

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Date of Meeting	Monday, 22 July 2024
Report Subject	Standards Committee Annual Report
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee must publish an annual report each year which must include (amongst other things):

- 1) A description of its work
- 2) Any notices it has received from the Adjudication Panel for Wales
- 3) Any cases referred to it for a hearing by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- 4) Its opinion on whether group leaders have complied with their duty to promote good behaviour; and
- 5) Any recommendations to the Council on the functions of the committee

The annual report is attached for Council to receive and consider.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the annual report is approved.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
1.01	Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires the committee to produce an annual report and to have regard to guidance issued by ministers when doing so.

1.02	<p>The statutory guidance provides that the annual report must:</p> <p>(1) describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year.</p> <p>(2) In particular, the report must include a summary of—</p> <p>(a) what has been done to discharge the general and specific functions conferred on the Committee [to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members and co-opted Members of the authority and Town and Community Councils, and to assist Members and co-opted Members of the authority to observe the authority's Code of Conduct.</p> <p>(b) reports and recommendations made or referred to the Committee [by the Ombudsman]</p> <p>(c) action taken by the Committee following its consideration of such reports and recommendations</p> <p>(d) notices given to the Committee [by the Adjudication Panel for Wales following a hearing];</p> <p>(3) An annual report by a standards Committee of a County Council ... must include the Committee's assessment of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their duties under section 52A(1) during the financial year.</p> <p>The Committee may also include recommendations to the authority about any matter in respect of which the Committee has functions.</p> <p>The report must be considered by Full Council within three months of it being referred to it.</p>
1.03	<p>The annual report is attached at Appendix 1. It follows the same format as last year's report and describes the work of the committee during the municipal year 2023/24.</p>
1.04	<p>Last year the committee made two recommendations which have both been actioned as described below</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) that clerks be reminded of the ability to seek dispensations. The Monitoring Officer wrote to all clerks reminding them of the Committee's ability to grant dispensation and provided training on what was involved in granting a dispensation at the joint meeting in November. 2) that training is provided on how to balance the obligation to treat people with respect and the freedom of political expression. An outline of the training content was agreed with Group Leaders and the training took place in May 2024
1.05	<p>This year the committee has recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That standards committee feedback becomes a standing agenda item at all group meetings (picking up on good practice captured within self-assessments); • That an open offer is circulated from the Standards Committee for any member to discuss concerns with us and seek support / guidance; and

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That town and community clerks are again reminded of the opportunity for their councillors to apply for a dispensation (in appropriate cases).
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The annual report can be produced and distributed within the existing resources of the council.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The Standards Committee approved the annual report at its meeting on 3 rd June 2024.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Properly assessing levels of compliance with the group leaders' duty is important not least because group leaders in breach of their duty might be regarded as bringing their office into disrepute. The Committee has agreed a process to enable it to undertake the task. Feedback from group leaders last year was positive so the same process has been followed this year.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Standards Committee Annual Report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>None</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: Gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.