

Standards and Ethics Committee Annual Report 2024/25

Cardiff Council



Ten General Principles of Public Life

Selflessness – members should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.	Personal judgement – members may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.
Honesty and integrity – members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly, and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.	Respect for others – members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.
Objectivity – members should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefit.	Duty to uphold the law – members should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.
Accountability – members should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.	Stewardship – members should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently, and in accordance with the law.
Openness – members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.	Leadership – members should promote and support these principles by leadership, and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.
<i>“Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life</i>	

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Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Standards and Ethics Committee's Annual Report for 2024/25, which outlines the Committee's work in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct across Cardiff Council and its Community Councils.

This year, the Committee continued to operate within a strengthened statutory framework, following the implementation of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. We have embraced our enhanced responsibilities, including the duty to assess political group leaders' compliance with their obligations to promote ethical conduct. I am grateful to the Committee's Working Group for its thoughtful recommendations on how we can better support and evaluate this important duty.

Highlights of our work include the review of the Cardiff Undertaking, the Member Behaviours Survey, and the revised Whistleblowing Policy. We also continued our engagement with Community Councils and contributed to national discussions through the Standards Committee Chairs Forum.

We also continued our role as the Standards Sub-Committee for the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee (SEWCJC), supporting its ethical framework and ensuring that its members uphold the same high standards expected across local government. As the SEWCJC moves towards establishing its own Standards Sub-Committee, we remain committed to supporting a smooth transition and sharing best practice.

I am pleased to report that the overall number of complaints received has decreased compared to previous years, and that the Local Resolution Protocol was not required during this reporting period. This reflects positively on the conduct of Members and the effectiveness of the training and support provided.

We welcomed new Independent Members to the Committee this year, whose diverse backgrounds and expertise have enriched our discussions. I would also like to thank those Members who have stepped down for their valuable contributions, and acknowledge the continued commitment of our existing Members.

As Chair, I remain committed to ensuring that the Committee provides robust oversight, constructive challenge, and meaningful support to all Members. I would like to thank my fellow Committee Members, the Monitoring Officer, and supporting officers for their professionalism and diligence throughout the year.

Continued thanks are also due to the Councillors who, overall, conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner, helping to uphold the standards expected of public office.

We look forward to continuing our work in 2025/26, guided by our principles and focused on maintaining public confidence in local democracy.

Jason Bartlett

Chair of the Standards and Ethics Committee

The Role of the Standards and Ethics Committee

The Committee operates within a statutory framework and the following terms of reference:

- (a) To monitor and scrutinise the ethical standards of the Authority, its Members, employees and any associated providers of the Authority's services, and to report to the Council on any matters of concern.
- (b) To advise the Council on the content of its Ethical Code and to update the Code as appropriate.
- (c) To advise the Council on the effective implementation of the Code including such matters as the training of Members and employees on the Code's application.
- (d) To consider and determine the outcome of complaints that Councillors and Co-opted Members have acted in breach of the Code in accordance with procedures agreed by the Standards Committee, including the imposition of any penalties available to the Committee.
- (e) To oversee and monitor the Council's whistleblowing procedures and to consider ethical issues arising from complaints under the procedure and other complaints.
- (f) To grant or refuse requests for dispensations in respect of Members' interests under the Members Code of Conduct in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions.
- (g) To undertake those functions in relation to community councils situated in the area of the Council and members of those community councils which are required by law.
- (h) To recommend to Council and the Cabinet any additional guidance on issues of probity.
- (i) To hear and determine any complaints of misconduct by Members or a report of the Monitoring Officer, whether on reference from the Ombudsman or otherwise.
- (j) To recommend the provision to the Monitoring Officer of such resources as he/she may require for the performance of his/her duties.
- (k) To monitor compliance by political group leaders with their duties in relation to Member conduct (under section 52A(1) of the Local Government Act 2000), and to advise, train or arrange training for political group leaders in relation to those duties.

All Members of the Committee will be required to undertake relevant training to enable them to properly discharge their duties.

The Committee has identified its major role as being to:

- Promote and maintain high standards of conduct by County Councillors, Community Councillors and Co-opted Members.
- Provide support, advice and training for County Councillors and Community Councillors on conduct and personal interests.
- Monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct and the governance of the Council.
- Hear and determine any complaints referred by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
- Provide advice and guidance on the whistleblowing procedure, constitutional, protocols and ethical issues.

The Committee operates on the clear understanding that Elected Members that sit on the Committee are independent of political allegiance and that all discussions and decisions are taken with ethical principles at the forefront. The Committee is mindful that not all political groups are represented on the Committee and welcomes attendance by all Members at its meetings and is happy to receive contributions from those groups not so represented. The Committee wishes to do all it can to support Elected Members and Co-Opted Members in their role.

The Committee's Work in 2024/25

Group Leaders' Reports

On 16 July 2024, the committee received and considered reports from political group leaders on the discharge of their statutory duties relating to standards of conduct of members of their groups (introduced under Part 4 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021).

Reports completed by the leaders of three of the four political groups represented on the Council, included mandatory training attendance figures, with individual group members' training records for the Committee's consideration. Group leaders and whips were also invited to attend the Committee meeting to discuss their reports with the Committee.

The Committee noted the reports setting out how Group Leaders had discharged their duty and the Committee confirmed that the Group Leaders had complied with their statutory duties. The Committee also identified some concerns regarding the application of the legislation and determined to establish a working group to identify how the Standards & Ethics Committee were able to effectively assess Group Leaders' compliance with their statutory duty pursuant to Section 52A of the LGA 2000.

Standards & Ethics Committee Working Group

In response to the concerns identified on 16 July 2024 the Committee resolved to set up a Working Group to consider representations from its Members in respect of the relevant Sections of the Local Government Act 2000 and its associated guidance.

The Committee agreed the following Terms of Reference:

- Receive training from the Monitoring Officer on the contents of Sections 52A and 52B of the LGA 2000 and the associated guidance;
- Consider representations made from Members of the Standards & Ethics Committee and Group Leaders relating to the above;
- Report back to the 16 October 2024 meeting of the Standards & Ethics Committee having regard to the aforementioned representations in respect of the current arrangements for assessing and how this is assessed by the Standards & Ethics Committee pursuant to Section 52B of the LGA 2000 and any suggested amendments to the same; and
- The Chair of the Working Group to have a broad discretion to extend the Terms of Reference.

Having considered the representations received, all issues within its terms of reference and correspondence the Working Group concluded that the pro forma for Leader's Reports is useful and should be used to provide such reports to the

Committee subject to the removal of the initial statistical section, and for such information to be reported separately as part of the Monitoring Officer's Report.

The representations made regarding retaining confidentiality of the completed proformas by the Group Leaders was supported together with the frequency of Group Leaders attending Committee.

When reviewing the correspondence received by the Working Group it was suggested that Committee receive a separate report detailing a Protocol setting out how the Monitoring Officer would correspond/interact with Members and Group Leaders on concerns raised pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Conservative Group submitted correspondence raising their serious concerns about the standards regime, and that they remained dissatisfied with how the Standards and Ethics Committee handled the matter, and with the outcomes of the Working Group.

The four recommendations of the Working Group were considered and approved by the Standards and Ethics Committee at its meeting on 22 January 2025.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Letter & Annual Report 2023/24

The Committee considered the Annual Letter 2023/24 for Cardiff Council issued by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ('the PSOW') together with the PSOW's Annual Report 2023/24. The committee also had the opportunity to provide a response to the consultation document in respect of Recommendation 2 of the Independent Review.

The Annual Letter (2023/24) for Cardiff Council was issued by the PSOW and was received on 9 September 2024. The Annual Letter provides an overview of all complaints considered by the PSOW during the year 2023/24 followed by an analysis of the complaints received in relation to Cardiff Council. Further information in relation to the Code of Conduct complaints considered by the Ombudsman is contained within The Ombudsman's Annual Report 2023/24

The Consultation sought the views of a range of organisations including Local Authorities, Community and Town Councils, Fire and Rescue Authorities and Police and Crime Panels in Wales to three questions regarding how the PSOW notified an accused member of a complaint.

The Committee agreed to provide relevant observations and comments to the consultation.

The Cardiff Undertaking

An update report on Cardiff Undertaking was presented to the Committee meeting, on 22 January 2025. The Committee was recommended to give a preliminary view on whether the Undertaking should be amended or withdrawn; and to instruct the Monitoring Officer to re-consult with Group Leaders and non-grouped Members. The Cardiff Undertaking that had been adopted by full Council. Although it was regarded as binding upon all Council members, there are no prescribed mechanisms for its enforcement; and individual Members cannot be compelled to give the Undertaking.

Group Leaders and Non-Grouped Members were consulted on their views with minimal additional feedback being received. However, concerns regarding the Cardiff Undertaking which had also previously been submitted to the Committee on behalf of the Conservative group were scheduled to be re-considered at its meeting on 30 April 2025.

Member's Behaviours Survey

In January 2025 the Committee considered the outcomes of the Member's Behaviours Survey undertaken in 2024. The Standards and Ethics Committee approved a series of questions for a Behaviours Survey which was agreed to be launched in 2023-24 with the outcomes being reported back to the Committee. The Survey provided an opportunity to identify if Members had experienced or observed any unacceptable behaviours and to confirm that the reporting mechanisms were understood and used appropriately.

A total of 61 responses were received equating to a 65.59% response rate with at least 45% each of the respective groups providing responses which enabled a significant level of assurance in the outcomes of this survey.

The Survey identified that of respondents who had experienced unacceptable behaviours:

- that 40 or 65.57% had not experienced any bullying behaviours. This showed a small improvement when compared to the 2022 Exit survey which identified that 38% of those respondents had experienced bullying. When asked about the nature of bullying experienced, 13 respondents confirmed that these were verbal in nature. Those who experienced indirect bullying which included being the target of rumours, graffiti, exclusion from a group (6) or on-line bullying (6) account for around a third of the total respectively.
- a small proportion of respondents (6 or 10%) confirmed that they experienced some form of discrimination. This reflected a significant improvement since the 2022 Exit survey where 21% of respondents identified that they had experienced discrimination. Two thirds (4) of those who experienced discrimination specified that they were subjected to age related discrimination. A much lower proportion (1) cited other forms of discrimination that they experienced.

- a relatively small proportion (8 or 13%) confirmed that they experienced harassment. Although there was no direct comparison to the experience of harassment in the 2022 Exit Survey, the level of “other unacceptable behaviours” which included harassment was 26%. Taking this into account this still represented a significant improvement in the experience of unacceptable behaviours. Those who experienced harassment the majority (5) cited that they were subjected to ‘Verbal harassment’. More than a third (3) stated that the harassment they experienced ‘Made life difficult’ whilst a quarter (2) stated that they had been subjected to inappropriate comments. None of the respondents cited being subjected to sexual harassment.

The results show that nearly half of all respondents (30 out of 61 or 49%) confirmed that they had observed or witnessed unacceptable behaviours. Nearly half (14) of those who had observed or witnessed unacceptable behaviours cited seeing bullying behaviours. A lower proportion stated that they have observed or witnessed harassment (10) and discriminatory behaviours (6).

The Survey identified that (53 or 86%) of the respondents considered that they had a duty to report incidents. The Survey confirmed that (46) of the respondents were aware of the reporting process although (11) confirmed that they were unsure. Overall, the results show that the majority of those who were subjected to unacceptable behaviours have informally reported their experiences. Only a small proportion of respondents stated that they had not informally reported their experiences and gave various reasons why they had chosen not to do so.

Only a small proportion of respondents (5 or 20%) who experienced unacceptable behaviours – bullying harassment and discrimination confirmed that they had formally reported it. In the 2022 Exit Survey the reporting levels were significantly higher with approximately 66% of unacceptable behaviours being reported.

The Committee determined that mid-term refresher training targeted on areas that were identified in the survey for possible areas for improvement. The Monitoring officer agreed to consult with the political groups regarding how this refresher training best be delivered and any key issues that the groups identified as beneficial for inclusion. The dates for the refresher training would be integrated into the Member Development Programme that was being developed.

Review Of Whistleblowing Policy And Reports

There have been no significant changes to the whistleblowing legislation (the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) or best practice guidance since the policy was substantively revised in 2014. However, a number of amendments were proposed to be made to the Whistleblowing Policy in relation to:

- (i) Clarify certain points identified through operational experience;
- (ii) Address the recommendations of a recent audit review of the Council’s whistleblowing arrangements;
- (iii) to reflect other developments, such as duties to combat modern slavery and human trafficking.

Proposed revisions included:

- A simple definition of the term 'whistleblowing'
- updating the list of the types of concerns which may be raised under the Policy to include reference to bribery, tax evasion, unethical employment practices, such as modern slavery and human trafficking, and deliberate concealment of any of the above, to make clear that workers should raise any such concerns under the Whistleblowing Policy and demonstrate that the Council has appropriate procedures in place to protect anyone raising those types of concerns;
- To emphasise that complaints relating solely to a worker's own personal circumstances or employment should be made under the Council's Resolution Policy, rather than the Whistleblowing Policy; and to make clear, in light of operational experience, that the Whistleblowing Policy should not be seen as a further opportunity to appeal against decisions properly reached under the Resolution or Disciplinary Policies;
- To clarify that any doubts about the scope of the Whistleblowing Policy should be referred to the Monitoring Officer for advice;
- To emphasise that whistleblowers should not suffer any detrimental treatment as a result of raising a concern, explain what this covers and urge workers to immediately report any such treatment to the Monitoring Officer;
- To provide assurance that the Council will seek to limit the number of people who are made aware of a whistleblower's identity, on a strict need to know basis;
- To explain the respective roles and responsibilities of the investigating officer, service area senior officer and the Monitoring Officer in relation to any investigation carried out, the Council's decision on any action to be taken, and notifying the whistleblower of the outcome;
- To clarify the Monitoring Officer's responsibility for ensuring that staff are made aware of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and providing appropriate training;
- To clarify the Monitoring Officer's responsibility for monitoring the progress of investigations;
- To provide that the Committee's review of the Policy is to be informed by feedback which will be invited from whistleblowers;

Consultation was carried out with Directors (on behalf of their staff) and trade unions. No significant concerns were raised, but any further feedback received will be reported to the Committee at its meeting. The Monitoring Officer met with representatives of the Trades Union and presented the proposed revisions to the Whistleblowing Policy on 16 September 2024. The presentation was well received and feedback regarding the proposed Policy was positive.

The Policy is currently publicised through posters in all core Council buildings and on the staff intranet (under the HR A-Z); and is included in the Corporate Induction training plan for all new Council staff. Presentations have been delivered to senior management and individual management teams, and a Manager's Guide leaflet has been issued outlining managers' responsibilities under the Policy.

A new communications and training plan is to be agreed, with the assistance of colleagues in the Communications Team, HR People Services and Cardiff Academy, for implementation when the revised Policy is agreed. The plan will seek to ensure that all staff covered by the Policy (including the staff of Council contractors) and their managers understand the Council's whistleblowing arrangements and feel

confident to report concerns or deal with concerns, as appropriate, under the Policy; and is expected to include:

- (i) An online-training module for all staff, with alternative arrangements for non-PC user staff;
- (ii) Updated guidance for staff and managers to be published on the staff intranet;
- (iii) Ensuring that the Whistleblowing Policy and guidance are published and made accessible to contractors and their staff; and
- (iv) Regular reminders to be issued via staff information bulletins, team meetings and or other appropriate channels.

Personal and Prejudicial Interest Dispensations

The Committee to consider the arrangements for discharging its functions in relation to personal and prejudicial interest dispensation applications submitted under the Members' Code of Conduct, specifically: the Committee's Policy on Dispensations and the Dispensations Application Form.

Guidance from the National Assembly for Wales regarding dispensations states that "the dispensation regime is necessary to perform three functions: to deal with interests that Members share with a large proportion of the public, to allow the proper conduct of business, and to enable the participation rules to be applied to take account of individual circumstances". Given the infrequency of dispensation applications being received, the Committee considered it appropriate for Officers to circulate the documents to Political Whips and Political Group Leaders to serve as a reminder.

South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Standards Sub Committee

The committee continued with its role as Standards Sub-Committee for the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee. The Committee had the responsibility for the standards functions of the CJC and its members, only in so far as they relate to the CJC. However, where a matter relates to a Member's conduct in general, and not specifically to CJC activities, then the Standards Committee of that Member's own council would have responsibility.

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Cardiff Council and the CJC to set out the agreed terms and included provision for any additional costs and liabilities incurred by Cardiff Council to be paid for by the SEWCJC.

The Corporate Joint Committee is expected to fully operational and able to establish its own Standards Sub-Committee from 01 May 2025.

National Standards Committee Chairs Forum– Wales

The Committee was provided with information following a meeting of the national Standards Committees Forum – Wales, and an opportunity to consider the issues raised. The National Standards Committee Chairs Forum met on 24 June 2024 and 27 January 2025.

On 24 June, the meeting was attended by Judge Claire Sharp, the outgoing president of the Adjudication Panel for Wales and her successor Judge Meleri Tudur; Lyn Cadwallader, Paul Egan, Chief and Deputy Chief Executive of One Voice Wales and Michelle Morris, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Judge Sharp provided an insight into her decision-making process when considering whether to permit an appeal against a decision of a Standards Committee. Paul Egan provided information about the resources and support offered to Town and Community Councils and the training that can be provided.

Michelle Morris provided information in relation to the casework undertaken in the 2023/2024 year; the Independent Review and the plan to work with Council's and their Monitoring Officers to review and reissue guidance in relation to Local Resolution Procedures.

On 27 January, the meeting was attended by Pam Lucas, Welsh Government, Local Government Policy Division, Climate Change and Rural Affairs and Michelle Morris, Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Also in attendance were Standards Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs.

Pam Lucas updated the forum on the

- Ethical Framework Review including work relating to Sharing best practice, Progressing the standard in terms of equalities, Media training for Members, Removal of the prohibition of former Local Authority Members to sit on Standards Committees and Potential changes to sanction options.
- Remuneration of Members, explaining that Remuneration of Members was currently within the purview of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW), supported by the Division, however that would be transferred to the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) as of 1 April 2025.

Michelle Morris provided information in relation to the:

- Levels of PSOW casework which remained at a high and sustained level compared to last year.
- outcome of the Independent Review and Recommendation 2 of the Independent report of Dr. McCullough – Practice around notification of a complaint. The 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.

Observation Of Meetings

Independent members of the Committee and the Community Council representative have continued to observe meetings of Full Council and its Committees, as well as Community Council meetings and record their observations using the Committee's standard template form. Observations have been shared with the Chair / Clerk of the relevant meeting and discussed at Standards and Ethics Committee meetings to inform the Committee's work and understand the work of the Council and Community Councils.

Committee members are encouraged to continue attending different Council and Committee meetings for observation and feedback to the Committee.

Senior Officers' Personal Interests Declarations

The Committee reviewed the personal interest declarations made by Senior Officers of the Council, in line with the requirements of the Council's Policy on Officers' Personal Interests and Secondary Employment. Senior Officers' Personal Interests Declaration Forms are held by the Monitoring Officer and officers are asked to update their declarations annually.

The Committee was advised of the new digital system that had been introduced to provide assurance that all declarations are reviewed by the Senior Officers' line managers. This digitalisation of the current paper-based process will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing administrative arrangements for recording declarations of interests and make compliance information available for managers.

Community Councils

The Committee has continued to engage with Community Councils to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within those Councils and build good working relationships with them. Members of the Committee have attended Community Council meetings to familiarise themselves with the work of Community Councils and raise the profile of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

Training

All Cardiff Councillors had completed the mandatory Code of Conduct training. The Committee was pleased to note that, following a number of repeat training sessions on the Code of Conduct delivered by the Monitoring Officer both in person and remotely, with individual sessions offered when necessary. All other mandatory topics were also completed during this year, however the mandatory training will need to be provided for new members elected into office.

Other Topics considered by the Committee

- Registration of Gifts and Hospitality received by Members
- Independent review of investigations by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales into Code of Conduct complaints
- Whistleblowing Reports 2023
- Review of the Protocol For The Use Of Council Hybrid Meetings IT Equipment For Political Group Meetings.
- Town and Community Councils Civility & Respect Pledge
- Appointment of New Independent Member of the Standards & Ethics Committee

Taking Action on Complaints

The Standards and Ethics Committee received quarterly reports from the Monitoring Officer in respect of complaints made about Members' conduct. The Committee monitors the number of complaints and any themes or patterns emerging (but only considers specific details of individual cases if a complaint is formally referred to the Committee by the Monitoring Officer or the Ombudsman.)

During the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025, the Monitoring Officer was notified of a total of 8 complaints made against Members alleging breach of the Code of Conduct. The table below shows an analysis of the complaints reported on a quarterly basis.

Description of Complaint	Q1 Apr–Jun 2024	Q2 Jul-Sep 2024	Q3 Oct-Dec 2024	Q4 Jan-Mar 2025	TOTAL
Member on Member	1	0	0	0	1
Public on Member	3	0	1	0	4
Officer on Member	0	0	0	0	0
Community Councillors	0	2	1	0	3
Total	4	2	2	0	8

The Committee noted that the number of complaints received during 2024/25 (8 in total) was a decrease on the 9 complaints that were received last year (2023/24). This also shows an improvement when compared to previous years (20 in 2021/22 and 13 complaints in 2020/21). An outline of the complaints submitted during each quarter of the year 2024/25 is set out below.

Quarter 1 - 2024/25

During Quarter 1 of 2024/25, covering the period running from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024, a total of 4 complaints alleging a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct were notified to the Monitoring Officer.

- (i) A Councillor from another authority alleged that social media comments made by a Member included derogatory comments about members of the LGBTQIA+ community, which spread misinformation and incited hatred and brought the Council into disrepute. The complaint was considered by the Ombudsman who decided that the Members' comments could reasonably be regarded as political expression and were therefore afforded enhanced protection under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Ombudsman's decision included the following explanation of the legal position: 'Where a complaint relates to the conduct of a councillor who is exercising their right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Ombudsman must carefully consider whether an investigation and any sanction which might ultimately be imposed on the member would be a proportionate interference with those rights. Case law on this issue has found that such interference is only likely to be proportionate if the language used was extremely serious. As outlined above, the right to freedom of expression is to entitle a person to say things

which everyone does not agree with, or which may offend other people. The Member's comments were not directed towards specific persons, and instead appear to relate to generalised groups and organisations. I consider that, while the Member's comments may have offended some, he had an Article 10 right to express his views. As such, any finding of a breach of the Code would amount to a disproportionate interference with the Member's right to freedom of expression.' The Ombudsman decided that, in view of the above, an investigation would not be proportionate or in the public interest. Therefore, the complaint should not be investigated.

- (ii) A member of the public submitted complaints against **three** ward councillors alleging that they had failed to respond to his communications raising issues of concern about disability discrimination. All three complaints were submitted to the Ombudsman, who decided not to investigate any of the complaints, on the basis that, in each case: 'Whilst the Member failing to respond to correspondence may be considered discourteous, it is unlikely to amount to a breach of the Code. Instead, this is likely to relate to the Member's competency in their role or engagement with their constituents, which is a matter for the local electorate to determine through the democratic process.'

Quarter 2 - 2024/25

During Quarter 2 of 2024/25, covering the period running from 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024, a total of 2 complaints alleging a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct were notified to the Monitoring Officer by the Ombudsman.

- (i) The first complaint received in Quarter 2 was a Member-on-Member complaint about conduct at a Council Meeting, the matter has been considered by the Ombudsman and no further investigation will take place, the complaint is now closed.
- (ii) The second complaint received in Quarter 2 was another Member-on Member complaint regarding alleged misconduct over a period of time. The matter has been considered by the Ombudsman, no further investigation will take place and the complaint is now closed.

Quarter 3 - 2024/25

During Quarter 3 of 2024/25, covering the period running from 1st October 2024 to 31st December 2025, a total of 2 complaints alleging a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct was notified to the Monitoring Officer by the Ombudsman.

- (i) The first complaint received in Quarter 3 was a complaint submitted by a Community Councillor alleging that an earlier complaint submitted against them by another Community Councillor of the same Council was vexatious, in breach of Section 6(1)(d) of the Code of Conduct, which states that councillors must not 'make vexatious, malicious or frivolous complaints against other members or anyone who works for, or on behalf of, your authority'.

The complaint was considered by the Ombudsman who found that: 'The complainant did not suggest that the Member had made any other complaints to the Ombudsman about them. Evidence was provided to

support the Member's complaint, and the matter complained about, although not considered serious enough to warrant an investigation, was sufficiently indicative of a potential breach to justify the Ombudsman issuing a reminder to the complainant of her obligations under the Code.

On balance, the Ombudsman considered that these reasons are sufficient that Member's complaint to have been one that was appropriate to bring to the Ombudsman and would not be considered vexatious.' On the above basis, the Ombudsman decided that there was no evidence of a breach of the Code and the complaint should not be investigated. The Ombudsman went on to urge the Councillors to make efforts to repair relationships within the Council for the good of the people they were elected to serve.

- (ii) The second complaint received in Quarter 3 was a complaint submitted by a member of the public about a Cardiff Councillor. The Ombudsman decided to investigate this matter and notified the Monitoring Officer that the details of the complaint must be treated in confidence.

Quarter 4 - 2024/25

During Quarter 4 of 2024/25, covering the period running from 1st January 2025 to 31st March 2025, no complaints alleging a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct were notified to the Monitoring Officer.

Local Resolution

The Committee is pleased to report that the Local Resolution Protocol adopted by Cardiff Council was not required during this reporting period and therefore, no complaints were referred to the Hearings Panel in 2024/25 under the Local Resolution Protocol.

Referrals From the Ombudsman / Adjudication Panel for Wales

During 2024/25, no referrals were made to the Standards and Ethics Committee for determination by either the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

Future Priorities

The Committee regularly reviews its work programme and the following areas have been scheduled for consideration in 2025/26:

- **Code of Conduct Complaints** - To continue to receive quarterly reports on complaints made against Cardiff Members alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- **Observation of Council and Committee Meetings** – to continue to observe proceedings at Council, Committee and Community Council meetings to give feedback on observations and inform the Committee’s work priorities.
- **Gifts and Hospitality** - To continue to monitor the registers of gifts and hospitality received by Members.
- **Senior Officers’ Personal Interests** – to continue to monitor senior officers’ personal interests declarations.
- **Training** - to oversee the delivery and outcomes of the Members Code of Conduct Refresher training.
- **Monitoring compliance with Group Leaders’ statutory duties in relation to Member conduct** - to receive and consider reports from political group leaders about steps taken to discharge their new statutory duties in accordance with the agreed reporting arrangements.
- **Member Briefings** To continue to publish Member Briefings on the work of the Committee, underlining the importance of Member conduct and behaviour.

The Committee recognises the challenging budget position of the Council and the limited resources available for the work of the Committee, and notes that the Committee’s work will be progressed as resources permit.

Committee Membership 2024/25

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS



Jason Bartlett (Chair)

Jason Bartlett worked within the private sector running a number of businesses over a twenty five year period. He studied at the University of Glamorgan completing a post graduate course in Leadership and Management from the ILM (Institute of Leadership and Management). He has been a Magistrate in Cardiff since 2003, serves as a Chair for Social Care Wales on Fitness to Practice and was also appointed as an independent person to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority. He also served on the CHC (Community Health Council) for Cardiff and Vale. Other voluntary work included many years as a lay member for the Royal College of Anaesthetists as well as Chair for his local PACT meetings. Jason was appointed as an Independent Member of the Standards and Ethics Committee in November 2019 and was elected as Chair from June 2022.



**David Mills
(Vice Chair from
January 25)**

David Mills has worked in financial services for over 40 years in a number of senior roles across a variety of disciplines including IT services and operations, systems development and project & programme management. He has a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the University of Wales College Newport. Previously he sat on the governing body of a Cardiff primary school for 15 years, which included 5 years as chair and is currently a community governor at a Cardiff secondary school which he joined in 2011 and where he has also served as chair for 5 years. He has served on or chaired a number of other governing body committees over the years including an improvement group in 2018/19 which developed a range of resources for use by other governors across five Welsh local authorities. David was appointed as an Independent Member of the Standards and Ethics Committee in January 2022.



**Chrissie Nicholls
(Vice Chair until
December 2024)**

Chrissie Nicholls has worked in the public and third sector for 20 years as an experienced senior and project manager for Local Government and a number of National and International charities. Since 2016 she has been working as an independent consultant, providing business development, governance and capacity building support to the third sector, and research and evaluation programmes for local authorities across Wales. She particularly specialises in violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. Originally born in Cardiff, Chrissie studied in Nottingham before moving to London. She returned to Cardiff in 2012 and now lives in the Vale of Glamorgan. In addition to her work, Chrissie is a Trustee for Cancer Research Wales. Chrissie became vice-chair of the Committee on 1st November 2021. Chrissy resigned from the Committee on 19th December 2024.



Rashpal Singh

Rashpal Singh is a qualified and an accredited Psychotherapist / Counsellor. He has practiced in the welfare, counselling, occupational health and employee assistance field for the past 25 years. He has successfully set up his own practice where he continues to deliver counselling, coaching, training, information, advice and guidance service, where a person in any walk of life can get confidential support. Rashpal specialises in stress, anxiety, depression, trauma and includes relationship counselling, work related stress to domestic/physical or psychological abuse. His current client list includes GPs, consultants, psychiatrists, counsellors, psychologists and employees, managers and directors of businesses. He has been the Chairman and one of the Trustees of the Institute of Welfare for the last 5 years and has been a Justice of the Peace for the last 23 years. Rashpal was appointed as an Independent Member of the Standards & Ethics Committee on 23 June 2022.



Louise Evans

Louise Evans is a retired (2018) executive and former member of the leadership team at Grant Thornton UK LLP. Louise became a lay governor on the Board of University of South Wales in 2017, becoming Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee. She was appointed Chair of the Board in 2019 and is Deputy Chair of ChUW (Chairs of Universities Wales). Louise is also a current board member of Merthyr Tydfil College and The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. She is currently also a magistrate. Louise has been non-executive director of No Fit State Circus, Chair (and a Trustee) for Kidney Wales and former non executive board member of UWC Atlantic College. Louise is a former international field hockey umpire and assessor of umpires and a former board member of the Welsh National Hockey Union. Louise was appointed as an Independent Member of the Standards and Ethics Committee in September 2024.



Ruth Davies

A resident of Cardiff since 1989, Ruth is an experienced senior leader in higher education with a background in governance, compliance and risk. Since May 2025 Ruth has been University Secretary at Cardiff Metropolitan University. Prior to that she was Head of Corporate Governance at Cardiff University, providing governance advice and guidance to the senior executive team and the governing body, as well as leading and developing teams responsible for information security, data protection, freedom of information and equality and diversity. Ruth has qualifications spanning law, corporate governance, project management and IT service management. Ruth was appointed as an Independent Member of the Standards and Ethics Committee in January 2025.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBERS

 Councillor Stephen Cunnah	Labour Councillor for the Canton Ward Currently serving on the following committees: • <u>Council</u> • <u>Constitution Committee</u> • <u>Standards & Ethics Committee</u> Outside Bodies: • <u>Chapter (Cardiff) Limited</u>
 Councillor Catriona Brown- Reckless	Conservative Councillor for the Pentyrch and St Fagans Ward Currently serving on the following committees: • <u>Council</u> • <u>Council Appeals Committee</u> • <u>Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee</u> • <u>Standards & Ethics Committee</u>
 Counccillor Imran Latif	Councillor for the Penylan Ward Currently serving on the following committees: • <u>Council</u> • <u>Democratic Services Committee</u> • <u>Constitution Committee</u>

COMMUNITY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE



**Community
Councillor Julia
Charles**

Community Councillor Julia Charles was appointed to the Standards & Ethics Committee at Full Council on 29 September 2022. Julia has been a Member of the Radyr and Morganstown Community Council since September 2017. Julia has a strong background in Human Resources and Learning and Development in Banking and the Civil Services, taking early retirement in October 2023. This knowledge and experience has helped in her Community Council work as Chair of the Finance Committee and a member of the Employment and Allowances Committee. She also held the Chair of the Christmas Working Group arranging Christmas festivities in Radyr and Morganstown during the lockdown and pandemic to ensure that the villages still had meaningful Christmas spirit.

Substitute Community Councillor Representative

Community Councillor Mike Jones-Pritchard was appointed to the Standards & Ethics Committee as the Substitute Community Councillor Representative at Full Council on 29 September 2029. Mike is the Chair of Tongwynlais Community Council.

Attendance Record

The Committee meets quarterly, with additional ad hoc meetings held as required. During 2024/25, the Standards and Ethics Committee met on the following dates:

- 16 July 2024
- 16 Oct 2024
- 22 Jan 2025

COMMITTEE MEMBER	ATTENDANCE MAIN COMMITTEE	
	Possible	Actual
Jason Bartlett (Chair)	3	3
David Mills	3	3
Rashpal Singh	3	3
Chrissy Nicolls**	2	1
Louise Evans	1	1
Ruth Davies***	1	1
Councillor Stephen Cunnah	3	1
Councillor Catriona Brown-Reckless	3	3
Councillor Imran Latif*	2	2

* Resigned from Committee in Nov 2024.

** Resigned from Committee in Dec 2024.

*** Attended as an observer only

Helpful Contacts

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