

Section pertaining to Standards Committee	Purpose of the Guidance	Current Measures in Place	Further Measures
<p><b>Section 4</b>  <b>Statutory Guidance on duties of leaders of political groups in relation to standards of conduct (pg 25-35)</b></p>	<p>This guidance sets out how leaders of political groups in principal councils should meet their duties contained in section 52A of the Local Government Act 2000 (“the 2000 Act”), inserted by section 62, of the 2021 Act, which relates to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by the members of the group.</p> <p>This guidance is designed to support leaders of political groups understand and discharge their duties in relation to high standards of conduct, whilst recognising that they will wish to and should be encouraged to develop their own approach in line with their wider statutory obligations, local circumstances, and best practice. However, the basic principles set out in the guidance should apply to all.</p> <p>This guidance specifically addresses the following duties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Duty to take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group.</li> <li>- Duty to co-operate with the council’s standards committee (and any sub-committee) in the exercise of the standards committee’s functions.</li> </ul>	<p>Group Leaders provide a report to Committee on a six-monthly basis. One report is delivered in person, the other is by way of a written update. The report must set out how they are promoting high standards of conduct within their group.</p> <p>Group Leaders submit written updates on an annual basis outlining the active role they are taking to promote high standards of conduct within their group.</p>	<p>The frequency and method of receipt of updates from Group Leaders will be reviewed in the new municipal year 2024/25 and review annually thereafter.</p>
<p><b>Section 5</b>  <b>Statutory guidance on the functions of standards committees. (pg 35-37)</b></p>	<p>Local standards committees play an important role in supporting members, individually and collectively, to develop and maintain a culture which embraces high standards of conduct. A principal council is required by section 53 of the 2000 Act to establish a standards committee.</p> <p>The general functions of a standards committee under section 54(1) of the 2000 Act are to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of a “relevant authority” and to assist them to observe the members Code of Conduct. In addition, a</p>	<p>Standards Committee is embedded as part of the Council’s Governance arrangements and Constitution.</p> <p>The Code of Conduct for Newport City Council reflects the CoC published by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.</p>	<p>Develop e-learning module for Code of Conduct training to support regular refresher training for elected members.</p>

	<p>standards committee also has specific functions under section 54(2) of the 2000 Act, namely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- advise the authority on the adoption or revision of a Code of Conduct</li> <li>- monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct</li> <li>- provide advice or provide or arrange training on the Code of Conduct for members of the authority</li> </ul> <p>A principal council may arrange for its standards committee to exercise such other functions as it considers appropriate, for example, monitoring the operation of corporate maladministration complaint procedures.</p> <p>An important aspect of governance arrangements is the approach taken to gifts and hospitality. While there has been some support for a Wales wide approach we consider this is a matter to be dealt with by individual councils. We would expect standards committees to regularly review the approach taken in respect of gifts and hospitality and the use of thresholds. We would recommend this to be a matter included in standards committees annual reports. In addition it is considered this is a matter which would be routinely discussed at regular meetings of Monitoring Officers across Wales.</p>	<p>Standards Committee consider updates on compliance rates with Code of Conduct training following local elections.</p> <p>Standards Committee receive regular updates on complaints and Code of Conduct matters from the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Standards Committee receive an annual report on Gifts and Hospitality for elected members. This will also form part of the Annual Report of Standards Committee from 2024.</p>	
<p><b>Section 6 Duty of a standards committee to monitor group leaders' compliance with their duties, and provision of advice and training. (pg 37-38)</b></p>	<p>Section 62(3) of the 2021 Act amends section 54 of the 2000 Act to extend the specific functions of a standards committee to include monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups with the duty imposed on them by the 2021 Act to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group. As noted above, a council's political group leaders and its standards committee should agree on the form and frequency of a report from each group leader to the standards committee. The standards committee should</p>	<p>Group Leaders attend Committee on an annual basis to give an update on the active role they are taking to promote high standards of conduct within their group.</p> <p>Group Leaders submit written updates on an annual basis outlining the active role they</p>	<p>The frequency and method of receipt of updates from Group Leaders will be reviewed in the new municipal year 2024/25 and annually thereafter.</p>

	<p>then consider each report and provide feedback to the group leaders.</p> <p>A standards committee must also provide advice and training or arrange to train group leaders on the new duty. At the start of each administration this should take place within 6 months of the election and be reviewed at least annually.</p> <p>As set out earlier in this guidance the standards committee should meet with group leaders at the beginning of each council year to agree a number of issues, including the frequency of meetings between political group leaders and the standards committee through the year to discuss compliance with the duties covered by this guidance, annual reporting processes and issues arising from the analysis of complaints in respect of standards of behaviour.</p>	<p>are taking to promote high standards of conduct within their group.</p> <p>The Committee met with the Group Leaders informally to agree the method and frequency of the arrangements in 2023.</p>	<p>The Committee to discuss how advice and training can be provided to group leaders on compliance with their new duties.</p>
<p><b>Duty of standards committee to make annual report. (pg 38-40)</b></p>	<p>Section 63 of the 2021 Act inserts section 56B into the 2000 Act which places a requirement on standards committees in each “relevant authority” to make an annual report to the authority concerned. In the case of a principal council, the requirement to report to “the authority” in this context includes any community councils in its area.</p> <p>As a minimum, the report must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- describe how the committee has discharged its functions during the preceding financial year.</li> <li>- confirm the operation of a local protocol for the resolution of complaints and provide an assessment of its impact. Where no local protocol has been adopted, the standards committees must consider whether the adoption of such a protocol would support its functions in relation to promoting high standards of ethical conduct.</li> <li>- include an analysis of complaints. This analysis must include information about the number of councillors who</li> </ul>	<p>The Standards Committee makes an Annual Report and this is presented by the Chair to full Council.</p>	<p>In order to comply with the new duties, the next annual report will be prepared as soon as practicable in the new municipal year 2024/25.</p> <p>Any gaps in reporting that the new duties present will be resolved in the 2023/24 Annual Report.</p> <p>The threshold which the standards committee will use to establish whether it is content that political group leaders have complied with the duties of the 2021 Act</p>

have been the subject of a complaint which has been upheld, and whether they have or have not attended a training session on the Code of Conduct prior to or after the complaint was received.

- include a summary of reports and recommendations made or referred to the committee by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales relating to the investigation of alleged breaches of the member; Code of Conduct, and any subsequent action taken by the committee.
- include a summary of notices given to the committee by the Adjudication Panel for Wales, relating to the Panel's decisions on possible breaches of the member Code of Conduct.
- describe the advice it has provided on training for all members and how that has been implemented; in the case of a principal council set out how it has worked with the town and community councils in its area to promote and maintain high standards of conduct amongst town and community councillors.
- in the case of a principal council, include the committee's assessment of how political group leaders have complied with the new duty under section 52A(1) of the 2000 Act (inserted by section 62 of the 2021 Act) to promote high standards of conduct, including the advice the standards committee has provided and the training it has suggested.

The committee may also wish to report on the number of cases considered under local resolution processes. This would help to capture data on an "all Wales" basis, on matters which do not reach the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Approaches to the management and monitoring of gifts and hospitality are often sensitive matters. It is recommended the approach to this is reviewed and agreed within individual principal councils and that the regular review of thresholds for declaration of gifts, hospitality, material benefit or advantage, are included in standards committee's annual report. This will assist in terms of transparency of the arrangements.

The requirement to make an annual report is intended to ensure there is a regular and consistent approach to the reporting and consideration of standards of conduct by members of relevant authorities in Wales. This is intended to promote local ownership and collective responsibility by members for ensuring high standards of conduct within their authority. To this end, section 56B places an obligation on a relevant authority to consider the report and any recommendations made by its standards committee within 3 months of its receipt. The authority's consideration of a report will be a matter of public record through the published minutes of the meeting.

The standards committee should consider whether there are improvements that can be made to strengthen the standards of behaviour of members. This may include recommendations to the full council and town and community councils in its area about matters such as mandating training in equalities and the model code of conduct. It would be good practice for standards committees to share their Annual Reports with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and town and community councils.