

## **Annual Report of the Standards Committee for the year 2022/23 - DRAFT version 2**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 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. This duty came into force on 5th May 2022. To comply with this duty, this is the first annual report made by MCC’s standards committee. It covers the year ending on 31st March 2023.

1.2 Section 63 LGE 2021 and the statutory guidance prescribe the required content of the annual report, which is structured by the headings of sections 2 to 8 inclusive listed below.

### **2. Discharge of the Committee’s functions**

2.1 The standards committee is composed of nine members: three county councillors, one community committee member and five independent members. There is currently one vacancy for an independent member.

2.2 The committee met twice in 2022/23 - on Monday 10th October 2022 (five members present, two apologies) and Monday 6th February 2023 (eight members present, no apologies).

2.3 The functions of standards committees are defined in sections 54 and 56 of the Local Government Act 2000 (“LGA 2000”). The primary function is to 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.

2.4 The committee is therefore accountable for the volume, nature and outcome of conduct complaints. Conduct complaints can be formal and submitted to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW), or informal and submitted to the Monitoring Officer.

2.5 PSOW data for 2022/23 shows that ....

2.6 The Monitoring Officer reported to the Committee on 12th June 2023 that throughout the year 2022/23 he maintained his approach to potential conduct matters by seeking to operate an open and trusted relationship with all Councillors and, when necessary, looking to deal with matters in as informal and proportionate way as possible. There have been no matters that have escalated to the point of requiring the instigation of the Protocol for Self-Regulation of Member Conduct in the Constitution.

2.7 The standards committee reviewed the Protocol for Self-Regulation of Member Conduct on 6th February and did not recommend any changes.

### **3. Reports and recommendations from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)**

3.1 No conduct complaints were referred by PSOW to the standards committee during the year.

3.2 No Councillor has been required to attend a hearing at the Standards Committee.

### **4. Actions taken by the Committee following consideration of PSOW reports / recommendations**

4.1 Not applicable.

### **5. Notices given to the Committee by the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW)**

5.1 No notices regarding member conduct were received from APW during the year.

5.2 No MCC members or Monmouthshire community councillors were respondents at APW tribunals.

## **6. Training for members on the Code of Conduct**

6.1 Code of conduct training was provided for all councillors at County Hall on 12th May 2022. All forty six county councillors attended this training or the online follow-up sessions. All four independent members of standards committee also attended the training.

6.2 All committee meetings have a standing agenda item to consider “code of conduct training delivered, scheduled and requested” since the previous meeting.

## **7. Compliance of political group leaders with new conduct duties in s 52A(1) LGA 2000**

7.1 Section 52A(1) of LGA 2000 states that:

*A leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council or county borough council in Wales -*

*(a) must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group, and*

*(b) must co-operate with the council’s standards committee (and any sub-committee of the committee) in the exercise of the standards committee’s functions.*

7.2 The Monitoring Officer has corresponded with the Group Leaders who are all content that they have carried out their new duties regarding standards, and have no issues to raise. Based on the advice given, monthly and pre-Council meetings, and informal communication throughout the year, the Monitoring Officer is satisfied that all three MCC political group leaders complied with the two duties set out above in s 52A(1) of LGA 2000.

## **8. Recommendations to the authority**

8.1 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.*

8.2 The committee has no recommendations for the authority.

## **9. Conclusion**

9.1 The standards committee strongly commends all members of the authority for continuing to maintain high standards of conduct throughout a particularly challenging year.

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