victoria Davidson, the Deputy Monitoring Officer / Operational Manager Legal Services, Justine Cass, and the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer, Amy Rudman, provide advice and support at regular intervals in respect of the Standards Committee and Code of Conduct matters, as well as support the Committee with maintaining its forward work programme.

The Standards Committee maintains an annual Forward Work Programme to support the effective discharge of its statutory functions and to ensure that key standards related matters are considered in a timely and structured manner throughout the municipal year. The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme for 2025/26 at its meeting held on 15th May 2025, with the programme being reviewed and updated as necessary during the year to reflect emerging issues, local priorities and developments in the standards regime across Wales.

The Forward Work Programme ensured that the Committee received regular updates on matters central to its role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct across the Vale of Glamorgan. Throughout the year, the Committee considered standing items including applications for dispensations, feedback arising from observation visits undertaken by Independent Members at Vale of Glamorgan Council and TCC meetings, reports of correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, and updates from meetings held between the Monitoring Officer and TCC Clerks.

In addition to these recurring matters, the programme provided a mechanism for the Committee to consider strategic and developmental issues affecting standards and ethical governance. During the year, the Committee considered its Annual Report and assessment of Political Group Leaders' compliance with the duties placed upon them by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, updates concerning the Protocol for Standards of Conduct Expected by Members and Civility in Public Life, matters arising from the All Wales Monitoring Officer Group, and the work undertaken by the Standards Committee Procedures Working Group in reviewing local standards arrangements.

The Committee is mindful that standards and ethical governance continue to evolve both locally and nationally. The Forward Work Programme therefore remained sufficiently flexible to accommodate matters that emerged during the course of the year, including developments

arising from case law, decisions of the Adjudication Panel for Wales, determinations and guidance issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, and wider discussions taking place through national standards networks and professional forums. This flexibility enabled the Committee to respond proactively to changing circumstances rather than being constrained solely by a fixed schedule of business.

National developments continued to inform the Committee's work throughout the year. Regular updates from the All Wales Monitoring Officer Group, together with reports relating to the work of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, the Adjudication Panel for Wales, and the National Standards Forum, enabled Members to consider emerging themes, areas of good practice and common challenges being experienced by authorities across Wales. These discussions helped to ensure that local arrangements remained aligned with developing expectations regarding standards, accountability, transparency and Member conduct.

A number of emerging issues also influenced the Committee's work during the year and informed future programme planning. These included the continued focus on civility and respectful behaviour in public life, the increasing use of social media and online platforms by Elected Members and the standards implications arising from such use, the effective operation of local resolution procedures, and the practical implementation of the duties placed on Political Group Leaders under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The Committee also considered learning arising from decisions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Adjudication Panel for Wales, together with governance matters affecting TCCs, where national trends continue to demonstrate the importance of training, early intervention and clear behavioural expectations.

These emerging issues also influenced the Committee's work during the year and informed future programme planning. These included the continued focus on civility and respectful behaviour in public life, the effective operation of local resolution procedures, and the practical implementation of the duties placed on Political Group Leaders under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. The learning arising from decisions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Adjudication Panel for Wales, together with governance matters affecting TCCs, where national trends continue to demonstrate the importance of training, early intervention and clear behavioural expectations.

The use of social media by Elected Members remained a significant area of focus nationally and locally. Increasingly, complaints considered by standards bodies across Wales continue to involve online conduct, including the tone and content of social media communications, interactions

between Members, engagement with members of the public, and the distinction between personal, party-political and official communications. The Committee therefore remained alert to developments in relevant case law, Ombudsman guidance and standards decisions concerning online behaviour, recognising that the same principles of respect, integrity, accountability and leadership apply equally in digital environments as they do in face-to-face meetings and public engagement activities.

The Committee further recognised the challenges presented by the rapidly evolving nature of digital communication, including the speed at which information can be shared, the risk of misunderstanding or escalation of disputes through online platforms, and the increasing public expectation that Elected Members demonstrate professionalism and respect in all forms of communication. As part of its ongoing standards role, the Committee therefore supported continued awareness raising, training and the sharing of good practice to assist Members in navigating these issues and reducing the risk of conduct concerns arising from online activity.

The Committee also recognised the increasing importance placed nationally upon the promotion of civility and respectful behaviour in public life, both in traditional Council settings and across digital platforms. Through its consideration of national guidance, ombudsman decisions, complaints trends, emerging governance issues and training requirements, the Forward Work Programme supported the Committee's objective of taking a proactive and preventative approach to standards, rather than focusing solely on enforcement and complaints handling. In doing so, the Committee continued to champion a culture of openness, respect, accountability and integrity across both the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the TCCs within its area.

The Forward Work Programme therefore served not only as a schedule of reports for consideration but also as a governance tool that enabled the Committee to adapt to emerging issues, monitor national developments and fulfil its statutory responsibilities effectively. The Committee is satisfied that the programme provided an appropriate framework for the planning and delivery of its work during 2025/26 and contributed positively to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct and ethical governance throughout the Vale of Glamorgan.

5. Outcomes of the 2025-26 Municipal Year

5.1 Applications for Dispensation

Applications for dispensation from Elected Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and TCCs within the Vale of Glamorgan are presented to the Committee for consideration under the Standards Committee's statutory powers to grant dispensations to Members with a personal and prejudicial interest in a matter. Once approved this allows Councillors to participate in a decision regarding that matter, in appropriate circumstances, as are set out in the statutory regulations. During the course of the 2025 - 26 municipal year 7 dispensations were granted to allow Members to actively participate in decision-making and to ensure their voice and the voice of their constituents was not lost as a result of any prejudicial interest. In conjunction with the Chair of Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer has a delegated authority to consider, refuse or approve an application should she choose to do so.

Applicants are also advised that they are able to attend the Standards Committee meeting to present their application should they wish to do so. Details of the applications that have been dealt with over the last six years can be viewed as part of the minutes of the meetings of the Standards Committee which are available on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website [here](#).

5.2 Observations by Independent Members of the Standards Committee

Having regard to its role and function, the Standards Committee agreed that Independent Members of the Committee would observe meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council (since March 2018) and TCC meetings (since March 2019) with a view to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct. To assist with observation visits, a proforma was agreed by the Standards Committee which provides the Independent Member with a list of questions to consider when undertaking such visits.

Feedback reports compiled by Independent Members of the Standards Committee are presented at Standards Committee meetings by the Independent Members, with any specific observations that require discussion or further action being discussed by the Monitoring Officer with the Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the Clerk and / or Chair of the TCC.

The Monitoring Officer also provides TCC Clerks with an overview of observations undertaken, as well as any related points of good practice and areas of concern, at the Monitoring Officer and Clerks meetings which are held on a quarterly basis.

Chairs and Clerks of the TCCs are advised by Democratic Services of the dates of the meetings the Independent Member intends observing in order that arrangements for the

agenda and the link/location to the virtual/in-person meeting can be forwarded to the Independent Member in time for the meeting. A schedule of visits is maintained within Democratic Services and reported to the Standards Committee on a regular basis and the latest update report can be found here [ADD LINK].

5.3 Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks

The Monitoring Officer holds meetings with Clerks of TCCs on a quarterly and hybrid basis, to provide opportunities for discussion of matters of mutual concern, to have regard to the principles of standards in public life and to provide networking opportunities. The next meeting is scheduled for the 3rd September 2026.

Reports of the Clerks meetings with the Monitoring Officer are provided to the Standards Committee following the meetings taking place and the latest update report is available here [ADD LINK].

Feedback received to date following the meetings is that the meetings are both useful and informative and a frank exchange of views shared, which Clerks are grateful to the Monitoring Officer for hosting.

Key areas discussed included:

- The Application for Dispensation Process,
- Standards Committee Independent Member Observations schedule and feedback,
- Findings of interest following Public Service Ombudsman for Wales Investigations and Adjudication Panel for Wales reviews,
- Handling low-level complaints locally before escalation,
- Local resolution and mediation approaches,
- Boundary Commission Community Review Advice: Welsh Government guidance on implementation, highlighting the documentation, templates, and resources available via One Voice Wales and flagging key legal and practical issues that Councils should be planning for as implementation progresses, and
- Opportunities for collaboration with Democratic Services and wider Vale of Glamorgan Council Staff.

5.4 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) Annual Reports and Accounts

These reports provide the Committee with details relating to the functions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) throughout the year and also details of financial management of the Ombudsman's office.

In relation to received and considered case decisions of the APW and the PSOW, these are regularly reported to the Standards Committee as and when available.

The Standards Committee also considers specific complaints that are formally referred to the Standards Committee by the PSOW as and when received. However, at each Standards Committee meeting, under the Part II item of the agenda, the Monitoring Officer provides an overview to the Standards Committee of the up to date position regarding, if any, complaints / concerns received from the Public Services Ombudsman, not yet in the public domain, that are made against Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and / or TCCs alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer provides an overview of the complaints which may or may not end up for consideration by the Standards Committee it being noted that the PSOW may decide that is it not appropriate for an investigation to take place.

During 2025/2026 no new referrals were received and investigated by the PSOW. One ongoing investigation which commenced during 2024/2025 was discontinued during 2025/2026. The PSOW commenced an investigation in respect of one complaint received by them during 2025/2026. The investigation was suspended on the 6th February 2026. This suspension is being kept under careful review, and the PSOW will keep parties informed when the suspension is lifted.

The Committee also considered the implications of decisions issued by the APW during the reporting period, including matters arising from appeals against findings relating to breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct. The Committee recognises the importance of ensuring that Elected Members are aware not only of findings made in relation to Code of Conduct complaints, but also of the reasoning underpinning such decisions and any lessons that may be learned from them.

Where decisions of the APW are publicly available and considered relevant to the promotion of high standards of conduct, summaries of the key findings and any learning points will continue to be reported to the Committee as part of its ongoing standards and training work.

5.5 All Wales Standards Committee Forum

The All Wales Standards Forum is a body for the sharing of good practice and the co-ordination of activity; however, it is not a formal decision-making body. The agendas for the Forum meetings are prepared by the Monitoring Officers Group (MOG) with members of the Forum being able to suggest items for future business. Meetings of the Forum are to be held once or twice per year. The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee were keen to be part of the all-Wales Forum and reports on the work and discussions of the Forum are reported to the Standards Committee by the Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Standards Committee for information and consideration as appropriate.

5.6 Local Dispute Resolution Procedure

The Standards Committee had previously noted that the Local Resolution Protocol adopted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council on 25th June 2014 and amended on 26th September 2018 continues to provide a helpful process for resolving relatively low level behavioural complaints made by Vale of Glamorgan Council Members about other Members in a timely and proportionate way. No matters have been dealt with under the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure during the 2025/26 municipal year.

The Standards Committee also continue to encourage TCCs to adopt their own Local Dispute Resolution Protocol using the model developed by One Voice Wales in consultation with the PSOW.

At the Full Council meeting of the Vale of Glamorgan on 2nd December 2025 Council approved a Motion that 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 (LDRP) 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 be undertaken.

As such, at the 27th March 2025 Committee Meeting, the Standards Committee appointed members of its Committee to a Working Group and agreed associated Terms of Reference to undertake a review of the Council Procedures under the knowledge that any amendments to the Council's Constitution required the approval of the Vale of Glamorgan Full Council.

After which, the Standards Committee Procedures Working Group met on two occasions: Wednesday 22nd October and Wednesday 10th December 2025 and collated suggested updates to Section 19 of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution, for Standards Committee consideration and agreement on the 26th March 2026. The latest update report and minutes in relation to this matter can be found [here](#).

The suggested changes have now been provided to Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leaders for comment ahead of a report being presented to the 28th September Full Council Meeting for consideration.

5.7 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act") and Political Group Leaders' Duty

The above Act has been a major piece of legislation for Local Authorities in Wales with some extra duties being placed on the Standards Committee within Section 63 of the Act. Section 62 of the Act has also placed a further duty on Political Group Leaders in relation to standards of conduct. The Act states that the Leader of a Political Group must take

reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members of the Group and must co-operate with the Council's Standards Committee (and any sub-committee of the Committee) in the exercise of the Standards Committee functions. The Section also provides that the Standards Committee must also monitor compliance of Leaders of Political Groups with their duties under Section 52(a)(i) of the 2000 Act and advise, train, or arrange to train Leaders of Political Groups about matters relating to those duties.

Having regard to the requirements of the '21 Act, the Standards Committee meet with Group Leaders following the Council's Annual Meeting and, where considered appropriate, meetings with Group Leaders and the Chair of the Standards Committee may also take place. An example Proforma to assist Group Leaders in exercising their duty, was also agreed which once completed is forwarded to the Monitoring Officer and thereafter reported to the Standards Committee and referred to in the Annual Report.

The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of Standards Committee, will also continue to brief Independent Members similarly to Political Group Leaders on matters to ensure that standards of conduct are achieved to a high standard.

The proforma that has been developed to assist Group Leaders under the Section 62 duty may also include any further information provided by the Monitoring Officer such as the number of concerns or complaints raised during the year, together with details of the Group Leaders' responses.

[SUBJECT TO APPROVAL FOLLOWING COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF GL DUTY REPORT ON SAME AGENDA: Following consideration of the pro-formas submitted by Group Leaders, as well as discussions held with the same, the Standards Committee resolved that this Standards Committee Annual Report 2025-26 be amended to reflect the Committee's satisfaction that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders have been met.]

6. Appointments and Training

Independent Members and the TCC representative of the Standards Committee are co-opted to the Committee and serve a term of office of between 4-6 years, although they are eligible to serve two consecutive terms of office with the second term not exceeding four years i.e. a maximum term of 10 years on the Committee.

Independent Members				
	First Appointed	End of 6 Year Term	Reappointment	End of 4 Year Reappointment
R. Hendicott	31.07.2017	30.07.2023	26.06.2023	05.05.2027
G. Watkins	13.03.2019	12.03.2025	04.03.2025	12.03.2029
R. Alexander	13.03.2019	12.03.2025	04.03.2025	12.03.2029
G. Olphert	18.06.2024	17.06.2030	Jun 2030	Jun 2034
J. Evans	03.10.2025	02.10.2031	Oct 2031	Oct 2035

Town & Community Council Representative				
	First Appointed	End of 5 Year Term	Reappointment	End of 5 Year Reappointment
P. Summers	26.06.2023	05.05.2027	June/July 2027	May 2032

Members elected to the Vale of Glamorgan Council hold office until the next ordinary local government elections, currently held every five years. The Council's Elected Member representatives on the Standards Committee are appointed annually by Full Council at its Annual Meeting, usually held in May. Whilst these appointments are considered annually, Members may be reappointed from year to year throughout the life of the Council, subject to the maximum period of service permitted by the Constitution. This distinction reflects the difference between a Member's term of office as a Councillor and their annual appointment by Council to serve on the Standards Committee.

Elected Members				
	First Appointed	End of 5 Year Term	Reappointment	End of 5 Year Reappointment
R. Birch	24.05.2017	04.05.2022	23.05.2022	05.05.2027
C. Franks	23.05.2022	05.05.2027	May 2027	May 2032
J. Charles	23.05.2022	05.05.2027	May 2027	May 2032

The appointments of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Standards Committee are dealt with at the first meeting of the Standards Committee following the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Annual Meeting each year. In accordance with the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001, both the Chair and Vice-Chair should be elected from amongst the Independent Members of the Committee.

Municipal Year	Chair	Vice-Chair
2022 – 23	R. Hendicott	L. Tinsley (Retired)
2023 - 24	R. Hendicott	L. Tinsley (Retired)
2024 – 25	R. Hendicott	L. Tinsley (Retired)
2025 – 26	R. Hendicott	G. Watkins
2026 - 27	R. Hendicott	G. Watkins

On the 12th May 2025, Mrs L. Tinsley retired from the Committee as an Independent Member. Following a recruitment exercise, Mrs. Janet Evans was appointed to the Lay Member vacancy on the Committee. No other appointments were made during the 2025/26 municipal year. On appointment, Mrs Evans took part in mandatory training with the Monitoring Officer prior to taking up their seat on the Committee.

Members of the Standards Committee are required to attend training offered as part of the Council's Induction and Development Programme established after each Local Government Election. Members are offered to attend a variety of training courses with the following deemed mandatory topics:

- Market Place Induction Event
- Ethics & Standards (Members' Code of Conduct)
- Introduction to the Standards Committee
- Equality and Diversity
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Easy Conference Connect Meeting Platform.

The Monitoring Officer held refresher training on the Members' Code of Conduct in December 2025 which was completed by all Standards Committee Members.

7. Future Priorities

The Standards Committee has developed and agreed its Forward Work Programme for 2026/27 which can be found at **Appendix B** to this report, and details the dates of future meetings.

The Local Government Election in May 2027 will have an impact on the Committee in the following ways:

- TCCs will be invited to provide nominations for their Representative based on individuals elected to their respective Councils at the May 2027 election.
- Elected Member seats will be appointed at the Council's Annual Meeting in May 2027 based on the individuals elected to the Council at the May 2027 election. If re-elected to the Council, Councillor Rhiannon Birch will be retiring from the Committee having sat for the maximum term.
- Mr. R. Hendicott will be retiring from the Committee having sat for the maximum term, creating an Independent Member vacancy. This will instigate a recruitment exercise to fill the position and the need to provide necessary training to the successful applicant.
- The Local Government Election will mark the start of the Council's 2027 Member Induction & Development Programme, and all Standards Committee Members will be required to take part in mandatory training prior to sitting. In addition to the mandatory topics previously stated, it is expected that there will be additional training in relation to information governance following an internal audit conducted by the Council.

The Committee has suggested changes to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Section 19 of the Constitution, that have since been provided to Vale of Glamorgan Political Group Leaders for comment ahead of a report being presented to the 28th September Full Council Meeting for consideration. The outcomes of this process will be presented to the Standards Committee for further consideration to support the Committee with promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives.

Whilst this report focuses primarily on Members' compliance with the Code of Conduct training requirements, the Committee recognises the importance of Members engaging with the full range of learning and development opportunities available through the Council's Member Development Programme. Continued participation in training supports effective decision-making,

good governance and high standards of conduct across the Authority. In this regard, Political Group Leaders also have a statutory duty under Section 52A(1)(i) of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of their Group, including encouraging attendance at relevant training and development activities. The Committee will therefore continue to encourage all Members to actively engage in the wider programme of training opportunities available to support them in their roles.

Hyperlinks Index

Vale of Glamorgan Council Constitution: Members' Code of Conduct, Section 19.	https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee Reports/Committee Information/Constitution/October-2025/25-10-13-Section-19.pdf
Vale of Glamorgan Council Constitution: Standards Committee , Section 8.	https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee Reports/Committee Information/Constitution/October-2025/25-10-13-Section-8.pdf
Standards Committee Agendas, Reports, and Minutes Webpage.	https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/minutes,_agendas_and_reports/agendas/standards/standards.aspx
Standards Committee Meeting Recordings (YouTube).	https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzt4i14pgqIHxpsAQ4IkMdLXlwDunodjw

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26

Date of Meeting	Report Title
17 th July 2025	• Dispensation Applications (if any). • Feedback report following observations at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings. • Draft Standards Committee Annual Report (together with feedback from Political Group Leaders on compliance with section 62 of the Local Government ad Elections (Wales) At 2021). • Update report – All Wales Monitoring Officer Group meeting. • Items for National Standards Forum (Part II). • Update report of Monitoring Officer meeting with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (Slipped to 20th nov). • Correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. • Standards Committee: Procedures Working Group – Terms of Reference. • Adjudication Panel for Wales – Recent Tribunal Decisions. • Public Service Ombudsman for Wales – Recent Summary and Investigations Findings and Outcomes.
25 th September 2025	• Dispensation Applications (if any). • Feedback report following observations at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings. • Report on Protocol - Standard of Conduct Expected by Members and Civility in Public Life (Update). • Correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
20 th November 2025	• Dispensation Applications (if any). • Feedback report following observations at Town and Community Council Committee meetings. • Update report of Monitoring Officer meeting with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (Slipped from July). • Adjudication Panel for Wales – Annual Report 2024/25 • Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25. • Correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. • Standards Committee Quoracy - Governance review, clarification and ratification of decisions.

29 th January 2026	• Dispensation Applications (if any). • Feedback report following observations at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings. • Update All Wales Monitoring Officer Group meeting. • Adjudication Panel for Wales – Recent Tribunal Decisions • Report on Protocol - Standard of Conduct Expected by Members and Civility in Public Life (Update). • Standards Committee Quoracy - Governance review, clarification and ratification of decisions. • Correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (Part I and II).
26 th March 2026	• Dispensation Applications (if any). • Feedback report following observations at Town and Community Council meetings. • Standards Committee Quoracy - Governance review, clarification and ratification of decisions. • Feedback Report: Standards Committee: Procedures Working Group.(slipped from Jan meeting). • Standards Committee Forward Work Programme. • Monitoring Officer Update Report. • Correspondence with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (Part I and II).

Other reports

- (1) Adjudication Panel for Wales Annual Report (to be presented when available).
- (2) Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report (to be presented when available).
- (3) Update report – Standards Conference Wales – if held.
- (4) Standards Committee: Procedures Working Group Report (to be presented when available).
- (5) Annual Report and Adjudication Panel for Wales – recent Tribunal decisions.
- (6) Public Service Ombudsman for Wales – Recent Summary and Investigations Findings and Outcomes.
- (7) Civility in Public Life - Programme of Work Updates.

May 2026 - • Update report of Monitoring Officer meeting with Clerks of Town and Community Councils.

Standards Committee

Forward Work Programme May 2026 – April 2027.

Thursday 4 th June 2026, 10am.	Thursday 30 th July 2026, 10am.	Thursday 17 th September 2026, 10am.	Thursday 26 th November 2026, 10am.	Thursday 28 th January 2027, 10am.	Thursday 1 st April 2027, 10am.
ROLLING ITEMS [EACH MEETING, AS REQUIRED]					
Applications for Dispensation.	Applications for Dispensation.	Applications for Dispensation.	Applications for Dispensation.	Applications for Dispensation.	Applications for Dispensation.
Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.	Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.	Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.	Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.	Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.	Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.
Monitoring Officer Update Report.	Monitoring Officer Update Report.	Monitoring Officer Update Report.	Monitoring Officer Update Report.	Monitoring Officer Update Report.	Monitoring Officer Update Report.
Correspondence with the PSOW (Part I).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part I).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part I).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part I).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part I).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part I).
Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (March).	Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (June).		Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (September).	Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (December).	
Correspondence with the PSOW (Part II).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part II).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part II).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part II).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part II).	Correspondence with the PSOW (Part II).

Standards Committee

Forward Work Programme May 2026 – April 2027.

Thursday 14 th May 2026, 10am.	Thursday 16 th July 2026, 11am.	Thursday 17 th September 2026, 10am.	Thursday 26 th November 2026, 10am.	Thursday 28 th January 2027, 10am.	Thursday 1 st April 2027, 10am.
SPECIFIC MONTH ITEMS [SELECT MEETING, AS REQUIRED]					
Appointment of Chair/ Vice-Chair [standing agenda item].	Group Leader Duty Compliance (Part I).	Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) – Annual Report.		PSOW and APW Findings Report.	Standards Committee Forward Work Programme.
PSOW and APW Findings Report.	Draft Standards Committee Annual Report (taken alongside GL Duty report).	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) Annual Report and Accounts.			
		Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts.			
	Group Leader Duty Compliance (Part II).				

Items to be scheduled on an ad hoc basis:

- Civility in Public Life – Programme of Work.
- Feedback Report - Standards Committee: Procedures Working Group.