

## Report on Compliance With the Group Leaders Duty

Report by:	Darren Price		
Political Group:	Plaid Cymru		
No. of members:	38	No. trained on Code:	31 (82%)
For the period:	May 2023 – April 2024		

### Number, Source and Level of Complaints

From	Local Resolution	Public Services Ombudsman			Other
		No Action	Referred to Standards committee	Referred to APW	
Public	0	7	N/A	N/A	
Officers	0	0	0	0	
Councillors	1	0	0	0	

### Steps taken to Promote Compliance (To Be Completed by Group Leader)

Address such matters such as:

- demonstrating personal commitment to and attending and participating in relevant development or training around equalities and standards, including on the Code of Conduct.
- actively encouraging group members to attend relevant development or training around equalities and standards including in relation to the Code of Conduct.
- ensuring nominees to a committee have received the recommended training for participating on that committee;

As Leader of the Council, and the Plaid Cymru Group, ensuring that members maintain standards in public life, in line with the Nolan principles is important to me.

During the year I have encouraged members of my Group who were unable to attend the Code of Conduct session in May 2022 to attend additional training sessions on the Code of Conduct which had been arranged in April and May 2023. An additional 10 Group members attended one of those training sessions, which I also attended.

Of the 7 Plaid Cymru members that have not been able to attend Code of Conduct training in 2022 or 2023, 6 of them have undertaken training prior to this Council term.

For those that were unable to attend the sessions in April or May 2023, I urged them to access online resources that are available to them in terms of refreshing their appreciation of expected standards in public life.

Generally, I believe that my group have a strong grasp of the standards expected of them and we strive to ensure that senior members of the group can advise and support newer members in these matters, often advising in terms of the need to declare interests in Council meetings etc.

As a group, we are also well supported by Council officers who are always prepared to offer advice, often proactively, on the Code.

#### **STEPS TAKEN TO PREVENT POOR BEHAVIOUR**

Address such matters as:

- promoting civility and respect within group communications and meetings and in formal council meetings.
- promoting civility and respect in all online and social media communications.
- supporting informal resolution procedures in the council, and working with the standards committee and monitoring officers to achieve local resolution.
- encouraging a culture within the group which supports high standards of conduct and integrity;

I strive to ensure that every group member feels that their views are being heard. The authority has faced some difficult decisions over that past year, and will continue to do so, as public finances reduce further over the next few years.

I have tried to ensure that discussions around these very sensitive issues are conducted within an environment of civility and respect, and am pleased to report that there have been very few instances where standards have not been met.

A tendency had developed within the group for sometimes complex policy issues to be discussed via our Group's social media platform. This sometimes led to tensions, as members weren't able to articulate themselves in the same way that they would in person. Some felt frustrated and this was reported to me by a number of members. During the year, I therefore clarified the policy development procedure for the group, which aims to ensure that all group members have the opportunity via our regular 'away days' to contribute in person to the Group's strategic direction. I believe this to be an important principle.

I have had reason this year to play my part in one informal resolution procedure between two members from two different political groups, which prevented escalation to the Ombudsman.

#### **STEPS TAKEN TO WORK WITH THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE AND/OR OTHER GROUP LEADERS**

Address such matters as:

- Attending any meeting of the council's standards committee if requested to participate in discussions on Code of Conduct issues.
- Implementing any recommendations from the standards committee about improving standards.
- Working with the standards committee to proactively identify, consider and tackle patterns of inappropriate behavior.
- Working together with other group leaders to collectively support high standards of conduct within the council.

During 2023-24 I have continued to try and change the way that politics takes place within the Council. I continue to push for early cross-party discussions – and inviting members from across the chamber to feed in their ideas. I want all members to feel that they have a contribution to make, and that their views are respected.

I appreciate that members of different political persuasions will not always agree, but I am certain that we can do so in a way which is respectful and maintains standards. Throughout the year, I maintained a respectful relationship with the former Leader of the Opposition, meeting regularly, sometimes informally, to discuss a range of matters. I will seek to develop a similar relationship with the newly elected Leader of the Opposition as we look to respond to a number of challenges to local government services over the next few years.

During the year, I confirmed my willingness to engage with the Council's Standards Committee, and am looking forward to working with members to make any necessary improvements in order to support high standards of conduct.