

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

COUNCIL : 15TH JULY, 2024

REFERENCE FROM STANDARDS COMMITTEE: 10TH JUNE, 2024

92 DRAFT STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (MO/HLDS) –

The report was presented by the Chair of the Committee who advised that the draft would be updated further following the outcomes of other agenda items considered at the same meeting. The purpose of the report was to present a draft Annual Report for consideration by the Standards Committee for future reference to Full Council.

Under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Standards Committee, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, must make an Annual Report to the Authority in respect of that year. Attached at Appendix 1 to the report was the draft Standards Committee Annual Report for consideration and approval.

With no comments or queries raised by the Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer / Head of Democratic Services confirmed that the Committee was content to amend the draft to reflect the Committee's satisfaction, following assessment, that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders had been met.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the draft Annual Report attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved and forwarded to Full Council.

(2) T H A T delegated authority be granted to the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Chair of the Standards Committee to include the additional comments made at the meeting in order to finalise the Annual Report before submission to Full Council.

(3) T H A T a copy of the finalised report, following presentation to Full Council, be forwarded to each Vale of Glamorgan Town and Community Council Clerk and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Reasons for decision

(1) In compliance with the requirements of Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

- (2) In order to insert additional comments into the Annual Report as discussed at the meeting.
- (3) For information.

Attached as Appendix: Report to Standards Committee – 10th June, 2024

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 10 June 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Draft Standards Committee Annual Report
Purpose of Report:	To present a draft Annual Report for consideration by the Standards Committee
Report Owner:	D. Marles, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	K. Bowen, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	No consultation is required
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for the Standards Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 Standards Committee, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, must make an Annual Report to the Authority in respect of that year. • Attached at Appendix 1 to this report is the draft Standards Committee Annual Report for consideration and / or approval. 	

Recommendations

1. T H A T the Standards Committee consider and approve the draft Annual Report attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
2. T H A T the draft Annual Report, once approved by the Committee, be forwarded to the Full Council.

Reason for Recommendations

- 1&2.** In compliance with the requirements of Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

1. Background

1.1 Under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 the Standards Committee has a duty, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year, to make an Annual Report to its Local Authority in respect of that year.

1.2 Other requirements under the Act are as below:

- The Annual Report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year.
(3) In particular, the report must include a summary of—
(a) what has been done to discharge the general and specific functions conferred on the committee by section 54 or 56;
(b) reports and recommendations made or referred to the committee under Chapter 3 of this Part;
(c) action taken by the committee following its consideration of such reports and recommendations;
(d) notices given to the committee under Chapter 4 of this Part.
- (4) An annual report by a standards committee of a county council or county borough council in Wales 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.
- (5) 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.
- (6) A relevant authority must consider each annual report made by its standards committee before the end of 3 months beginning with the day on which the authority receives the report.
- (7) The function of considering the report may be discharged only by the relevant authority (and accordingly is not a function to which section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 applies).

- (8) In this section “financial year” means a period of 12 months ending with 31st March.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Committee is requested to consider and approve the draft Annual Report attached at Appendix 1. The report refers to the work of the Standards Committee during 2023/24 and various actions taken following consideration of reports presented to the Committee during the year.
- 2.2** As referred to in bullet point 2 of paragraph 1.2, the Standards Committee must include a statement in the Annual Report of the extent to which leaders of political groups on the Council have complied with their duties under Section 52A(1). The Standards Committee have requested the attendance of the political group leaders at the meeting on 10th June, 2024 and will determine following discussions under Part I and Part II of the agenda compliance with the duty and comment on the extent to which the duty has been complied with in the Annual Report as appropriate.
- 2.3** Following the approval of the draft Annual Report, the Report will be referred to Full Council as required by the legislation.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives. It is intended that the Draft Report aims to promote that role.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** None as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** None as a direct result of this report.

Employment

- 5.2** None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** The Standards Committee have a duty to present an Annual Report to the Local Authority as required under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

6. Background Papers

[Minutes of Standards Committee meetings](#) – available on the Council’s website.

STANDARDS COMMITTEE
ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

Foreword by the Chair of the Standards Committee

This is the second annual report of the Standards Committee's Annual Reports as required under Section 63 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ("the Act").

Section 63 of the Act provides that as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of each financial year the Standards Committee of a relevant Authority must make an Annual Report to the Authority in respect of that year. The Annual Report must describe how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year. "The Act " also states that the Annual report must also include the Committee's assessment of the extent to which Leaders of Political Groups on the Vale Council have complied with their duties under Section 52(a)(i) during the financial year and may include recommendations to the Authority about any matter in respect of which the Committee has functions. The Annual Report is to be reported to the Authority and the relevant Authority must consider each Annual Report before the end of three months beginning with the day on which the Authority received the Report.

This Annual Report which therefore covers the period from April 2023 to March 2024 provides information to the Council about the work carried out by the Committee during these past 12 months and identifies particular issues that have arisen. .

The Standards Committee is committed to promoting high standards of ethical conduct among Elected Members, Co-opted Members and officers in order to maintain public confidence in local government. The Standards Committee also has a responsibility for Code of Conduct matters for Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members of the Standards Committee, Elected Members and officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Elected Members and Clerks of Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan for their advice and support throughout the last 12 months and in particular the officers for the support provided to the Standards Review Panel in undertaking the review detailed at paragraph 3.2 (x) of this report.

At the time of writing this report the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services at the Vale of Glamorgan Council, Debbie Marles, has been appointed Director of Governance and Legal Services and Monitoring Officer for Cardiff Council and will shortly be taking up her position there. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank Debbie on behalf of the Committee for the support and sound advice given to myself and the Committee during and outside of the meetings, as required. We wish Debbie all the best in her new position.

Finally, I hope that this report proves an interesting read.

Richard Hendicott
Chair of Standards Committee 2023/24

1. INTRODUCTION

The following paragraphs provide details of the Terms of Reference, Membership of the Standards Committee, its work in the last 12 months and future working arrangements and methods.

1.1 **Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee** (as contained within the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution)

- (1) To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives.
- (2) To assist Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives to observe the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (3) To advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (4) To monitor the operation of the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (5) To advise, train or arrange to train Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (6) To grant dispensations to Councillors, Co-Opted Members and church and parent governor representatives from requirements relating to interests set out in the Members' Code of Conduct.
- (7) To deal with any reports from a case tribunal or interim case tribunal, and any report from the Monitoring Officer on any matter referred to that officer by the Public Services Ombudsman.
- (8) To exercise (1) to (7) above in relation to the Community Councils wholly or mainly in its area and the Members of those community councils.
- (9) To overview complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations.
- (10) To make an Annual Report to Full Council describing how the Committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year.
- (11) To monitor compliance by political leaders of the above duties and provide advice, training or arrange to train Leaders of political groups.

1.2 **Structure and Membership of the Standards Committee**

The composition and membership of the Standards Committee is prescribed by the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 (As Amended). The

Standards Committee comprises of five independent Members (persons who have no connection with the Local Authority).

Five Independent Members:

R. Alexander

P. Hallett (resigned in March 2024 advert placed in a local newspaper and on the Council's website for a new Independent Member.

Standards Appointment Panel to be convened following receipt of applications)

R. Hendicott

L. Tinsley

G. Watkins

Town and Community Council representative

Councillor P. Summers (appointed June 2023)

Vale of Glamorgan Council Members

Councillors R.M. Birch, J.E. Charles and C.P. Franks.

Independent Members and the Town and Community Council (TCC) representative of the Standards Committee serve a term of office of between 4-6 years, although they are eligible to serve two consecutive terms of office with the second term not exceeding four years. Elected Members on the Committee are appointed annually by the Council at the Council's Annual Meeting, which usually takes place in May each year and are appointed until the next Local Government Elections unless they cease to be a Member of the Council. They too can be re-appointed for one further consecutive term.

2. HOW MANY TIMES HAS THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MET IN 2022/23

The Standards Committee under legislation is required to meet at least once annually in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. The Committee meets on a scheduled quarterly basis or as business is required, for example where additional special meetings are arranged to deal with specific matters, including hearings.

During the Municipal year 2023/24 the Standards Committee met on six occasions: 8th June 2023, 13th July 2023, 28th September 2023, 23rd November 2023, 2nd February 2024 and 8th March 2024. The Committee's work programme for the Municipal year 2023/24 can be found [here](#) and its work programme for 2024/25 which was approved by the Committee on 8th March 2024 can be found as Appendix A to this report.

Agendas are published within five days (including weekends) of the date of the meeting. Also during the year the Standards Committee agreed for a Panel of three Independent Members to undertake a review in relation to comments made at Full Council meeting on 5th December, 2022 in respect of the conviction of an former Councillor at Newport Crown Court in November

2022. Further details in respect of this review can be found later in this document.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Code of Conduct can be found at Section 19 of the [Constitution](#). Appendix 1 to Section 19 provides details of the principles of public life which are: Selflessness, Honesty, Integrity and Propriety, Duty to Uphold the law, Stewardship, Objectivity in Decision-Making, Equality and Respect, Openness, Accountability and Leadership.

Appendix 2 to Section 19 (which can be found in the above link to the Constitution) details the protocol of standards of conduct expected by Members within the Vale of Glamorgan Council in dealing with each other. This protocol is to be read in conjunction with the Members' Code of Conduct and the Member / Officer Protocol.

3. THE WORK OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE IN 2023–24

3.1 The work of the Standards Committee in 2023-24, as can be seen from the Committee's Work Programme as referred to above, is significant and includes reports such as :

- Applications for Dispensation;
- Reports of the Monitoring Officer meeting with TCCs' Clerks;
- Observation visits by Independent Members;
- Reports of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW);
- National Standards Committees Chairs Forum Wales;
- Matters referred under the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure;
- Complaints referred by the Ombudsman following an Investigation;
- Consideration of the Terms of Reference of a Review Panel;
- Feedback reports following the attendance of the Chair at the National Standards Committees Chairs Forum;
- Feedback reports from the Monitoring Officer following meetings of the All Wales Monitoring Officer Group.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Debbie Marles, the Deputy Monitoring Officer / Operational Manager Legal Services Victoria Davidson and the Democratic and Scrutiny Services team provide advice and support at regular intervals in respect of the Standards Committee and Code of Conduct matters.

3.2 The following paragraphs detail further work of the Committee during the year.

(i) Applications for Dispensation

Dispensation applications from Elected Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and TCCs within the Vale are presented to the Committee for consideration under the Standards Committee's statutory powers to grant dispensations to Members with a personal and prejudicial interest in a matter. Once approved this allows

Councillors to participate in a decision regarding that matter, in appropriate circumstances as are set out in the statutory regulations. During the course of the year a number of dispensations were granted to allow Members to actively participate in decision-making and to ensure their voice and the voice of their constituents was not lost as a result of any prejudicial interest. In conjunction with the Chair of Standards Committee, the Monitoring Officer has a delegated authority to consider, refuse or approve an application should she choose to do so.

Applicants are also advised that they are able to attend the Standards Committee meeting to present their application should they wish to do so. Details of the applications that have been dealt with over the last six years can be viewed as part of the minutes of the meetings of the Standards Committee which are available on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website at https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/Council-Structure/minutes_agendas_and_reports/minutes/standards/standards.aspx

Recommendation from last year's Annual Report –

In last year's Annual report the Standards Committee recommended that all Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council's be advised to ensure that applications for dispensations are received at least seven clear days before a meeting, and on the appropriate proforma, to enable the applications to be despatched with the agenda. Our thanks to the Elected Members for their support during the year in this regard.

(ii) Observations by Independent Members of the Standards Committee

Having regard to its role and function as referred to in 1.1(1) above, the Standards Committee agreed that Independent Members of the Committee would observe meetings of the Vale of Glamorgan Council (March 2018) and TCC meetings (March 2019) during each Municipal year with a view to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct. Feedback reports received are presented at Standards Committee meetings by the Independent Members of the Standards Committee, with any specific observations that require discussion or further action being discussed by the Monitoring Officer with the Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the Clerk and / or Chair of the TCC. Following a Committee decision in March 2022, the Committee after receiving advice from the Monitoring Officer agreed that as a number of Senior Council Officers and Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officers attend Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings that they be requested to report to the Monitoring Officer any matters regarding Code of Conduct and Governance that may require attention and / or suggestions for improvement.

With regard to observations of TCC meetings the Standards Committee also recently agreed that where no significant issues are reported following visits, that TCC observations take place on a biennial basis. However, it is accepted that during any year the Monitoring Officer can ask for a TCC to be visited if she considers there to be a need to do so.

The Monitoring Officer also provides TCC Clerks with an overview of observations undertaken at the Monitoring Officer and Clerks meetings which are held on a six monthly basis. Chairs of Vale of Glamorgan Council Committees and Clerks of TCCs are advised by Democratic Services of the dates of the meetings the Independent Member intends observing in order that arrangements for the agenda and the link to the virtual meeting or the venue and date of the in person meeting can be forwarded to the Independent Member in time for the meeting. Good practice emanating from the observation visits and general good practice, advice and support is also shared by the Monitoring Officer at the six monthly meetings.

To assist with observation visits a proforma was agreed which can be found attached as an appendix to this report. The proforma provides the Independent Member with a list of questions to consider when undertaking such visits. A schedule of visits is maintained within Democratic Services.

A lessons learned report following the visits to all 26 TCCs in 2023/24 was presented to the Standards Committee on 2nd February, 2024 with Independent Members for the majority of TCCs visited reporting very favourable comments on how the meetings were managed and run. Most meetings it was noted had been managed very well with Clerks providing advice as appropriately required and not usurping the role of the Member. Many Chairs had also managed their meetings well with decisions being clearly relayed during the meetings for all to understand. Although one or two meetings viewed recorded tensions between some Members and a lack of understanding relating to declarations of interest and lack of clarity with regard to recommendations, on the whole such comments were only attributed to one or two Councils. The Independent Members of the Standards Committee have noted the marked improvements that have been made.

(iii) Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks

As mentioned above the Monitoring Officer holds meetings with Clerks of TCCs, usually on a six monthly basis, to provide opportunities for discussion of matters of mutual concern, to have regard to the principles of standards in public life and to provide networking opportunities. The Chair of the Standards Committee also attended one of the meetings.

Reports of the Clerks meetings with the Monitoring Officer are provided to the Standards Committee following the meetings taking place.

Feedback received to date following the meetings is that the meetings are both useful and informative and a frank exchange of views shared which Clerks are grateful to the Monitoring Officer for hosting.

(iv) Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts

These reports provide the Committee with details relating to the functions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman) throughout the year and also details of financial management.

(v) Received and Considered Case Decisions of the Adjudication Panel for Wales

Reports from the Adjudication Panel for Wales are regularly reported to the Standards Committee as and when available.

(vi) All Wales Standards Committee Forum

The All Wales Standards Forum is a body for the sharing of good practice and the co-ordination of activity however, it is not a formal decision-making body. The agendas for the Forum meetings are prepared by the Monitoring Officers Group (MOG) with members of the Forum being able to suggest items for future business. Meetings of the Forum are to be held once or twice per year. The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee were keen to be part of the all-Wales Forum and reports on the work and discussions of the Forum are reported to the Standards Committee by the Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Standards Committee for information and consideration as appropriate.

(vii) Local Dispute Resolution Procedure

The Standards Committee noted that the Local Resolution Protocol adopted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council on 25th June, 2014 and amended on 26th September, 2018 continues to provide a helpful process for resolving relatively low level behavioural complaints made by Vale of Glamorgan Council Members about other Members in a timely and proportionate way. There was one matter dealt with under the Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure during the year.

The Standards Committee have also encouraged TCCs to adopt their own Local Dispute Resolution Protocol using the model developed by One Voice Wales in consultation with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

(viii) Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“the Act”) and Political Group Leaders’ Duty

The above Act has been a major piece of legislation for Local Authorities in Wales with some extra duties being placed on the Standards Committee within Section 63 of the Act as mentioned in my foreword at the beginning of this report. Section 62 of the Act has also placed a further duty on Political Group Leaders in relation to standards of conduct. The Act states that the Leader of a Political Group must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members of the Group and must co-operate with the Council’s Standards Committee (and any sub-committee of the Committee) in the exercise of the Standards Committee functions. The Section also provides that the Standards Committee must also monitor compliance of Leaders of Political Groups with their duties under Section 52(a)(i) of the 2000 Act and advise, train or arrange to train Leaders of Political Groups about matters relating to those duties.

Having regard to the requirements of the Act, the Standards Committee meet with Group Leaders following the Council’s Annual Meeting and where considered appropriate meetings with Group Leaders and the Chair of the Standards Committee may also take place. An example Proforma to assist Group Leaders in exercising their duty, was also agreed which once completed is forwarded to the Monitoring Officer and thereafter reported to the Standards Committee and referred to in the Annual Report.

The Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Chair of Standards Committee, will also continue to brief Independent Members similarly to political Group Leaders on matters to ensure that standards of conduct are achieved to a high standard.

The proforma that has been developed to assist Group Leaders under the Section 62 duty may also include any further information provided by the Monitoring Officer such as the number of concerns or complaints raised during the year, together with details of the Group Leaders’ responses.

Following consideration of the pro-formas submitted by Group Leaders, as well as discussions held with the same, the Standards Committee resolved that this Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2023-24 be amended to reflect the Committee’s satisfaction that the statutory duties placed on Group Leaders have been met.

(ix) Complaints / PSOW Investigation reports

The Standards Committee also considers specific complaints that are formally referred to the Standards Committee by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) as and when received. However, at each Standards Committee meeting, under the Part II item of the

agenda, the Monitoring Officer provides an overview to the Standards Committee of the up to date position regarding, if any, complaints / concerns received from the Public Services Ombudsman, not yet in the public domain, that are made against Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and / or TCCs alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct

The Monitoring Officer provides an overview of the complaints which may or may not end up for consideration by the Standards Committee it being noted that the PSOW may decide that is it not appropriate for an investigation to take place.

During 2023/24 two reports following an investigation by the PSOW have been received, one in relation to a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor the other in relation to a TCC Councillor with hearings by the Standards Committee to be arranged prior to the Council's August recess.

(x) Standards Committee Panel

As mentioned earlier in this report in January 2023 the Standards Committee agreed to establish a Panel, to consider conducting a review, following a request at Full Council on 5th December, 2022 where a Member asked whether the Leader was prepared to undertake an inquiry in relation to a former Vale of Glamorgan Councillor who had recently been found guilty of offences before the Newport Crown Court on 25th November, 2022. A report was subsequently submitted to the Standards Committee in January 2023 with the Committee being asked to consider –

- whether to undertake a review having regard to the comments made at the Full Council meeting in December 2022,
- whether the Standards Committee consider a review to be appropriate,
- and if so, to consider establishing a Panel to undertake the review with Panel membership consisting of three Independent Members and that the Panel be convened to consider the Terms of Reference of such a review, with the Terms of Reference to be reported for consideration to the Standards Committee.

The Standards Committee approved a Terms of Reference for the Panel on 8th June, 2023 with the Panel's review report being considered by the Standards Committee on 2nd February, 2024 where the following was resolved –

(1) T H A T the recommendations of the Standards Committee Review Panel Report be approved as below, that –

- DBS checks be applied for within two weeks of Elected Members (and relevant Scrutiny Committee Co-opted Members with voting rights) being appointed to office and/or within two weeks of any renewals being required, and that the candidate handbook be amended accordingly.

- All Elected Members receive Code of Conduct refresher training midway through their elected term of office and be part of the ongoing Member Development.
- It should be a requirement that each Member should undertake any mandatory training within one month of taking office.
- The training should specifically cover the risk of any behaviour occurring in the future which would be in breach of the Code of Conduct, efforts should be made to ensure that 100% of the workforce know of the Whistleblowing Policy, possibly by including it in the induction and refresher packs.

(2) T H A T the personal information contained within the Review Panel Report be redacted prior to the report being placed in the public domain.

(3) T H A T the resolution above, for all staff to be made aware of the Whistleblowing Policy and for the policy to be a part of the Staff Induction and Refresh Programme, be referred to the Governance and Audit Committee.

(4) T H A T the above resolutions, together with the Review Panel Report, be referred to Cabinet.

Reasons for decisions

(1) Following consideration of the report and the discussions at the meeting.

(2) Having regard to the personal information contained within the report.

(3&4) For consideration.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 21st March, 2024 considered the resolutions of the Standards Committee and

RESOLVED – T H A T the recommendations proposed from Standards Committee on 2nd February, 2024 be agreed to ensure that all Members were 100% compliant in terms of DBS Checks and adherence to the Code of Conduct.

Of further note is the fact that the training aspect with regard to recommendation 3 above, was reported by the Monitoring Officer to the Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting on 5th February, 2024 when that Committee considered the Council's Whistleblowing Annual Report. The Governance and Audit Committee resolved that the recommendation of the Standards Committee for all staff to be made aware of the Whistleblowing Policy and for the Policy to be a part of the Staff Induction and Refresh Programme be agreed and that the Whistleblowing Policy be considered as part of the review of mandatory training for staff, and for the matter to be referred to the Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

The Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20th March, 2024 duly noted the resolutions of the Governance and Audit Committee.

4. OTHER ASPECTS

4.1 Elected Member Induction and Training

- (i) As mentioned in last year's Annual Report 2022/23 the Local Government elections in Wales took place in May 2022. A comprehensive training programme had been considered by the Standards Committee prior to the elections in May 2022. The comprehensive induction programme was for Elected Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council however, the Monitoring Officer had also commissioned Code of Conduct / Ethical Standards training from One Voice Wales for all TCCs.

The training included remote and in person attendance sessions with recordings of the sessions also being made available for later use. All Co-opted Members with voting rights (which includes Members of the Standards Committee) also took part in this induction and training programme.

- (ii) Training was also provided by the Monitoring Officer to the TCC representative on the Standards Committee following their appointment to the Committee.
- (iii) Through the auspices of the Standards Committee the Monitoring Officer also offers Group Leaders opportunities to identify any additional training or refresher training, as required, with a session on personal and prejudicial interests following a request from a Group Leader having been delivered for one political group during the year.

4.2 Future Priorities

As mentioned earlier within this report, the Standards Committee have developed and agreed their Forward Work Programme for 2024/25 which can be found at Appendix A to this report and which also details the dates of future meetings. Dates of future meetings of the Committee can also be found on the Council's website at

[https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/ Committee%20Reports/Co mmittee%20Information/Calendar-of-Meetings/2023-24/23-06-12-Updated.pdf](https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Calendar-of-Meetings/2023-24/23-06-12-Updated.pdf)

The Standards Committee will continue to –

- consider applications for dispensations;
- promote and maintain high standards of conduct – including working with Group Leaders, Independent Elected Members, TCC Elected Members and Clerks;
- share good practice and seek continuous improvement at Vale of Glamorgan and TCC meetings, as appropriate;
- share good practice and maintain discussions with the All Wales Standards Forum;

- play a key role in the development of future induction programmes for Elected and Co-opted Members,
- respond where appropriate to any consultation / and or reports of the PSOW as required.