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County Hall
Rhadyr
Usk
NP15 1GA

Friday, 5 September 2025

Notice of meeting

Standards Committee

**Monday, 15th September, 2025 at 10.00 am,
Council Chamber, County Hall, Usk**

AGENDA

Item No	Item	Pages
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2024	1 - 4
4.	Annual Report of the Standards Committee	5 - 6
4.1.	Appendix 1 - Draft Annual Report to Council	7 - 24
5.	Local Resolution Protocol - verbal update	
6.	Notes from the National Forum of the Chairs of Standards Committees (January 2025 and June 2025) - Chair's update	25 - 36
7.	Decision Notices - Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (exempt)	37 - 80
8.	Next Meeting - 15th December 2025	

**Paul Matthews
Chief Executive**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CYNGOR SIR FYNWY

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMITTEE IS AS FOLLOWS:

County Councillors:

Fay Bromfield
Frances Taylor
Peter Strong

Independent Memebrrs:

Ruth Price
Andrew Blackmore
Michael John
Rhian Williams-Flew
Peter Easy
Marion Gibson

Public Information

Access to paper copies of agendas and reports

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Watch this meeting online

This meeting can be viewed online either live or following the meeting by visiting www.monmouthshire.gov.uk or by visiting our Youtube page by searching MonmouthshireCC.

Welsh Language

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public through the medium of Welsh or English. We respectfully ask that you provide us with adequate notice to accommodate your needs.

Aims and Values of Monmouthshire County Council

Our purpose

- to become a zero-carbon county, supporting well-being, health and dignity for everyone at every stage of life.

Objectives we are working towards

- Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced;
- Green place to live and work with reduced carbon emissions and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency;
- Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres and where businesses can grow and develop
- Safe place to live where people have a home where they feel secure in;
- Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued;
- Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential

Our Values

Openness. We are open and honest. People have the chance to get involved in decisions that affect them, tell us what matters and do things for themselves/their communities. If we cannot do something to help, we'll say so; if it will take a while to get the answer we'll explain why; if we can't answer immediately we'll try to connect you to the people who can help – building trust and engagement is a key foundation.

Fairness. We provide fair chances, to help people and communities thrive. If something does not seem fair, we will listen and help explain why. We will always try to treat everyone fairly and consistently. We cannot always make everyone happy, but will commit to listening and explaining why we did what we did.

Flexibility. We will continue to change and be flexible to enable delivery of the most effective and efficient services. This means a genuine commitment to working with everyone to embrace new ways of working.

Teamwork. We will work with you and our partners to support and inspire everyone to get involved so we can achieve great things together. We don't see ourselves as the 'fixers' or problem-solvers, but we will make the best of the ideas, assets and resources available to make sure we do the things that most positively impact our people and places.

Kindness: We will show kindness to all those we work with putting the importance of relationships and the connections we have with one another at the heart of all interactions.

Public Document Pack **Agenda Item 3**

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held
at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 16th December, 2024 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillors: R. Price, A. Blackmore, John, R Williams-Flew,
P. Easy and Frances Taylor

R. Price, A. Blackmore, M. John, R Williams-Flew, and P. Easy
(Chair)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Nicola Perry
Geraint Edwards

Senior Democracy Officer
Solicitor

APOLOGIES:

M. Gibson and Fay Bromfield

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting - 16th September 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

Matters Arising:

- 1) There was one action point for the Deputy Monitoring Officer relating to compliance with the PSOW Annual Letter requirement to take a report to the Governance and Audit Committee and to Cabinet to explain the position and this has been copied to the Chair. It was confirmed that all four recommendations have been responded to.
- 2) A replacement for former Councillor Fookes is yet to be determined.

3. Community and Town Councils Training Update

The report was presented to advise members of the extent and uptake of code of conduct training among members of Community and Town Councils ("the Councils") in the administrative area of Monmouthshire County Council.

It was agreed that a return from just half of the Councils is unsatisfactory for this committee. The Committee has a responsibility to promote and encourage training in the Code of Conduct but there is no statutory or legal requirement for community or town council to undertake it. The Committee is interested in understanding why the training is not completed by some councils.

The Committee resolved to accept the recommendations to note the information set out in the report relating to the arrangements for code of conduct training for members of the

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held
at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 16th December, 2024 at 10.00 am**

Councils, and to instruct the Monitoring Officer to liaise with the clerks of the Councils to encourage the uptake of training on the code of conduct.

Action: It was requested that clerks to town and community councils are approached to gain a fuller picture of their council's position in relation to training, to promote and encourage take up of training and to capture any late returns.

4. Outcome of Panel Meeting

The Committee was updated on the outcome of the Panel hearing held on 28th August 2024.

In doing so the Committee resolved to accept the recommendation that members note the decision of the Panel attached at Appendix 1.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer will liaise with the Monitoring Officer regarding how the Committee will know if the required training has been completed.

5. PSOW External Review

The Committee considered the Report of the Independent Review of Investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales into Code of Conduct Complaints published on 27 September 2024.

The committee resolved to:

- a) **Note the report of the independent review of investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales into Code of Conduct Complaints; and**
- b) **Instruct the monitoring officer to prepare and submit a response to the PSOW consultation on behalf of the committee to cover the following points:**
 - To inform the subject of a complaint as the complaint is made Rather than wait for the assessment stage;
 - That the Committee supports the reversal to the original process; and
 - That there should be no representations following knowledge of a complaint (at that early stage).

6. Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales

The Committee considered the Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales 2023/24.

The Committee resolved to note the Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales 2023/24.

7. Notes from the National Forum of the Chairs of Standards Committees

The Committee was provided with the opportunity to review the notes from the Chair following his attendance at the National Forum for Chairs of Standards Committees on 24th June 2024.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Standards Committee held
at Conference Room - Usk, NP15 1AD on Monday, 16th December, 2024 at 10.00 am**

The Committee resolved to note the contents of the report.

8. Dates and Times of Future meetings

The Committee accepted a request from County Councillor Bromfield to hold the December meeting in the first rather than the third week of the month.

The next meeting will be held on the 17th March 2025 at 10.00am.

The meeting ended at 10.54 am

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SUBJECT:	Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2023/24
MEETING:	Standards Committee
DATE:	15th September 2025
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE

To present the Standards Committee Annual Report 2024/25 for approval prior to reporting to a meeting of Council.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Standards Committee approves the draft annual report at Appendix 1.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("LGE 2021") created a new requirement for standards committees to make an annual report to their authority.
- 3.2 Section 63 LGE 2021 prescribes the required content of the annual report which is reflected in the draft report attached at Appendix 1.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None.

5. CONSULTEES

Standards Committee
Monitoring Officer – James Williams

6. AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS

Peter Easy, Chair, on behalf of the Standards Committee

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2024/25

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SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Standards Committee for 2024/25

MEETING: Council

DATE: TBC

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE

To present the 2024/25 annual report of the Council's Standards Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the contents of the report.

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 The Standards Committee is required by Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("LGE 2021") to make an annual report to their authority.

3.2 Section 63 LGE 2021 prescribes the content of the annual report as set out below.

4. DISCHARGE OF THE COMMITTEE'S FUNCTIONS

4.1 The Standards Committee is composed of nine members: three County Councillors, one community member and five independent members.

4.2 The Committee met three times in 2024/25 - on 10th June 2024, 16th September 2024 and 16th December 2024.

4.3 The functions of the Committee are defined in sections 54 and 56 of the Local Government Act 2000 ("LGA 2000"). The primary function is to

APPENDIX 1 – Draft Annual Report

promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the authority, and by the members of community councils in Monmouthshire.

5. REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES (PSOW)

- 5.1 The Standards Committee did not receive any referrals from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (“PSOW”) during the year 2024/25.
- 5.2 The PSOW’s annual letter to the Council for the year 2024/25 is attached to this report as Appendix 1.

6. ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATION OF PSOW REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. NOTICES GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE ADJUDICATION PANEL FOR WALES

- 7.1 No notices regarding member conduct were received from APW during the year.
- 7.2 No member of the County Council and no member of any community council in the area of Monmouthshire were respondents at APW tribunals.

8. TRAINING FOR MEMBERS

- 8.1 All members of the Council are required to undergo Code of Conduct training. Code of Conduct training was provided for all members at County Hall on 12th May 2022 in person. Further training has been made available for those members who were unable to attend this training, or who have been co-opted to the Council since this date.
- 8.2 All members and co-opted members have received training on the Code of Conduct, either in person or via the online format.

9. COMPLIANCE OF POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS WITH NEW CONDUCT DUTIES s 52A(1) LGA 2000

- 9.1 The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that all three MCC political group leaders complied with the duties set out above in s 52A(1) of LGA 2000 during the year ending 31st March 2025.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE AUTHORITY

- 10.1 Section 56B(5) of LGA 2000 states that:

An annual report by a standards committee of a relevant authority may include recommendations to the authority about any matter in respect of which the committee has functions.

- 10.2 The committee has no recommendations for the authority.

APPENDIX 1 – Draft Annual Report

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The standards committee strongly commends all members of the authority for continuing to maintain high standards of conduct throughout 2024/25.

12. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 - PSOW's annual letter to the Council for the year 2024/25

14. CONSULTEES

Standards Committee
Monitoring Officer – James Williams

15. AUTHOR AND CONTACT DETAILS

Peter Easy, Chair, on behalf of the Standards Committee

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Ask for: Communications



01656 641150



Caseinfo@ombudsman.wales

Date: 14 August 2025

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby
Monmouthshire County Council

By email only

maryannbrocklesby@monmouthshire.gov.uk
paulmatthews@monmouthshire.gov.uk
JamesWilliams@monmouthshire.gov.uk
annetteevans@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Mary Ann Brocklesby

Annual Letter 2024-25

Role of PSOW

As you know, our role as the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is to consider complaints about public services, to investigate alleged breaches of the councillor Code of Conduct, to set standards for complaints handling by public bodies and to drive improvement in complaints handling and learning from complaints. We also undertake investigations into public services on own initiative.

Purpose of letter

Through this letter, we want to give you an update on our work, share key trends in complaints about local government in Wales and highlight any particular issues for your organisation, together with actions I would like your organisation to take.

Complaints about public services

This letter, as always, coincides with the publication of our Annual Report. Again, we saw an increase in the number of people contacting us about public services. Since 2019-20, the volume of new complaints about public services reaching our office has increased by 44%.

We also closed a record number of complaints about public services – 5% more than last year. This year, we intervened (found that something has gone wrong, and recommended how to put things right) in 18% of complaints that we closed. Positively, this year we resolved many more complaints early on. 87% of our interventions this year involved Early Resolution, compared to 70% in 2023-24.

Page 1 of 14

We understand that people who come to us want their complaints resolved as quickly as possible and we are committed to dealing with them in a timely manner.

Overall, we assessed incoming complaints, or intervened with an Early Resolution, within an average of 4 weeks; well within our target of 6 weeks. We have also reduced the time it takes us to complete an average investigation, from 64 weeks in 2023-24, to 53 weeks this year.

During 2024-25, we received 1,337 complaints about local councils - an increase of 20% on the previous year and 54% more than in 2019-20.

The main complaint subjects accounting for this increase related to social services, environment and environmental health, and housing. However, we also saw a welcome drop in complaints about complaint handling.

We intervened in 13% of local council complaints that we closed – a similar proportion to recent years.

We received 19 complaints about Monmouthshire County Council and closed 16 – some complaints were carried over from the previous year. Monmouthshire County Council's intervention rate was 6%. You can find detailed information on complaints about your organisation that we handled this year can be found in the appendices.

In 2024-25, we made 2 recommendations to your organisation. To ensure that our investigations and reports drive improvement, we follow up compliance with the recommendations agreed with your organisation. In 2024-25, 2 recommendations were due. 0% of the recommendations due was complied within the timescale agreed. Recommendations and timescales for complying with recommendations are always agreed with the public body concerned before being finalised, and we therefore expect organisations to comply within the timescales agreed.

Our Code of Conduct work

Our role is to investigate allegations that councillors have breached their Code of Conduct. Where an investigation finds evidence to support the complaint on a matter which is serious enough to require a referral in the public interest, these cases are referred either to the local Standards Committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales for consideration.

In 2024-25, we received 4% less new Code of Conduct complaints than the previous year. 60% of these complaints related to members of Town and Community Councils. We continue to see that over a half of these complaints (56% this year) tends to relate to promotion of equality and respect.

We made 15 referrals to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales (compared to 21 last year). We are grateful to your Monitoring Officer for their positive engagement with my office over the last year. We will continue to engage with them on matters relating to the ethical standards framework, including Local Resolution Procedures this year.

Independent Review

As you will be aware, last year, it was brought to our attention that a member of staff who had been the Team Leader of our Code of Conduct Team had been making inappropriate and unacceptable social media posts of a political nature.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, we commissioned Dr Melissa McCullough to conduct an independent review of our Code of Conduct work. [Dr McCullough's Report](#), published in September 2024, found that, "in general terms, the PSOW's Code of Conduct processes and delegations are robust in terms of safeguarding fairness and impartiality. They are systematic, well documented and supplemented with appropriate guidance and the reasoning for decisions is required to be recorded and explained as applicable."

While the findings overall were very positive, the review report included a number of recommendations and lessons learned, to "augment the existing safeguards for ensuring the fairness and impartiality of the processes and would clarify the related guidance as applicable."

Following this, the Senedd's Finance Committee published its report on the [Review into the operations, processes and investigations carried out by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales](#). The Committee made further recommendations to us in its report. The details of all the recommendations and lessons learned and the actions we have taken in response can be found in our Annual Report.

To provide additional assurance, Dr McCullough undertook further independent assessment of how we implemented the recommendations and lessons learned, as set out in her 2024 Independent Review Report. This [assessment](#) concluded that:

- all recommendations and lessons learned were fully accepted by us and have been fully implemented
- we demonstrated a comprehensive, thoughtful and consultative approach to the implementation
- the pace of implementation has been impressive
- a separate quality assurance review confirmed the robustness of our process.

Supporting improvement of public services

We continued our work on supporting improvement in public services.

During 2024-25, we concluded our second wider own initiative investigation which looked into unpaid carers' needs assessments in Wales. We considered whether 4 local councils – Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Flintshire and Neath Port Talbot - undertook carers' assessments in line with their statutory obligations.

We published the report on this investigation in October 2024. We found that only 2.8% of people in those council areas who identified as carers had received a needs assessment. In addition, only 1.5% had received a proper support plan following their assessment. Many carers were also not aware of their rights with regard to assessments and support services that might be available to them.

We identified some areas of good practice by the councils we investigated. However, we also made several recommendations including to:

- improve recording practices
- improve how information is shared with carers
- offer staff refresher training on carers' rights
- collaborate better with the healthcare sector.

We invited the other local councils in Wales to make similar improvements.

As we did in the case of our first own initiative investigation, we have been actively monitoring how organisations' have been complying with our recommendations.

We are planning to review compliance with the recommendations and any other impacts of the report in October 2025.

Currently 54 organisations across Wales operate our model complaints policy. This includes all local councils, all health boards and now most housing associations - representing about 85% of the complaints which we receive.

Our offer of free complaints handling training has remained popular and we provided a further 52 training sessions to public bodies across Wales during the year. This brings the total to 550 training sessions and 10,000 people, since 2020.

We have continued our work to publish complaints statistics, gathered from public bodies, with data published twice a year. We expect to publish the data on complaints handled by local councils in Wales during 2024-25 in the Autumn. This data allows us to see information with greater context – for example, during 2024-25 5.18% of complaints made to local councils went on to be referred to us. Finally, this year we also published 2 thematic reports, which included as case studies complaints about local councils:

- 'Living in Disrepair' (November 2024): a thematic report about housing disrepair and damp and mould complaints.
- 'Equality Matters' (January 2025): a thematic report on inclusion and accessibility across public services.

These reports include general recommendations for public service providers, drawing on lessons learned from our casework.

Action we would like your organisation to take

Further to this letter, can I ask that your organisation takes the following actions:

- Present this Annual Letter to the Cabinet and to the Governance and Audit Committee at the next available opportunity and notify me of when these meetings will take place.
- Consider the data in this letter, alongside your own data, to understand more about your performance on complaints, including any patterns or trends and your organisation's compliance with recommendations made by my office.
- Inform me of the outcome of the organisation's considerations and proposed actions on the above matters at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to thank you, and your officers, for your continued openness and engagement with my office. Our information shows that local authorities are looking into more complaints than ever before and are using information from complaints to deliver better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Morris

Michelle Morris

Public Services Ombudsman

Cc. Paul Matthews, Chief Executive, Monmouthshire County Council
James Williams, Monitoring Officer, Monmouthshire County Council
Annette Evans, PSOW Liaison Officer, Monmouthshire County Council

Information Sheet

Appendix A shows the number of complaints received by PSOW for all Local Authorities in 2024-25. These complaints are contextualised by the population of each authority.

Appendix B shows the categorisation of each complaint received, and what proportion of received complaints represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix C shows intervention rates for all Local Authorities in 2024-25. An intervention is categorised by either an upheld complaint (either public interest or non-public interest), an early resolution, or a voluntary settlement.

Appendix D shows outcomes of the complaints which PSOW closed for the Local Authority in 2024-25. This table shows both the volume, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix E shows the compliance performance of each Local Authority.

Appendix F shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Local Authority in 2024-25. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for the Local Authority.

Appendix G shows the outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints closed by PSOW related to Town and Community Councils in the Local Authority's area in 2024-25. This table shows both the number, and the proportion that each outcome represents for each Town or Community Council.

Appendix A – Complaints received (overview)

	MAL			CODE			Total		
Local Authority	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents	Complaints Received	Population	Received per 1,000 residents
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	14	67356	0.21	1	67356	0.01	15	67356	0.22
Bridgend County Borough Council	58	146743	0.40	10	146743	0.07	68	146743	0.46
Caerphilly County Borough Council	78	176437	0.44	3	176437	0.02	81	176437	0.46
Cardiff Council*	219	383536	0.57	4	383536	0.01	223	383536	0.58
Carmarthenshire County Council	86	190083	0.45	14	190083	0.07	100	190083	0.53
Ceredigion County Council	47	73050	0.64	0	73050	0.00	47	73050	0.64
Conwy County Borough Council	29	114410	0.25	9	114410	0.08	38	114410	0.33
Cyngor Gwynedd	46	119173	0.39	2	119173	0.02	48	119173	0.40
Denbighshire County Council	98	97156	1.01	7	97156	0.07	105	97156	1.08
De Montshire County Council	61	155812	0.39	3	155812	0.02	64	155812	0.41
Isle of Anglesey County Council	22	69291	0.32	2	69291	0.03	24	69291	0.35
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	17	58593	0.29	3	58593	0.05	20	58593	0.34
Monmouthshire County Council	19	94572	0.20	9	94572	0.10	28	94572	0.30
Neath Port Talbot Council	48	142898	0.34	1	142898	0.01	49	142898	0.34
Newport City Council	61	163628	0.37	1	163628	0.01	62	163628	0.38
Pembrokeshire County Council	47	125006	0.38	6	125006	0.05	53	125006	0.42
Powys County Council	55	134439	0.41	24	134439	0.18	79	134439	0.59
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	62	241178	0.26	3	241178	0.01	65	241178	0.27
Swansea Council	113	246742	0.46	6	246742	0.02	119	246742	0.48
Torfaen County Borough Council	20	93419	0.21	4	93419	0.04	24	93419	0.26
Vale of Glamorgan Council	61	134733	0.45	3	134733	0.02	64	134733	0.48
Wrexham County Borough Council	76	136149	0.56	11	136149	0.08	87	136149	0.64
Total	1337	3164404	0.41	126	3164404	0.04	1463	3164404	0.45

Appendix B – Complaints received (by organisation)

Monmouthshire County Council	Complaints Received	% Share
Adult Social Services	6	32%
Benefits Administration	0	
Children's Social Services	2	11%
Community Facilities, Recreation and Leisure	0	
Complaints Handling	0	
Covid19	0	
Education	1	5%
Environment and Environmental Health	0	
Finance and Taxation	0	
Health	0	
Housing	2	11%
Licencing	0	
Planning and Building Control	6	32%
Roads and Transport	2	11%
Self Funding Care Provider	0	
Various Other	0	
Total	19	

Appendix C – Cases with PSOW intervention (overview)

Local authority	No. of interventions	No. of closures	% of interventions
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	12	0%
Bridgend County Borough Council	6	57	11%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	11	79	14%
Cardiff Council*	37	190	19%
Carmarthenshire County Council	11	86	13%
Ceredigion County Council	11	45	24%
Conwy County Borough Council	5	29	17%
Denbighshire County Council**	6	98	6%
Flintshire County Council	7	61	11%
Cyngor Gwynedd	3	44	7%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	1	20	5%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	1	15	7%
Monmouthshire County Council	1	16	6%
Neath Port Talbot Council	5	45	11%
Newport City Council	6	62	10%
Pembrokeshire County Council	8	47	17%
Powys County Council	8	51	16%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	6	60	10%
Swansea Council	12	109	11%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	18	0%
Vale of Glamorgan Council	12	63	19%
Wrexham County Borough Council	7	72	10%
Total	164	1279	13%

Appendix D – Complaint outcomes (by organisation) (* denotes intervention)

Monmouthshire County Council	Complaint Outcomes	% Share
Complaint investigation discontinued (with early resolution at assessment stages)*	0	
Complaint investigation discontinued (without settlement)	0	
Decision not to investigate complaint	6	38%
Early resolution*	1	6%
Matter out of jurisdiction	2	13%
Non-public interest report issued: complaint not upheld	0	
Non-public interest report issued: complaint upheld*	0	
Non-public interest report issued: complaint upheld with early resolution at assessment stage*	0	
Premature	7	44%
Public interest report issued: complaint upheld*	0	
Public Interest report issued: complaint upheld with early resolution at assessment stage*	0	
Special Interest Report*	0	
Voluntary settlement*	0	
Total	16	

Appendix E – Compliance performance comparison

Local Authority	Number of recommendations made on complaints closed in 2024-25	Number of recommendations falling due in 2024-25	% of recommendations, complied with in line with agreed target date
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Bridgend County Borough Council	15	18	17%
Caerphilly County Borough Council	24	24	50%
Cardiff Council*	97	96	59%
Carmarthenshire County Council	29	27	67%
Ceredigion County Council	24	24	63%
Conwy County Borough Council	14	14	64%
Denbighshire County Council	10	8	50%
Flintshire County Council	20	22	100%
Cyngor Gwynedd	9	9	100%
Isle of Anglesey County Council	4	6	0%
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	2	8	75%
Monmouthshire County Council	2	2	0%
Neath Port Talbot Council	11	8	88%
Newport City Council	12	11	36%
Pembrokeshire County Council	20	18	61%
Powys County Council	21	23	22%
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	11	10	20%
Swansea Council	25	22	27%
Torfaen County Borough Council	0	0	n/a
Vale of Glamorgan Council	30	31	55%
Wrexham County Borough Council	19	16	63%

Appendix F – Code of Conduct Complaints Closed (* denotes investigation)

Monmouthshire County Council	Code of Conduct Complaints Closed
Cc not acted on	0
Code of Conduct leaflet sent/link to website provided	0
Complaint taken over telephone – awaiting signature	0
Complaint Withdrawn	0
Discontinued. Not in the public interest to pursue*	0
Duplicate complaint with no new evidence	0
Information provided	0
No action necessary*	2
No declaration rec'd – Withdrawn	0
No evidence of Breach*	0
No prima facie evidence of breach	4
Not in the public interest to investigate	1
Out of Jurisdiction - signposted	0
Premature - referred for local resolution	0
Referred to Adjudication Panel*	0
Referred to Standards Committee*	0
Withdrawn	0
Total	7

Appendix G - Town / Community Council Code of Complaints

	Decision not to investigate Code		Investigations					
	Not in the public interest to investigate	No prima facie evidence of breach	Discontinued. Not in the public interest to pursue	No action necessary	No evidence of Breach	Referred to Adjudication Panel	Referred to Standards Committee	Total
Monmouthshire County Council								
Abergavenny Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caerwent Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Caldicot Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chepstow Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crucorney Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devauden Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gobion Fawr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Goetre Fawr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grosmont Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanarth Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanbadoc Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanelly Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llanfoist Fawr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llangybi Fawr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Llantilio Pertholey Community Council	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Llantrisant Fawr Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Magor with Undy Community Council	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	14
Mathern Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mitchel Troy United Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Monmouth Town Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Portskewett Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Raglan Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rogiet Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shirenewton Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skenfrith Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St Arvans Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trellech United Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Usk Town Council	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Whitecastle Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wye Valley Community Council	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Standards Committees Chairs Forum - Wales**Monday, 27th January 2025 @ 2pm, via Teams****Notes****1. Chair.**

The chair welcomed:

- Pam Lucas, Welsh Government, Local Government Policy Division, Climate Change and Rural Affairs.
- Recently appointed Standards Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs deputising for their Chairs.

2. Notes from the previous meeting – 23rd June 2024.

Notes attached with the agenda and actions confirmed as completed.

3. Pam Lucas (PL) – Welsh Government (WG), Local Government Policy Division, Climate Change and Rural Affairs.

PL, updated the Forum on the following:

- a) Ethical framework review - position update including the work of the Division in relation to:
 - Sharing best practice.
 - Progressing the standard in terms of equalities, which would require changes to primary legislation, and the socio-economic duty.
 - Media training for Members including guidance,
 - Removal of the prohibition of former Local Authority Members to sit on Standards Committees (no change in primary legislation required). The views of the Chairs would be welcomed in relation to the period of grace between serving as a Member of a Local Authority and sitting on a Standards Committee. It may be that there would be a gap of 5 years for former Cabinet Members or those in an executive role and a period of 2 years for other Members. The Division had received responses for a gap ranging from 0 – 10 years. Impartiality and independence were key considerations and need to work carefully through any changes. The Chairs emphasised the importance of maintaining independence and impartiality with any changes to eligibility. These

were key considerations and must be independent to ensure public confidence in the arrangements. A point was made that councillors with a prominent political background should not be made for that reason.

- Potential changes to sanction options such as withholding allowances and access to member services.
- It was difficult to confirm when a report would be submitted to the WG Minister on any changes because the legislative timetable would have to be factored in with policy decisions. The Division would be consulting on the developments within the next 6-8 months.
- In response to a request from PL, several Chairs indicated they would be happy to participate in consultation/feedback sessions organised by her Division. This would include Standards Committee annual reporting arrangements.
- JC – Forum Advisor, encouraged the Chairs to discuss any potential changes with their respective Monitoring Officers as there may be implications regarding local government law around meetings.

Action: PL to take forward with the Chairs, separately to the Forum meetings.

- PL invited the Chairs to attend a conference organised by WG Democracy event on 5 March 2025. The afternoon session included an item on Standards. It was hoped to arrange a similar even in North Wales.

Action – Details of the event including invite to be circulated via CT.

b) **Remuneration to Members**

- Remuneration of Members was currently within the purview of the IRPW, supported by the Division, however that would be transferred to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) as of 1 April 2025. See note 9 for related item.

4. Michelle Morris (MC), Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) – Update.

MC updated the Forum on the following.

- a) The Independent Review completed – The outcome of Dr McCullough's independent review concluded that:
 - There was no evidence of political bias with regards to decision making. It was also deemed to be appropriate and fair.

- The PSOW was working through the recommendations and would be publishing an action plan in March 2025, setting out their response.
- b) Casework.
- Caseloads for code of conduct complaints were again at a high and sustained level, compared to last year.
 - Some had taken a long time to conclude – 12 cases had gone over 12 months last year and this was likely to be the same this year. This was beyond the control of the PSOW.
 - Of the ongoing 100 cases, 20 were from Town and Community Councils (T&CC). One T&CC had 13 complaints around 3 Members.
 - The PSOW had written to a Chair to express concern about the high number of “tit for tat” complaints. This will be done in future to raise awareness and what action can be taken.
 - The previous year had been a busy one for referrals to the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) and Standards Committees. The number was higher this year and all except 1 had been dealt with (due in February 2025).
 - It would be impossible for the APW to refuse an appeal if the reasons are not clear in the minutes, and it will have no alternative other than to grant the appeal. Important to sign these off when approving the minutes.
 - The following responses were given to questions from the Chairs:
 - i. Regarding a question about a political group, in one LA, who were repeatedly discussing the independent inquiry conducted by Dr McCulloch, and had a lack of confidence in the PSOW, The Chair should direct them to the findings of the Independent Review report.
 - ii. In response to what can be done generally to improve standards of behaviour in T&CCs the Chairs were advised to ensure there are training arrangements in place for Members on the Code of Conduct; arrangements in place to support the Clerks who were in a very difficult position and to be aware of the support on offer from One Voice Wales. The Clerk should be recognised by Members as a professional role, and it needs to be done properly.
- c) Recommendation 2 of the Independent report of Dr. McCulloch - Practice around notification of a complaint.
- Currently the PSOW does not notify Members at the point when they have been complained about. They are informed only if the complaint satisfies the PSOW 2 stage test and there may be a case

to answer. As only 50% satisfy the 2-stage test and 85% of complaints are unfounded the PSOW did not wish to cause unnecessary anxiety and “tit for tat” complaints which would also result in increased workloads.

- The overwhelming view of the Chairs was that in the interests of natural justice and, notwithstanding the increased administrative burden on the PSOW, Members should be notified early in the process i.e. when the complaint is made to the PSOW.

5. Matters raised by exception by the Chairs.

- a) TO, Isle of Anglesey - Have other Authorities signed up to the SLCC | Civility & Respect Pledge and / or encouraged their Town and Community Councils to do so. In response, JH indicated that in one LA, she was aware that 13 out of 34 had signed up and those who had not were actively encouraged to do so.

6. Recent cases of interest - Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) in previous 6 months – JC.

- a. In keeping with the Forum’s terms of reference as a learning opportunity the Chairs appreciated the opportunity to discuss several cases of interest and learn from cross sector experiences. This would be a standing item for future meetings.
- b. Chairs commented on the complexity and time commitment required for conduct hearings. The process was, in their experience, excessive and potentially chaotic if both sides were not represented. There appeared to be an assumed level of legal awareness.
- c. Important to participate in training and be aware of the following considerations which had been helpful –
 - i. The in-person training offered by BE – A trusted legally qualified training provider who had previously facilitated an online session to the Forum.
 - ii. The presentation slides of the former President of the APW (circulated with the notes of the previous meeting) were very helpful.
 - iii. There is a need to ensure a good replacement attends if the Monitoring Officer is unable to do so.
 - iv. Referencing recent cases could be helpful.
 - v. Chairs were aware that the complaints process including hearings were stressful experiences and the full process could take a long time to resolve.

7. Feedback from Chair and Panel Advisor - Evidence to the Senedd Local Government and Housing (LG&H) Committee CW & JC.

- a. The Chair and Forum Advisor had given evidence to the Senedd Local Government and Housing (LG&H) Committee on 14 November 2024 on the role and value of Town and Community Councils in Wales. The emphasis on aspects relating to standards, including interactions with Local Authority monitoring officers and standards committees.

8. National Standards Conference – Online, JC.

- a. The Chairs were supportive of an all-Wales conference, to be arranged by a sub-group of the Monitoring Officers Governance Group. Their preference was for this to be in person although they appreciated that would mean potential costs and additional administration arrangements.

9. Remuneration – Payments to Co-opted Members. – CT.

- a) This issue had been discussed previously at meetings when it was noted that payments to co-opted members was a matter for local determination and the Forum must work within its terms of reference as a voluntary learning Forum as opposed to a formal committee.
- b) There remained a sense of frustration in terms of fairness with the Chairs in that the rates had not been increased for some time for co-opted members and as they were applied according to local determination, not national, there were naturally occurring differences across Wales.

Action. The Chair will progress the matter separately with WG.

10. Any Other Business (AOB).

- a) Forum Chair – The Chair confirmed that whilst it had been a privilege to be the Forum Chair since it was first established, it was appropriate to vacate the position in advance of the next scheduled meeting on 26 January 2026. He would have been in the role for 3 years and it would be timely, in the interests of good governance principles, to select a new Chair. He will remain as Chair up until his successor is appointed at the next scheduled meeting on 26 January 2026.

Action: JC and CT to facilitate the arrangements for the appointment of Forum Chair with effect from 26 January 2026.

11. Dates of next meetings.

- Monday 23 June 2025, 2pm – 4pm on Teams.
- Monday 26 January 2026, 2pm – 4pm on Teams.

Standards Committees Chairs Forum - Wales

Monday, 23rd June 2025 @ 2pm, via Teams

Notes

1. Notes of previous meeting – 27th January 2025.

Actions confirmed as completed. The Forum discussed notes 3(a) and 9 at today's meeting – See notes 2 & 3 below.

2. Future engagement with the Welsh Government (WG), Local Government Policy Division, Climate Change and Rural Affairs (item 3(a) from notes of previous meeting).

JC confirmed that she and CT had met with PL from the Welsh Government Policy Division and recommended that contact with the Chairs who were prepared to participate in consultation/feedback sessions organised by her Division would best be made via their respective Monitoring Officers.

3. Remuneration – update on engagement with the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (D&BCC) (Item 9 from notes of previous meeting).

CW confirmed that he had written to the Chief Executive of the D&BCC outlining his frustration with the payments to co-opted Members i.e., that the rates had not been increased for some time and the inconsistency of how the payments were applied across Wales. The CEO confirmed that she would be pleased to attend a meeting of the Forum although that was unlikely to be at the June 2025 meeting. It was more probable to be the meeting thereafter, to allow for confirmation of the D&BCC work programme with her Commissioners, which included the responsibilities transferred from the IRPW.

4. Michelle Morris (MM), Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) – Update.

MM updated the Forum on the following.

- a) Notification of a complaint (note 5c from previous meeting). The PSOW, following consultation with stakeholders, had from 1 April 2025, reverted to notifying Members at the point when they had been complained about and not later in the process, when an assessment had been made if there may be a case to answer.

b) Casework.

- Caseloads for code of conduct complaints were fewer than last year although the level remained high, 315 cases, compared to previous years.
- 60% related to Town and Community Councils (7% increase on the previous year) and 40% to Local Authorities. A lack of equality and respect was the main complaint theme.
- The PSOW investigated 49 cases during the previous year, of which 15 had been referred to Standards Committees or the Adjudication Panel for Wales. That remained at a high level despite being lower than 20 referrals the previous year. Notably 85% of the referred breaches were upheld which was a positive indicator for the PSOW i.e. the application of the two-stage test to indicate that there may be a case to answer was working effectively.
- The previous year, 2024- 2025 had been a busy one for the PSOW and a summary will be included in the Annual Report and published at the end of July 2025.

c) Local Resolution Protocols (LRPs).

- It was very important for low level issues to be resolved locally wherever possible.
- Local resolutions meant that matters would be dealt with quickly before relationships were affected and situations escalated unnecessarily. The more serious cases could then be dealt with by the PSOW which was a much better use of their resources.
- The PSOW were working on developing good practice with LAs including Monitoring Officers.

d) Responses to questions/observations from the Chairs.

- There was a concern that some cases were taking a long time to consider. MM acknowledged that some cases had been ongoing for more than a year, which was too long and the PSOW was working to reduce it. The reasons for this were due to a high number of complaints and not enough staff to process them. There was no funding for additional support although a temporary member of staff and one other staff member had been allocated to deal with the issue. A dedicated officer for assessment work was focussed on this area and it was hoped that next year, more cases would be dealt with within 12 months.
- For consistency, would it be better for a single “top-down” approach for a LRP model, rather than leave it to individual Standards Committees which inevitably resulted in inconsistent procedures. In response MM highlighted it was not straightforward because these matters were part of each Council’s constitution. The intention was

to issue best practice, as opposed to imposing a procedure, with a view to achieving consistency.

- MM will continue to try and make the PSOW Annual Report an “easy and interesting” read. MM will also check and confirm if it is possible to show trends over time i.e., to place current year figures into context, e.g., 315 code of conduct complaints compared to previous years.
- Points were raised by the Chairs about complaints involving Town and Community Councils; it was not clear how many had completed the One Voice Wales training and signed the civility and respect pledge, given the number of complaints in this sector, was it timely for the training to be reviewed; there were too many vacancies for Clerks and not enough candidates were standing for election as a T&CC councillor, should Welsh Government consider merging smaller community councils; where multiple Councils appoint a shared Clerk that can leave a significant gap if they leave, could a local authority employ a pool of Clerks to provide greater resilience and lastly a community review was underway in one area whereby a Council was reviewing the number and size of T&CCs. It was recognised that this was a sensitive area. The Forum were informed about the Welsh Government (LGH Committee) inquiry which was due to report on this area and the Welsh Government Democratic Health Task and Finish Group that focussed on improving participation and diversity in Town and Community Councils.

5. Matters raised by exception by the Chairs.

Dispensations, individual committee approaches: (CD, Chair Ceredigion Standards Committee).

- a) Are councillors required to attend to present their application; views on duration of dispensation e.g. annual/length of term; acceptance of late applications; any written advice to councillors on these aspects; delegated authority to the Monitoring Officer.**
- b) Is there written guidance for committee members on how to approach making a decision e.g., what to consider/allow e.g. when to allow voting or not.**
 - JC advised that there are differences between the way dispensations are dealt with in Wales and England.
 - Refer to the Local Government Act 2000 s.81(4) for a list of dispensations, lots of latitude – it is very wide.
 - In Wales procedures are a matter for local constitutions, and they do differ. Chairs confirmed this e.g., in some cases it is

mandatory for a Member to appear before a Standards Committee whereas in others it is not.

- Dispensations are granted for varying lengths of time e.g., a year and are subject to review, whereas in other cases they may be for longer or even for a single meeting.
- It is possible to make urgent decisions e.g., in consultation with Chair of Standards who discuss it with the Monitoring Officer.
- JH offered to circulate the standard form that is used in her Council.

Action JH to circulate via CT.

6. Recent cases of interest - Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) in previous 6 months – JC.

- a) Consistent with the Forum's purpose as a learning network, the Chairs appreciated the opportunity to discuss several cases of interest and learn from cross sector experiences.
- b) Chairs reiterated comments made at the previous meeting about the complexity and time commitment required for conduct hearings. Some Councils have a formal written protocol.

Action CD to share her Standards Committee Chair's briefing document for hearings. CT to circulate to the Forum.

- c). Important that Standards Committees are clear about the reasons for their decision. Some appeals are allowed because the decision has not been given properly in writing in full. The presentation slides of the former President of the APW (circulated with the notes of a previous meeting) were very helpful on this.

Action CT to re-circulate the APW slides.

Action JH to share her Committee's considerations when setting out their Hearing decisions.

- d). Some Chairs might appreciate a "buddy" approach with Chairs with previous experience of hearings.
- e). To avoid a case where the Monitoring Officer has a conflict of interest, they can pass the matter to their deputy or it is not unusual, as standard practice, for Deputy Monitoring Officers to receive a complaint initially to avoid this scenario.

7. Forum Chair

As indicated at the previous meeting CW will remain in the role as Chair until his successor is appointed at the next scheduled meeting on 26 January 2026. CW was thanked for performing the role as the Forum's first Chair since it was established. His commitment and support had ensured the Forum had got off to a good start by establishing itself as intended i.e., a learning forum for Chairs to share experiences from across the sector and developing best practice.

Action: JC and CT to facilitate the arrangements for the appointment of Forum Chair and Vice Chair with effect from 26 January 2026. Anyone interested in the role will be asked to submit a 250-word pen picture and it is likely the appointment will be for 2 years.

8. Dates of next meeting.

- Monday 26 January 2026, 2pm – 4pm on Teams.
- Monday 22 June 2026 or 29 June 2026 (to be confirmed), 2pm – 4pm online.

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