

CODE OF CONDUCT DATA GATHERING EXERCISE

2022-2023

Section 1 - Code of Conduct Complaints

The Ombudsman's annual report records that in 2022-2023 a total of 4 Code of Conduct complaints were concluded against Town and Community Councillors from Carmarthenshire. This is the same number as in 2021-2022. As the committee is aware however the 2022-2023 figures include 2 cases referred to the committee for determination and which ultimately resulted in the suspension of the 2 councillors in question.

Overall, however the number of concluded complaints remains very low when considered against the overall number of Town and Community Councillors in the County.

There is no obvious pattern of complaints against councillors of particular councils. There were no concluded complaints against more than 1 councillor from the same council.

Section 2 – Dispensation Applications

During the year 2022-2023 the committee received 14 dispensation applications from Town and Community Councillors (including twin-hatted members). All but 1 was granted.

By comparison in 2021-2022 the committee received 3 dispensation applications from Town and Community Councillors. Again, all but one was granted.

The increase in the number of applications is likely to be driven by the May 2022 elections and the lapse of dispensations granted prior to that date.

The proportion of dispensation applications compared to the overall number of councillors continues to be extremely low.

Section 3 – Declarations of Interest

Of the 58 Councils that responded only four (Cynwyl Gaeo, Whitland, Henllanfallteg and Llangain) recorded no declarations of interest.

Thirteen councils recorded 20 or more declarations of interest, with 3 Councils (Pembrey and Burry Port, Llanelli Rural and Llanelli Town) recording 50 or more.

Nine councils recorded between 10 and 20 declarations, the remainder recording under 10.

By comparison, during the year 2021-2022 of the 67 councils that responded, nine councils recorded no declarations of interest and eleven councils recorded twenty or more

declarations. Again three councils recorded fifty or more declarations (Pembrey, Llanelli Rural and Cwmamman Town).

Twelve councils recorded between 10 and 20 declarations during that period , the remaining councils recording less than 10.

Therefore during the last 2 years of the councils that have responded to the survey 86% recorded at least 1 declaration in 2021-2022 and 93% did so in 2022-2023.

When considering these figures it needs to be recognised that the fact a declaration of interest has been made does not necessarily mean the councillor in question has been unable to participate in the relevant council business.

Section 4 – Code of Conduct Training

Twenty one Councils reported that their members had received no code of conduct training during 2022-2023. One Council reported that they were not sure whether any such training had been received. This overall represents 36% of the Councils that responded.

By comparison 36 out of the 67 Councils that responded in 2021-2022 reported that their members either had not received code training during the year or that they were unsure whether they had. This represented 53% of those who had responded.

Section 5 – Training Plans

Of the Councils that responded, 37 (64%) confirmed that they have formally adopted a training plan in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. 14 Councils (24%) confirmed that they had not and 7 Councils (12%) were unsure whether they had or not.

Given that, to be adopted a training plan should have been formally approved at a meeting of the Council in question (and that fact recorded in the minutes) then it is likely that those Councils who are 'unsure' if a plan has been adopted have not in fact done so.

If those Councils who failed to respond to the survey have also failed to properly adopt a training plan, then only 51% of Councils have adopted a plan and 49% have not, despite it being a legal requirement for them to do so.

Of the 37 training plans that have been adopted, 5 do not require their members to undertake code of conduct training.

Of the 37 Councils that had adopted training plans, 10 reported that they had not been implemented or were unsure if they had been implemented.

A spreadsheet and graphs setting out this data for 2022/2023 is also annexed to this report