Agenda Item No: 7

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 26 November 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:	**Adjudication Panel for Wales and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Reports 2025/26.**
Portfolio Holder:	No Relevant Cabinet Member
Strategic Leadership Team:	Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Lead Officer:	Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer

1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an overview of the key findings arising from the 2025/26 Annual Reports of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) relating to Members' Code of Conduct matters.

1.2 The report draws attention to trends in complaints, investigations, referrals and sanctions involving elected Members across Wales and highlights key lessons emerging from recent Code of Conduct cases and tribunal decisions.

1.3 The report also assists the Committee in discharging its role of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst elected and co-opted Members of the Council.

2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2.1	T H A T the Standards Committee acknowledges the contents of the 2025/26 Annual Reports of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales insofar as they relate to Members' Code of Conduct matters.	To ensure that Members remain informed of national trends and developments relating to ethical standards in local government.
2.2	T H A T the Committee considers the lessons arising from the reports and whether any matters should be reflected in future Member development, Code of Conduct training and standards promotion activities.	To support the Committee's statutory role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members.

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 The annual reports produced by the PSOW and APW provide valuable information regarding the operation of Wales' ethical standards framework and identify emerging themes relevant to Elected Members and Standards Committees. Both Annual Reports are hyperlinked below.

3.2 The APW is an independent tribunal established under the Local Government Act 2000. Its functions include hearing references from the Ombudsman and determining allegations of misconduct against Members, together with hearing appeals against decisions of local Standards Committees.

3.3 The PSOW is responsible for investigating complaints that Members of local authorities, town and community councils, fire and rescue authorities, national park authorities and police and crime panels have breached their authority's Code of Conduct. Following investigation, cases may be referred either to local Standards Committees or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for determination.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Annual Reports and Accounts

4.1 The Committee is invited to consider the findings contained within the 2025/26 Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The report provides an overview of complaint volumes, investigations undertaken, referrals made and emerging themes

concerning Members' Code of Conduct matters.

4.2 The PSOW Annual Report also highlights wider organisational developments, performance management arrangements and improvements to investigative processes intended to maintain public confidence in the complaints system.

4.3 The previous reporting period identified a continued focus on complaints relating to respect and equality, member behaviour, social media activity and the conduct of elected Members when engaging with officers, fellow Members and members of the public. These themes remain relevant when considering ethical governance arrangements across local government in Wales.

Adjudication Panel for Wales

President of Welsh Tribunals Annual Reports | GOV.WALES

4.4 The Committee is also invited to consider the contents of the 2025/26 Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales. From 2025/26, the Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales is incorporated in the President of Welsh Tribunals Annual Report. The report summarises tribunal activity during the year and provides details of significant decisions concerning alleged breaches of the Members' Code of Conduct.

4.5 The President of Welsh Tribunals' Annual Report indicates that the ethical standards framework in Wales continues to operate effectively. Appeals from Standards Committees remain low, with APW largely upholding local decision-making. The principal areas of misconduct considered continue to be declarations of interest, respect and equality obligations, misuse of position and conduct bringing authorities into disrepute. The report reinforces the importance of ongoing member training, fair hearing procedures and continued monitoring of developments in Welsh tribunal reform.

4.6 The data included within the President of Welsh Tribunals' Annual Report provides useful learning points for Elected Members and illustrate the standards expected when undertaking public duties relating to:
- respect and courtesy;
- bullying and harassment;
- misuse of social media;
- conduct bringing local government into disrepute;
- failure to treat others with equality and respect; and
- inappropriate conduct towards officers and fellow Members.

Key Messages for Standards Committees

4.7 The lessons set out within both annual reports may assist the Committee when considering future standards initiatives and Member development programmes. The reports demonstrate the continuing importance of:
- maintaining a culture of respect and civility;
- supporting equality and inclusion;
- encouraging appropriate use of social media;
- ensuring awareness of Code of Conduct obligations;

- promoting early intervention and informal resolution where appropriate; and
- providing ongoing training and development for Members.

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

5.1 The report is informed by evidence contained within the Annual Reports of the APW and PSOW. Consideration has been given to complaint statistics, investigation outcomes, tribunal decisions, emerging trends and examples of good practice identified within those reports. The views reflected are those of the respective organisations as published within their annual reports and are presented to assist the Committee in understanding developments within the Welsh ethical standards framework.

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

6.1 Members will have regard to any lessons arising from recent complaints, investigations and tribunal decisions. The findings will be used to inform the Committee's ongoing work in promoting high standards of conduct and may be taken into account when planning future Member development and Code of Conduct training activities.

6.2 Developments within the Welsh ethical standards framework will continue to be monitored and reported to the Committee as appropriate.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

7.1 Promoting high standards of conduct and accountability supports effective governance, transparency and public confidence in decision making, all of which underpin the Council's ability to deliver its strategic objectives.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

8.1 Long Term - Promotes a sustained culture of ethical governance and high standards of conduct.

8.2 Prevention - Assists in identifying behaviours and trends which may lead to complaints and misconduct findings.

8.3 Integration - Supports good governance arrangements across all Council services and decision-making functions.

8.4 Collaboration - Reflects continued collaboration between local authorities, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

8.5 Involvement - Supports transparency and accountability, thereby helping to maintain public confidence in local democracy.

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 is presented to enable Members to note developments arising from the Welsh ethical standards framework and does not propose any changes to Council policies, functions or service provision.

11.2 The report supports the Committee's responsibility for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members.

12.0 **Key Contacts**

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

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

Appendix

There are no appendices with this report. Both Annual Reports are hyperlinked within Section 4.

Background Documents

Report to Standards Committee – 20th November 2025 - Adjudication Panel for Wales – Annual Report 2024/25.

Report to Standards Committee – 20th November 2025 - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25.