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**Gwasanaeth Democraidd**  
**Democratic Service**  
Swyddfa'r Cyngor  
CAERNARFON  
Gwynedd  
LL55 1SH

Cyfarfod / Meeting

**PWYLLGOR SAFONAU**  
**STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Dyddiad ac Amser / Date and Time

**11.00am, DYDD LLUN, 29 MEDI, 2014**

**11.00am, MONDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER, 2014**

Lleoliad / Location

**Ystafell Gwyrfai,**  
**Swyddfa'r Cyngor / Council Offices,**  
**Stryd y Jêl / Shirehall Street,**  
**Caernarfon**

Pwynt Cyswllt / Contact Point

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*Dosbarthwyd/Distributed 23/09/14*

**PWYLLGOR SAFONAU  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**Aelodaeth/Membership**

**Aelodau Etholedig / Elected Members (3)**

Y Cynghorwyr/Councillors  
Eryl Jones-Williams  
Michael Sol Owen  
[sedd wag / vacant seat]

**Aelodau Annibynnol (hefo pleidlais) / Independent Members (with a vote)  
(5)**

Ms Linda Byrne  
Mr Gwilym Ellis Evans  
Miss Margaret E Jones  
Mr Sam W Soysa  
Dr Einir Young

**Aelod Pwyllgor Cymuned (hefo pleidlais) / Community Committee  
Member (with a vote) (1)**

Y Cynghorydd / Councillor David Clay

## **AGENDA**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

### **2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

### **3. URGENT ITEMS**

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Chairman shall propose that the minutes of the meetings of this committee held on the undermentioned dates be signed as true records:-

- (a) 30 June, 2014 (attached);
- (b) 14 July, 2014 (attached);
- (c) 29 July, 2014 (attached).

### **5. UPDATE ON THE RE-STRUCTURING OF THE LEGAL SERVICES**

To submit a verbal report by the Monitoring Officer.

### **6. APPLICATION FOR DISPENSATION BY COUNCILLOR MIKE STEVENS**

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

### **7. WORK PROGRAMME**

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

### **8. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS**

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

### **9. THE OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14**

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

### **10. WEB-CASTING**

To submit the report of the Monitoring Officer (attached).

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## STANDARDS COMMITTEE, 30.06.14

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**Present:-**

**Elected Members:-** Councillors Eryl Jones-Williams and Michael Sol Owen.

**Independent Members:-** Mr Gwilym Ellis Evans (Chairman), Miss Margaret E. Jones, Mr Sam W. Soysa and Dr Einir Young.

**Community Committee Member:-** Mr David Clay.

**Also Present:** Sion Huws (Compliance and Language Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Apology:** Ms Linda Byrne (Independent Member).

At the start of the meeting, the Compliance and Language Manager referred to the resignation of Councillor Charles Wyn Jones from the Standards Committee, and it was agreed to send him a word of gratitude for his valuable contribution to the committee's work over a number of years. In line with the procedure, the full Council would appoint his successor.

Councillor Michael Sol Owen was congratulated on being elected Mayor of Pwllheli.

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

### 2. URGENT MATTER – HEARINGS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

This item was not included on the agenda; however, the Chairman agreed that it could be discussed as an urgent item under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 as it was intended to conduct hearings on two cases during July.

The Compliance and Language Manager noted that the item would be discussed as an exempt item at the end of the meeting.

### 3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meetings of this committee held on 7 April and 12 June, 2014 as a true record.

Matter arising from the minutes of 12 June, 2014

Item 4 – The Report of the Ombudsman for Public Services in Wales on an Investigation into a Complaint against Councillor 'B'

A member noted her disappointment that the second hearing would not be held in Dolgellau, as the majority of the members wished. The Compliance and Language Manager replied that the committee could decide to meet anywhere, but he was not of the opinion that Room 2 or the Chamber in Dolgellau were suitable for conducting a hearing.

#### 4. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2013/14

Submitted – the report of the Monitoring Officer enclosing a draft of the committee's annual report for the period from 1 April 2013 up until 31 March 2014. The Committee's observations and approval of the document were invited.

The Compliance and Language Manager noted that the Chair and Vice-chair had already submitted corrections to their personal profiles, and some members referred to other minor corrections, namely:-

- Einir Young – “*Einir is Director of Sustainability at Bangor University, ...*”
- Councillor David Clay – “*He has also finished serving as the chair of Meirionnydd Area Committee for One Voice Wales.*”
- Councillor Michael Sol Owen – “*He is currently the Chair of the Gwynedd Council Planning Committee ...*”

#### RESOLVED

- (a) To approve the contents of the report, subject to correcting the personal profiles as noted.
- (b) To circulate the report through the Council's website (and to tweet when it went on-line), Rhaeadr, Newyddion Gwynedd, Siop Gwynedd and the libraries.

#### 5. REVIEWING THE PROCEDURE FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Submitted – the report of the Compliance and Language Manager inviting the committee to submit observations on the process of conducting hearings and the current procedure.

**RESOLVED to approve the procedure, including references to the additional matters noted below:-**

- **Ensure equipment / apparatus beforehand for submitting video evidence.**
- **Keep the option of holding a short preliminary meeting to establish the procedure.**
- **Inform the members when the papers would be made public.**
- **Prepare a simple summary of the order of the hearing.**

#### 6. THE OMBUDSMAN'S REGISTER OF CASES

Submitted for information – the first two editions of the Ombudsman's Cases Register.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

#### 7. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS

Submitted for information – the report of the Monitoring Officer on formal complaints made against members.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

#### 8. NORTH WALES STANDARDS COMMITTEES FORUM

Submitted for information – the minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 29 April, 2014.

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Forum would be held in Anglesey County Council on 29 September, which was the same date as this committee. It was agreed to begin the Standards Committee at 10.00am, so that the Chair and Vice-chair could attend the forum afterwards.

Referring to the forum's decision to write to the Ombudsman asking him to consider the possibility of developing an instruction on sanctions to be used specifically by the Standards Committee, the Compliance and Language Manager noted that a response had been received from the Ombudsman stating that it would be inappropriate for him to do so as it would not be within his statutory powers.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **9. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 18C, Part 4, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. This paragraph applied because it concerns the deliberations of the Standards Committee in reaching a decision on a matter referred to it. It was believed that the information should not be disclosed due to the possibility of any publicity about the case prejudicing the councillors' situation prior to any hearings. Consequently, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **10. URGENT MATTER – HEARINGS OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Compliance and Language Manager presented an update on both cases.

### **(A) REPORT BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ON AN INVESTIGATION INTO COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLOR 'A'**

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) As the Ombudsman's Investigating Officer could not be in Caernarfon by 9.30am on 14th July and had asked to move the meeting to 11.00am, that the Compliance and Language Manager contacts her to ask if it is practical for her to be there by 10.00am or 10.30am at the latest, and to agree a time with the Chair should there be a problem.**
- (b) That the members meet half an hour beforehand for a preliminary meeting to set out the procedure.**
- (c) If the case cannot be dealt with in one day, that the hearing proceeds to the second day.**
- (ch) That whoever members are available on the day attend the hearing.**
- (d) To check that the member who is the subject of the investigation has received the questionnaire sent to him via registered mail, and to remind him of the need to complete the questionnaire as soon as possible.**

### **(B) REPORT BY THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES ON AN INVESTIGATION INTO COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLOR 'B'**

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) To move the hearing to the back-up date, namely 29 July, so that the Ombudsman's Investigating Officer could be present.**
- (b) To commence the hearing at 10.30am, with the members convening at 10.00 for the preliminary meeting to set out the procedure.**

The meeting commenced at 11.00am and concluded at 12.30pm.



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## SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE, 14.07.14

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**Present: -**

**Independent Members:-** Mr Gwilym Ellis Evans (Chairman), Ms Linda Byrne, Miss Margaret Jones, Mr Sam Soysa and Dr Einir Young.

**Community Committee Member:-** Councillor David Clay.

**Also present:**

On behalf of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – Mrs Katrin Shaw (Manager) and Ms Annie Ginwalla (Investigating Officer).

Gwynedd Council Officers - Sion Huws (Compliance and Language Manager) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support and Scrutiny Officer).

**Apologies:-** Councillors Michael Sol Owen and Eryl Jones-Williams (elected members).

### 1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

### 2. COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLOR CHRISTOPHER O'NEAL, GWYNEDD COUNCIL

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the hearing and then asked them to introduce themselves.

The Chairman then explained the nature / format of the hearing.

- (A) The Committee considered a report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members of Gwynedd Council by Councillor Christopher O'Neal, which had been referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman for determination.

The Ombudsman had received a complaint on 16 April 2013 that Councillor Christopher O'Neal had failed to observe the Code of Conduct for Members of Gwynedd Council. It was alleged that Councillor O'Neal had secretly filmed and recorded a conversation with the complainant whilst she was performing her duty as a civil enforcement officer, employed by Gwynedd Council, on 8 February and had later posted a video of this conversation on his Facebook page.

The Ombudsman had decided to investigate whether or not Councillor Christopher O'Neal had failed to comply with any of the following provisions of the Code of Conduct.

*"4. [a member] must –  
(b) show respect and consideration for others.*

*6.- [a member] must –  
(a) not conduct [themselves] in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing [their] office into disrepute."*

The Standards Committee considered the Compliance and Language Manager's covering report, the written report of the Ombudsman's investigation (including the video footage in question) and oral submissions from Ms Annie Ginwalla, Investigating Officer, and Councillor O'Neal.

The Committee then withdrew to consider its decision.

After reaching its decision, the Committee reconvened and the Chairman announced that the Standards Committee had decided that Councillor Christopher O'Neal had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct as follows:-

The Committee found that Councillor O'Neal's conduct amounted to a breach of paragraph 4(b) of the Code of Conduct.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows.

The Committee believed that the Councillor's motives were commendable and wished to note that its decision was in no way a criticism of his aim of highlighting the problems faced by disabled people. It also accepted that he had the right as a councillor to express his political views and that this right was afforded protection. However in this case, the Councillor had concerns about how individual employees of the council were carrying out the Council's policies. The relationship between councillors and council employees should be one of mutual trust and respect, and specific procedures had been put in place to allow councillors to raise concerns directly with senior officers and members (i.e. Heads of Department and Cabinet Members). Councillor O'Neal had not followed these procedures and had instead raised his concerns in the public domain immediately. This had caused distress to the enforcement officer.

The Committee then withdrew to consider what action to take.

After reaching its decision, the Committee reconvened and the Chairman announced that the Standards Committee had decided that Councillor Christopher O'Neal should be censured.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows.

The Councillor had breached the Code of Conduct and the Committee believed that some action should be taken, as it had affected the officers involved and had undermined them in their work. However it did not believe that the breach was particularly serious and it also took into account the Councillor's motives and also that he was a relatively new councillor at the time and may not have been familiar with all of the Council's procedures.

The Committee also resolved:

- (1) That Councillor O'Neal should remove the relevant footage and posting from his Facebook page immediately;
- (2) That Councillor O'Neal should receive training from the Council's Monitoring Officer on the Code of Conduct and all Council Protocols relevant to the conduct of councillors.

The Chairman announced that:-

- (1) Councillor Christopher O'Neal had the right to appeal against the determination of the Standards Committee to an appeals tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales. The appeal must be instigated by giving notice in writing to the President of the Adjudication Panel within 21 days of receiving this notice of determination. The notice of appeal must specify the grounds for appeal and whether or not the member consented to the appeal being conducted by way of written representations.
  - (2) A report on the outcome of the investigation would be published in accordance with the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001.
  - (3) Councillor Christopher O'Neal, the complainant and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales were notified accordingly.
- (B) The Committee considered a report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members of Gwynedd Council by Councillor Christopher O'Neal, which had been referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman for determination.

The Ombudsman had received a complaint, on 31 May 2013 that Councillor Christopher O'Neal had failed to observe the Code of Conduct for Members of Gwynedd Council. It was alleged that Councillor O'Neal had behaved in a threatening manner towards the complainant on 17 May 2013 whilst he was performing his duties as Civil Enforcement Officer. The complainant alleged that Councillor O'Neal had threatened to "put a rope around [his] neck."

The Ombudsman had decided to investigate whether or not Councillor Christopher O'Neal had failed to comply with any of the following provisions of the Code of Conduct.

*"6.- [a member] must –*

*(a) not conduct [themselves] in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing [their] office into disrepute."*

The Standards Committee considered the Compliance and Language Manager's covering report, the written report of the Ombudsman's investigation (including viewing part of the CCTV footage where the alleged words were spoken, submitted as evidence as part of the Ombudsman's report) and oral submissions from Ms Annie Ginwalla, Investigating Officer, Councillor O'Neal and Paul Jones (witness on behalf of Councillor O'Neal).

As a preliminary issue the Committee considered a submission by Councillor O'Neal that this complaint should be heard in private as the incident had occurred at his workplace and would have a future impact on the company. The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the proceedings because the information would fall within one of the categories set out specifically in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Based on Councillor O'Neal's request, the Committee decided that the information referred to could come within paragraph 14 ("Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person"). However the Committee did not believe that any sensitive information or information that could adversely affect the business would be revealed. In applying the public interest test, as required by the Act, the Committee did not believe that the public interest in of keeping the information exempt outweighed the public interest of its disclosure.

The Committee then withdrew to consider its decision.

After reaching its decision, the Committee reconvened and the Chairman announced that the Standards Committee had decided that Councillor Christopher O'Neal had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct as follows:-

The Committee found that Councillor O'Neal's conduct amounted to a breach of paragraph 6(1) (a) of the Code of Conduct.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows.

The Committee believed that in putting himself up for public office, a councillor also placed himself in a position where the public could expect high standards of behaviour and behaviour that would also serve to set an example to others. This standard was applicable to a councillor whether or not he was acting in his capacity as a councillor, as evidenced by the fact that paragraph 6(1)(a) of the Code was applicable at all times and in any capacity. Therefore whilst Councillor O'Neal was in this instance acting as a private individual, his behaviour was capable of breaching the code.

The Committee recognised that the Councillor as an individual had a legal right to defend his property. The Committee also acknowledged that he may have been frustrated at the situation that arose, and was concerned that his property would be damaged. However it was not the Committee's role to decide on the extent of his legal rights in this situation but rather to decide whether, in the circumstances, his behaviour had breached the Code. The Committee expected the Councillor to have dealt with the situation in a manner befitting a public figure.

Taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration, the Committee concluded that Councillor O'Neal's behaviour in making a threat of physical violence was neither appropriate nor proportionate in the circumstances. It was not the kind of behaviour that the Committee expected from an elected member and as such he had brought both his office and the authority into disrepute.

The Committee then withdrew to consider what action to take.

After reaching its decision, the Committee reconvened and the Chairman announced that the Standards Committee had decided that Councillor Christopher O'Neal should be suspended from being a member of Gwynedd Council for a period of two months.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows:

A threat of physical violence was considered a very serious matter. It was also a threat aimed at a member of the public carrying out his duty as an officer of the court at the time. It believed that bringing his office and the authority into disrepute was a breach that warranted consideration of suspension. It also considered, as an aggravating factor, that, whilst the Councillor had never denied using the alleged words, he at no time had showed any remorse or recognition that his behaviour was unacceptable in any way.

The Chairman announced that:-

- (1) Councillor Christopher O'Neal had the right to appeal against the determination of the Standards Committee to an appeals tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales. The appeal must be instigated by giving notice in writing to the President of the Adjudication Panel within 21 days of receiving this notice of determination. The notice of appeal must specify the grounds for appeal and whether or not the member consented to the appeal being conducted by way of written representations.

- (2) A report on the outcome of the investigation would be published in accordance with the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001.
- (3) Councillor Christopher O'Neal, the complainant and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales were notified accordingly.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 5.10pm.

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## **SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE, 29.07.14**

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**Present:-**

**Independent Members:-** Mr Gwilym Ellis Evans (Chairman), Ms Linda Byrne, Miss Margaret Jones, Mr Sam Soysa and Dr Einir Young.

**Community Committee Member:-** Councillor David Clay.

**Also present:**

On behalf of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Julie Ann Quinn (Investigating Officer) Gwynedd Council Officers – Iwan Evans (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Eirian Roberts (Members and Scrutiny Support Officer).

**Apologies:-** Councillors Michael Sol Owen and Eryl Jones-Williams (elected members).

**1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any member present.

**2. COMPLAINT AGAINST COUNCILLOR NANCY CLARKE, TYWYN TOWN COUNCIL**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the hearing and then asked everyone to introduce themselves.

The Chairman then explained the nature / format of the hearing.

The Committee considered the report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members of Tywyn Town Council by Councillor Nancy Clarke, which was referred to the Standards Committee by the Ombudsman for determination.

The Ombudsman had received complaints on 17<sup>th</sup> June, 15<sup>th</sup> July and 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013 that Councillor Nancy Elizabeth Clarke had failed to observe the Code of Conduct for Members of Tywyn Town Council. It was alleged that Councillor Clarke had failed to declare a personal prejudicial interest, made comments and voted at the Council's Finance Committee meetings on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> July and 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and at the Council meetings of 29<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> July and 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013. It is alleged that Councillor Clarke should have declared an interest and left the room when items relating to Tywyn and District Chamber of Tourism and Commerce ("the CTC") were discussed, due to a recent acrimonious history and her ongoing dispute with the CTC. It is also alleged that Councillor Clarke made unsubstantiated comments about the CTC in an attempt to prevent it from receiving financial assistance from the Council.

The Ombudsman decided to investigate whether Councillor Clarke had failed to comply with any of the following provisions of the Code of Conduct:

*"6.- [a member] must –*

*(1) (a) not conduct [themselves] in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing [their] office into disrepute.”*

*7. - [a member] must not –*

*(1) (a) in [their official] capacity or otherwise use or attempt to use [their] position improperly to confer on or secure for [themselves] or any other person, an advantage or create or avoid for [themselves], or any other person a disadvantage.*

*8a. [a member] must –*

*(1) (a) when participating in meetings or reaching decisions regarding the business of [the] Authority, do so on the basis of the merits of the circumstances involved and in the public interest.*

*11(1) Where [a member has] a personal interest in any business of the Authority and [attends] a meeting at which that business is to be considered, [they] must disclose orally to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest before or at the commencement of that consideration or when the interest becomes apparent.*

*10(2)(c)(i) [the member] must regard [herself] as having a personal interest in any business of the Authority if the decision upon it might reasonably be regarded as affecting the wellbeing or financial position of a person with whom [they] have a close personal association.*

*14(1) (a) [a member, where they have a prejudicial interest in any business of the Authority], unless [they] have obtained a dispensation from the Authority’s Standards Committee -*

*(a) withdraw from the room, chamber or place where a meeting considering the business is being held,*

*(c) not seek to influence a decision about that business.”*

At the commencement of the hearing. Councillor Clarke sought permission to introduce a transcript of the written judgment of Deputy District Judge Parsons at Aberystwyth County Court on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014 dismissing the claim against Councillor Nancy Elizabeth Clarke brought by the Complainant. It was determined, on advice by the Deputy Monitoring Officer that the late submission of documents should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and that the document was not of direct relevance to the issues before the Committee and should not be admitted.

The Standards Committee considered the Compliance and Language Manager’s covering report, the written report of the Ombudsman’s Investigation and the oral submissions from Julie Ann Quinn, Investigating Officer, Councillor Nancy Elizabeth Clarke and Mark Kendall as well as the written submissions of Councillor Clarke, Alex Lovett and Victoria Knapp.

The Committee then withdrew to consider its decision.

After reaching its decision, the Committee reconvened and the Chairman announced that the Standards Committee had determined that Councillor Nancy Clarke had failed to comply with the Code of Conduct as follows:-

- (1) The Committee found that Councillor Clarke was in breach of paragraph Para 14(1) (a) (e) of the Code of Conduct.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows:

The Committee found that the circumstances by which Councillor Clarke's formal membership of the CTC came to a conclusion in late 2012 resulted in an acrimonious continuing dispute between the Chairman of the CTC, Councillor Michael Stevens and Councillor Clarke. This dispute involved correspondence with solicitors in relation to the recovery of CTC documents from Councillor Clarke. Evidence from both Councillor Clarke and Mr Mark Kendall confirmed that the dispute was ongoing and in existence at the relevant time. The dispute included an attempt by Councillor Michael Stevens ostensibly on behalf of the CTC to recover legal costs in the sum of £1824.00 from Councillor Clarke. This was the subject of County Court litigation. These issues were ongoing during the period from 21<sup>st</sup> May to 11<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and continued thereafter. The Committee was satisfied that these matters related to the CTC.

The Committee determined, having regard to the Ombudsman's Guidance on the Code of Conduct, that the circumstances of Councillor Clarke's relationship with the CTC, the acrimonious history and ongoing dispute constituted a close personal association for the purposes of paragraph 10(2) (c) of the Members' Code of Conduct and that the nature of this association meant that this interest was a prejudicial interest for the purposes of paragraph 12(1).

The Committee also found, and this was not disputed, that Councillor Clarke had attended at meetings of the Town Council's Finance Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> May, 4<sup>th</sup> July and 10<sup>th</sup> September and at Council Meetings on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 10<sup>th</sup> July and 11<sup>th</sup> September when matters relating to the CTC were discussed and were the subject of decisions. Councillor Clarke had not declared the existence of an interest at any of the meetings and had failed to withdraw from those meetings in breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

- (2) The Committee found that Councillor Clarke was in breach of paragraph 7(a) and 14(1) (c) of the Code of Conduct.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows:

The Committee found that Councillor Clarke having a prejudicial interest in the matter and not having declared that interest participated in Council and Committee meetings, and in particular the meeting of the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013 where she argued against the application by the CTC for £3000 of financial support and voted against a proposal to grant them £2000 financial support although also voting in favour of a proposal to grant £1000 financial support.

Having regard to the existence of the prejudicial interest and background of acrimony and dispute between the CTC and Councillor Clarke, the Committee considered that her participation and submissions to these meetings was improper and constituted an attempt to influence a decision about the business and confer a disadvantage for the CTC.

- (3) The Committee found that Councillor Clarke was in breach of paragraph 8(a) of the Members' Code of Conduct.

The reasons for the Committee's conclusions were as follows:

The Committee found that Councillor Clarke had prepared a detailed note of her contribution to the Council discussion on the CTC's application for a donation of



£3000. The matter had been discussed at the Finance Committee who had recommended a donation of £1000. The Committee whilst of the view that a Councillor preparing a note of what they proposed to say at Committee was not of itself inherently improper, it found that other evidence indicated that Councillor Clarke had come to the meeting with a closed mind and was not prepared to consider alternative arguments or alternative proposals. The Committee in particular, found that during the course of the interview with the Investigating Officer, Councillor Clarke stated that she had purposely held back her contribution until the end of the discussion where she read out a pre-prepared statement with a view to pushing for a vote and specifically noted *“and I didn’t want to be picked up on anything else”*. Having regard to the circumstances surrounding this proposal, the nature of the interest and the manner in which Councillor Clarke contributed to the Council meeting, the Committee concluded that Councillor Clarke had assumed a fixed position in relation to the application prior to the meeting and was not open to consideration of alternatives notwithstanding the merits of any proposal.

- (4) The Committee found that Councillor Clarke was in breach paragraph 6(1) (a) of the Members’ Code of Conduct.

The reasons for the Committee’s conclusions were as follows:

The Committee having found that Councillor Clarke participated in multiple meetings where she had a prejudicial interest and took active steps as a member to influence a financial application by the CTC in breach of the Members Code of Conduct. The Committee considered that her conduct throughout fell short of the expectations of the standard of conduct for members and could reasonably be considered to have brought the office of member of the Council into disrepute.

The Committee then withdrew to consider what action to take.

After reaching its decision, the Committee reconvened and the Chairman announced that the Standards Committee had determined that Councillor Clarke should be suspended from being a member of Tywyn Town Council for a period of three months.

The reasons for the Committee’s decision were as follows:

The range and nature of the breaches of the Code over a number of months. The fact Councillor Clarke not only failed to declare and properly act upon a prejudicial interest but actively contributed to the debate on the Councils consideration of the requests for financial support to the CTC.

The absence of acknowledgement by Councillor Clarke that she was in breach or might be in breach of the Code of Conduct. This continued throughout the investigation process and during the Standards Committee hearing.

Although the Committee accepted there may have been an element of uncertainty about the specific advice which the Clerk had given Councillor Clarke, the Committee also considered that ultimately it is the responsibility of the individual member to take their own decisions on issues of conduct. There were also instances where Councillor Clarke should have considered or reconsidered her position, including the fact that she was specifically named as a debtor in the CTC accounts which she perused and the correspondence from the Ombudsman during the relevant period informing her of these specific complaints and that there was an intention to investigate.

The Committee took into account that Councillor Clarke was a relatively inexperienced member.

The Committee also recommended that arrangements were made for Councillor Clarke to receive one to one training in the Members' Code of Conduct.

The Chairman announced:-

- (1) That Councillor Nancy Clarke may appeal against the determination of the Standards Committee to an appeals tribunal drawn from the Adjudication Panel for Wales. The appeal must be instigated by giving notice in writing to the President of the Adjudication Panel within 21 days of receiving the notice of determination. Notice of appeal must specify the grounds for appeal and whether or not the member consents to the appeal being conducted by way of written representations.
- (2) A report on the outcome of the investigation would be published in accordance with the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001.
- (3) Councillor Nancy Clarke, the complainant and the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales would be notified accordingly.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 3.05pm.

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>29 September 2014</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Application for dispensation by Councillor Mike Stevens</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Action:</b>	<b>To decide upon the application</b>

### **Background**

1. Cllr Mike Stevens of Tywyn Town Council has applied for a dispensation. Copies of his e-mail and application form are appended to this report.
2. The Standards Committee may grant a dispensation if the situation comes within one (or more) of those listed in the relevant regulations. These situations are listed in the appended guidance notes.
3. The Ombudsman's Guidelines on the code of Conduct notes the following in relation to granting dispensations

*"The standards committee will need to balance the public interest in preventing members with prejudicial interests from taking part in decisions, against the public interest in decisions being taken by a reasonably representative group of members of the authority."*

### **Recommendation**

4. The Committee is requested to consider and decide upon Councillor Mike Stevens' application for a dispensation.

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>DATE</b>	29 September 2014
<b>TITLE</b>	WORK PROGRAMME
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To report on the Work Programme
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	To receive an update on the Work Programme
<b>AUTHOR</b>	Iwan G D Evans – Head of Legal Services

1. The appended Work Programme was adopted by the Committee in April 2014
2. The purpose of this report is to report on the work programme and any modifications that require the Committee's consideration.

## **Standards Committee Work Programme**

### **30 June, 2014**

- The Standards Committee's Annual Report
- Procedure for hearings
- The Ombudsman's casebook
- Allegations against members
- North Wales Standards Committee Forum
- Web-casting (or the September meeting)

### **29 September, 2014**

- The Ombudsman's Annual Report
- Annual Report of the Adjudication Panel for Wales
- Allegations against members
- Meet with community council representatives and discuss the possibility of holding one meeting in the autumn with community councils
- Training

### **26 January, 2015**

- Gifts and Hospitality Register
- Elected Members' Register of Interests
- Local Conflict Resolution Procedure
- Allegations against members
- North Wales Standards Committee Forum
- Election of new members

### **20 April, 2015**

- Meeting with the Chief Executive and representatives of the Council's Management Group
- Social Media Protocol
- Members' attendance of committees and training
- Allegations against members
- The Committee's Work Programme

<b>Committee :</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>29 September 2014</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Allegations against members</b>
<b>Author:</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Action:</b>	<b>For Information</b>

## **1. Background**

The purpose of this report is to present information to the Committee regarding formal complaints made against members. The report is based on information received from the Ombudsman and the case references are his.

## **2. Complaints**

### **2.1 Case No.201300346**

Date received: 23/04/13

#### **Complaint**

That a county councillor had secretly filmed and recorded a conversation and then put it on his Facebook page.

#### **Decision**

Member suspended for 2 months by Standards Committee.

### **2.2 Case No.201301307**

Date received: 06/06/13

#### **Complaint**

That a county councillor had behaved in a threatening manner towards the complainant.

#### **Decision**

Member suspended for 2 months by Standards Committee.

### **2.3 Case No. 4414/201301916**

Date received: (arose from investigation into 2.1 above)

#### **Complaint**

The Ombudsman has decided to investigate matters that came to his attention as part of the investigation into another complaint against the councillor (para 2.1 above):

- Bringing his office as councillor or the authority into disrepute
- Conflict between the councillor's business interests and his role as councillor and misuse of his position as councillor
- Attending a meeting where a conflict of interests could arise ,contrary to the Monitoring Officer's advice
- Behaviour towards member of the public contrary to Code of Conduct
- Failure to update registration of personal interests

#### **Decision**

Investigation discontinued as the evidence was not sufficiently conclusive to enable the Ombudsman to reach a firm view on the breaches of the code.

### **2.4 Case No. 201301629**

Date received: 17/06/13

#### **Complaint**

That a town councillor had failed to declare an interest at a meeting of the council.

#### **Decision**

Member suspended for three months by Standards Committee.

### **2.5 Case No. 6141/201400682**

Date received: 29/04/14

#### **Complaint**

Complaint by fellow member that a town councillor had misused his position for financial gain.

**Decision**

Ombudsman investigating aspects of complaint.

**2.6 Case No. 6180/201400801**

Date received: 15/05/14

**Complaint**

Complaint by member of the public that a county councillor had denied using certain words in a conversation.

**Decision**

No investigation – member not acting as a councillor at the time.

**2.7 Case No. 6397/201401427**

Date received: 02/06/14

**Complaint**

Complaint by member of the public that a town councillor had behaved in an offensive manner.

**Decision**

No investigation. The alleged comments were not offensive in the Ombudsman's view and would not, if proven, be serious enough to constitute a breach of the code.

**2.8 Case No. 201402810**

Date received: 28/07/14

**Complaint**

Member had sent an e-mail to a local organisation, purporting to express the community council's views, without its authorisation.

**Decision**

Referred to Monitoring Officer for investigation.



**2.9 Case No. 201403279**

Date received: 14/08/14

**Complaint**

Complaint by member of the public that a county councillor had breached a number of the code's principles in dealing with a local matter.

**Decision**

Considering whether to investigate.

**2.10 Case No. 5847/201402641 & 201402642 & 201403463**

Date received: 18/07/14

**Complaint**

Complaint by a town councillor that three of his fellow members had failed to declare an interest.

**Decision**

Investigation.

**2.11 Case No. 6769/201402621**

Date received: 18/07/14

**Complaint**

Complaint by a town councillor that a fellow member had behaved in an inappropriate manner.

**Decision**

Considering whether to investigate.

**2.12 Case No. 6141/201400940**

Date received: 27/05/14

**Complaint**

Complaint regarding a town councillor's conduct.

**Decision**

No investigation – insufficient information submitted.

**3. Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the information.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>Date :</b>	<b>29 September 2014</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>The Ombudsman's Annual Report 2013/14</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Action :</b>	<b>Note for Information</b>

### **Background**

1. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has published his annual report for the year 2013-2014.
2. A copy of those parts of the report relevant to code of conduct complaints is attached to this report as an **Appendix**. The report can be found on the Ombudsman's website ([www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk))

### **Recommendation**

3. The Committee is asked to note the report.

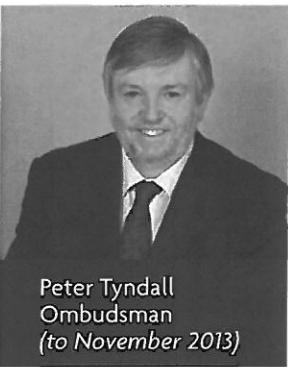
# 1. Introduction by the Acting Ombudsman



Margaret Griffiths  
Acting Ombudsman  
(from December 2013)

This is the eighth Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) since the inception of the office in April 2006. I am pleased to introduce this report for the year 2013/14 as Acting Ombudsman, having taken on the role in December 2013.

I was appointed as Acting Ombudsman following Peter Tyndall's departure at the end of November 2013, when he left to take up a new role as Irish Ombudsman and Information Commissioner. I will remain as Acting Ombudsman until such time as the new Ombudsman is able to take office.

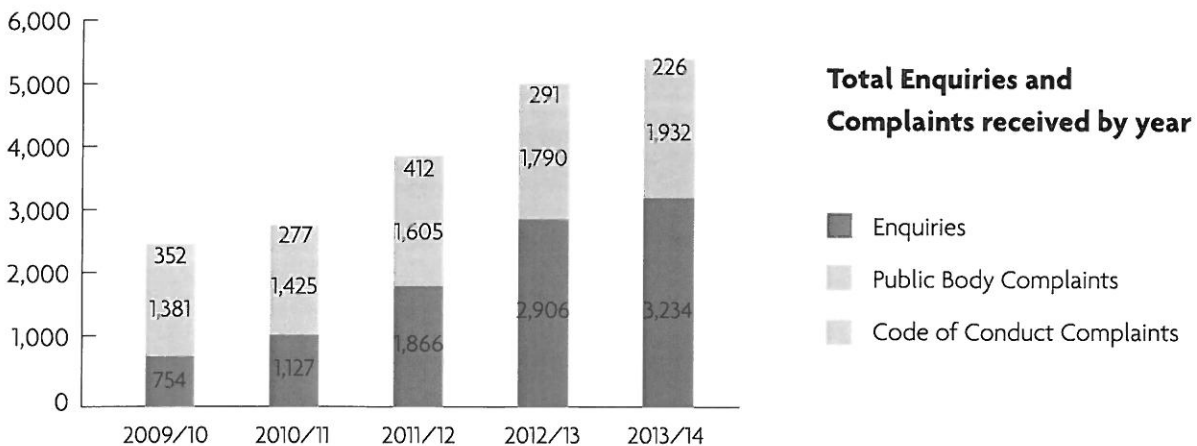


Peter Tyndall  
Ombudsman  
(to November 2013)

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the National Assembly for Wales. Nick Bennett – currently the Chief Executive of Community Housing Cymru – has been nominated by the National Assembly for Wales as the next Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. At the time of writing, royal approval for Mr Bennett's appointment is being sought.

## An ever-increasing caseload

The upward trend in enquiries and complaints to this office has been a recurrent theme in the Annual Reports of previous years; 2013/14 is no different. As the chart (below) demonstrates, the past year saw another notable rise. Looking back over a period of five years the office has seen a 117% increase in all contacts (that is, enquiries, public body complaints, and complaints about the conduct of members of local authorities).



It is a tribute to the staff of this office that they have ‘held their own’ in dealing with cases in a timely way, not only in the face of the continued increase in caseload but also during what has been an unsettling period for them in the latter part of the year, with the departure of the Ombudsman, the appointment of an Acting Ombudsman, and anticipation of the appointment of the new, permanent Ombudsman. I will take the opportunity here to thank all of the staff of the office for making me feel so welcome, for their professionalism, and for the support that they have provided to me since taking up my role as Acting Ombudsman.

The increase in complaints received is a matter of concern. Health complaints continue to be at the core of that concern, having increased by another 11% on the position at the end of 2012/13, and being a 146% increase over the past five years. The rise can be attributed to a number of factors: a reflection of the increased number of episodes of procedures and treatments available giving rise to a greater scope for things to go wrong; people’s increased expectations together with a greater propensity to complain; and local health boards and trusts not responding appropriately to a proportion of those complaints (a matter I address further below). However, there can be no denying that it is also an indication that increasingly health service delivery is not what it should be.

However, another area of concern this year has been the increase in social services complaints. Although starting from a much lower base in terms of number of complaints compared to health, there was a 19% increase in social services complaints against the position in 2013/14. It is timely to reflect on this situation now, before the introduction of the new areas to the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction as a result of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Bill and the changes to the statutory social services complaints procedure. It will be important when monitoring the level of social services complaints to this office not to automatically assume that any increases are merely due to these jurisdictional changes.

## **Making a Difference**

Statistics by their very nature are somewhat impersonal. It is crucial that we do not lose sight of the human experiences that lie behind them. Every complaint equates to a person who has felt aggrieved in some way about public service delivery. The summaries of our public interest reports (see Annex A) give some perspective on this.

Over and above putting things right for the individual we also seek to make a difference through driving improvement in public service delivery by sharing the lessons from our investigations. Our public interest reports and the Ombudsman’s Casebook are key tools in this aim, with the latter being well received by bodies in jurisdiction in particular.

The casework of this office can be a good barometer. It can indicate where the pressures lie in public service delivery, as evidenced in the rise of the health complaints for example. We have a unique overview of public service delivery in Wales derived from the views of members of the public who have been dissatisfied with the service they have received. Whilst we respond to National Assembly

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and Welsh Government consultations where that is appropriate, public policy makers are encouraged to proactively engage with this office so that any indicators or lessons from our casework can be taken into consideration at an early stage.

### **The complaint handling landscape in Wales**

The PSOW has over a number of years promoted the concept that all public service providers in Wales should adopt a common approach to dealing with complaints. The NHS's 'Putting Things Right' procedure and the Model Concerns and Complaints policy were developed in tandem and both use a two stage process (one informal stage and one formal investigation stage), with complainants, if remaining unhappy, then being able to complain to the Ombudsman. We welcome the fact that the last jigsaw piece to this common approach landscape will soon be slotted into place. In particular, this will now enable complaints involving more than one public service provider to be dealt with effectively, with complainants receiving one comprehensive response from the service provider which has taken the lead on co-ordinating the multi-faceted complaint investigation.

The way complaints are being handled, particularly health complaints, has featured prominently in public discussion during 2013/14. It is the clear view of this office that it is not with the process itself that the problem lies. Rather, it lays with the culture within health bodies and their attitude towards dealing with complaints. Some health boards are insufficiently resourced and there is often a lack of active backing for those managing complaints from senior managers and boards. This means that complaint handling staff are sometimes unable to secure appropriate and timely responses from those who are parties to the subject of the complaint under investigation. The investigations undertaken by this office have time and time again revealed occasions where complaints have not been dealt with in a sufficiently robust manner; for example, independent clinical expertise has not been sought when cases are sufficiently serious in their nature to warrant it. There is also a need for health board members to provide suitable challenge to management and to hold senior managers to account for not responding promptly and appropriately to any identified failures.

Finally, the oversight of the complaints function across public service providers in Wales is limited. During 2013/14, it was not possible to gather comparable statistics on numbers, types or outcomes of complaints made to county/county borough councils or health boards. Both Putting Things Right and the Model Concerns and Complaints Policy make provision for this. However, such data is not currently being collected or analysed at an all-Wales level. This is a valuable source for greater understanding of how well services are being delivered by various bodies, offering opportunities to learn from each other, and indeed to understand how these bodies are dealing with complaints. This is something that the Welsh Government, and the National Assembly for Wales with its scrutiny role, may wish to reflect upon.

## **Future considerations**

Towards the end of his time in office, Peter Tyndall set out his view that, with the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 on the horizon, it was timely to review the legislation under which the Ombudsman operated. He pointed to a number of areas which warranted consideration - for example 'own initiative' powers, which are now common amongst the remits of ombudsmen in Europe and elsewhere in the world. These views are ones that I share, and I hope that the National Assembly for Wales will give further consideration to the proposal that the Act should be reviewed.

Consideration will also need to be given to the implementation of the European Union Consumer Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Directive (implementation date is July 2015). The Directive imposes a requirement on EU member states to offer effective access to ADR services for resolving contractual disputes between consumers and businesses concerning the sale of products and services. The Ombudsman Association has been giving this issue close attention. Although responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Directive largely falls to the UK Government, it is also something that we need to give attention to in Wales, including in the context of the possibility of greater devolved powers to the National Assembly.

## **Peter Tyndall**

Finally, I wish to end this introduction by paying tribute to my predecessor, Peter Tyndall. He undertook his role with commitment and integrity, and ensured his independence as Ombudsman. He developed an efficient office, which was crucial in the face of the increasing caseload. He also introduced and facilitated a number of innovations in the complaints handling landscape. These gained recognition within the international Ombudsman community, but more importantly they have made the process of complaining to, and about, public services easier for people living in Wales.



Margaret Griffiths  
Acting Ombudsman

## 4. Code of Conduct Complaints

### Headline figures

- We received 228 new complaints, **down 22%** on 2012/13.
- We referred 6 investigation reports to either a standards committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales, **down 70%** on 2012/13.
- We closed 229 cases, **down 38%** on 2012/13.
- We had no investigations older than 12 months open at 31 March 2014.

### Complaints received

The table below gives a breakdown of the code of conduct complaints received by type of authority.

	2013/14	2012/13
Community Council	115	140
County/County Borough Council	111	150
Fire Authority	2	0
National Park	0	0
Police Authority	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>291</b>

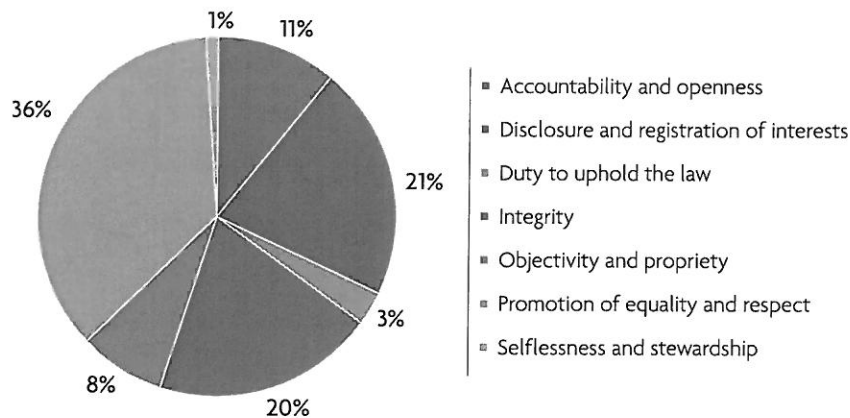
It is particularly pleasing to see that the number of code of conduct complaints have continued to fall. The new local resolution arrangements introduced by local authorities over the past year or so is clearly having the desired effect with the decrease of 22% of complaints to this office compared with the previous year. It is now our practice under these new arrangements to refer 'low level' complaints made by one member against another, such as allegations of failures to show respect and consideration of others under paragraph 4(b) of the code, to authorities' monitoring officers to be dealt with locally.

We have also continued with the approach adopted last year of writing to the local Monitoring Officer when the Ombudsman is minded not to investigate a complaint, or, having commenced an investigation, is minded to close the case. This will arise when it is judged that even if the Standards Committee did find that there had been a breach of the Code, it would be unlikely to apply a sanction. It will then be for the Monitoring Officer to consider the matter. If they take a different view on the likelihood of the Standards Committee applying a sanction should they decide that there has been a breach of the Code, then the investigation is transferred to them for local consideration. During the past year, 16 such complaints were referred to monitoring officers, of which 1 was called in for local investigation.



## Nature of Code of Conduct complaints

As in previous years, the majority of complaints received during 2013/14 related to matters of 'equality and respect'. In 2013/14 this was 36% of the code of conduct complaints received compared to 35% in 2012/13. The next largest areas of complaint related to disclosure and registration of interests (21%), and integrity (20%).



## Summary of Code of Conduct complaint outcomes

Of the Code of Conduct cases considered in 2013/14, the majority were closed under the category shown below as 'Closed after initial consideration'. This includes decisions such as:

- there was no 'prima facie' evidence of a breach of the Code
- the alleged breach was insufficiently serious to warrant an investigation (and unlikely to attract a sanction)
- the incident complained about happened before the member was elected (before they were bound by the Code).

Complaint about a public body	2013/14	2012/13
Closed after initial consideration	176	283
Complaint withdrawn	12	12
Investigation discontinued	8	18
Investigation completed: No evidence of breach	10	23
Investigation completed: No action necessary	17	15
Investigation completed: Refer to Standards Committee	5	15
Investigation completed: Refer to Adjudication Panel	1	5
<b>Total Outcomes – Code of Conduct complaints</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>371</b>

(A detailed breakdown of the outcome of Code of Conduct complaints investigated, by local authority, during 2013/14 is set out at Annex C.)

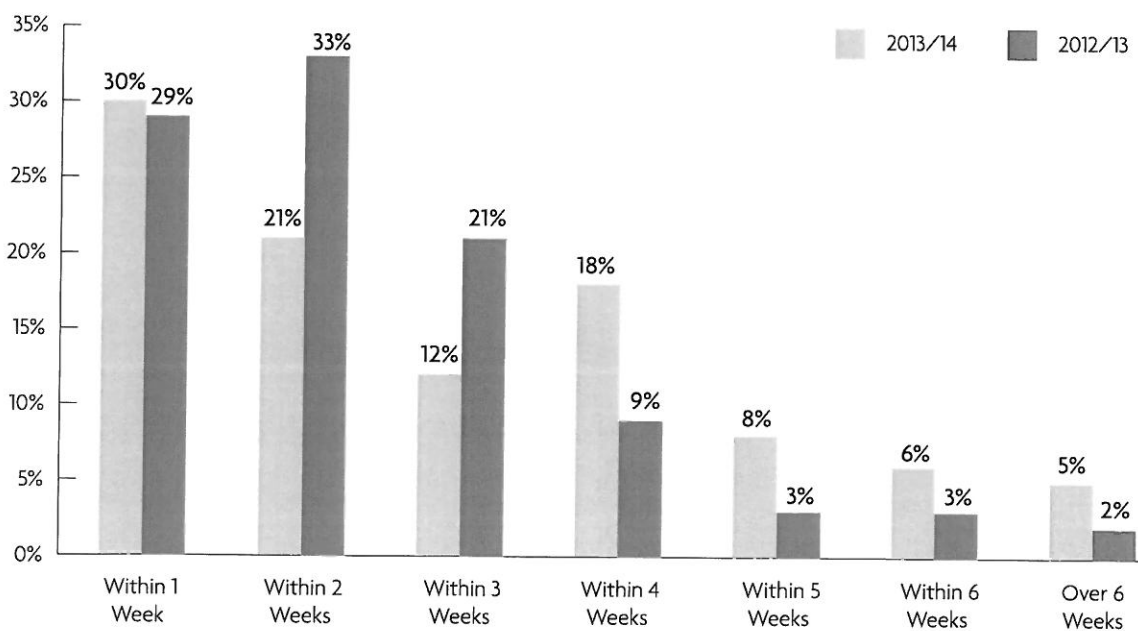
Not only have the number of code of conduct complaints to the office decreased over the past year, notable is the reduction in the number of cases referred to either an authority's standards committee or to the Adjudication Panel for Wales, which fell significantly from 20 in 2012/13 to 6 in 2013/14. This is partly attributable to the effects of the High Court judgement on the Calver case in 2012. The ruling on this case, concerning a member's freedom of expression attracting enhanced protection under the Human Rights legislation when comments made are political in nature, has had an impact on the application of paragraph 4b of the Code of Conduct relating to treating others with respect and consideration. Taking account of the ruling that politicians need to have 'thicker skins, the bar has now been raised on what the Ombudsman refers to a Committee or the Panel.

### Decision times

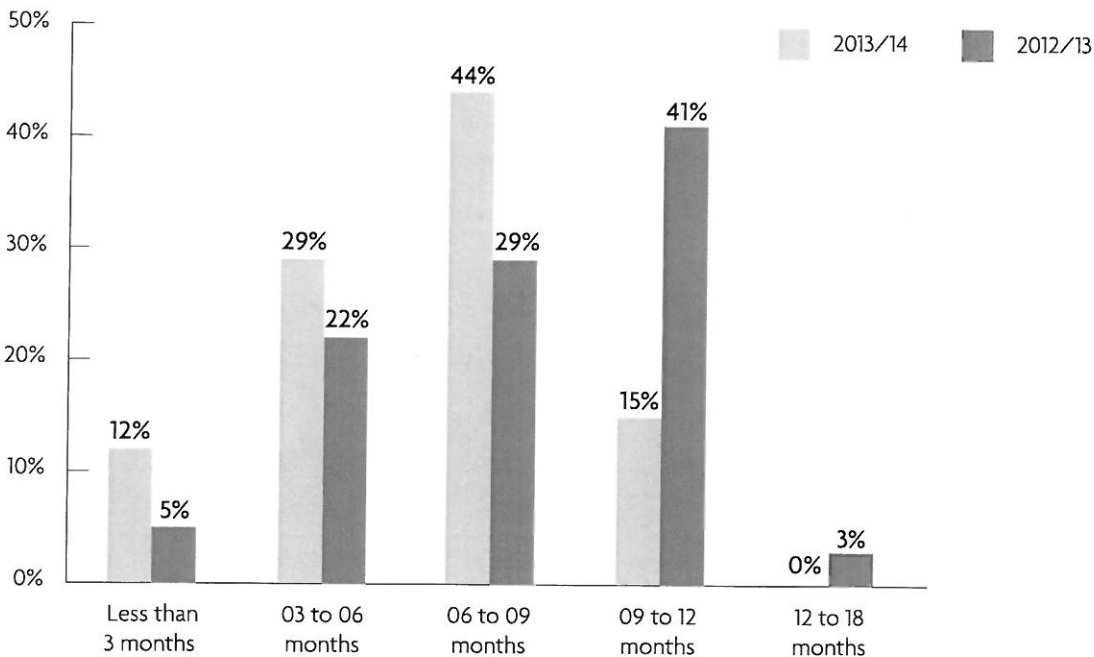
Below are the decision times for code of conduct complaints. The time targets set for code of conduct complaints are similar to those for complaints about public bodies, that is:

- at least 90% of all complainants to be informed within 4 weeks whether Ombudsman will take up their complaint (from the date that sufficient information is received)
- to conclude all cases within 12 months from the point that a decision is made to take up a complaint (that is, to commence investigation of a complaint).

### Decision times for informing complainants we will take up their complaint



### Decision times for concluding code of conduct investigations



In respect of the first target, we actually achieved this 81% of the time, and it is a little disappointing that we have not been able to achieve the 90% target in respect of code of conduct complaints and that we were unable to sustain our performance in 2012/13. This will be a matter that we will be looking to address in the year to come therefore.

With regard to the second target, and on a much more positive note, we are particularly pleased that we achieved a 100% success rate for completion of code of conduct investigations within 12 months. When looking back on previous Annual Reports it can be seen that our performance on code of conduct cases has been improving year on year. It is especially pleasing when comparing the position to three years ago when only 63% of code investigations were concluded in under 12 months. Against that position, the fact that over the past year 85% of investigations were completed in less than 9 months is even more gratifying.

### Standards Committee and Adjudication Panel for Wales’s Hearings – Indemnity Cap

The PSOW has previously made clear concerns about the levels of indemnity enjoyed by members who are accused of a breach and the need for this to be addressed. This is particularly of concern when considering the best use of public money, especially when all publicly funded organisations are working within a very difficult financial climate. By having unlimited indemnity, it is possible for cases before tribunals to last for months or even longer, with counsel being engaged at very considerable cost. Following discussions with the WLGA a proposed ceiling of £20,000 was agreed. Good progress

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has been made by local authorities in introducing such a cap over the past year or so. However, it is disappointing that a couple of councils who have an insurance arrangement in place for indemnity have stated that they are unable to fall in line due to insurance companies resisting such a ceiling.

Welsh Government Ministers had previously indicated that they may consider addressing this matter through legislation if wholesale voluntary agreement could not be secured. This is a matter which may therefore need to be re-raised in the forthcoming year.

**Annex C**  
**Code of Conduct Complaints:**  
**Statistical Breakdown of Outcomes by Local Authority**

## COUNTY/COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCILS

County/County Borough Councils	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Blaenau Gwent	2		1					3
Bridgend	4							4
Caerphilly	4			2			1	7
Cardiff	5		1				1	7
Cardiff								
Carmarthenshire	1						3	4
Ceredigion	2							2
Conwy	1							1
Denbighshire	2						2	4
Flintshire	2	2						4
Gwynedd	4							4
Isle of Anglesey	1			1				2
Monmouthshire	1	2						3
Newport	8							8
Pembrokeshire	3			1	1			5
Powys	1		2					3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	14						1	15
Swansea	22	2	5	1				30
The Vale of Glamorgan							1	1
Torfaen	5			1				6
Wrexham	1							1
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>114</b>

## COMMUNITY/ TOWN COUNCILS

Community/ Town Councils	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Aberffraw Community	1							1
Ammanford Town	1							1
Bangor City	1							1
Bargoed Town	1							1
Blaengwrach Community		1		1				2
Blaenrheidol Community	1							1
Bridgend Town	1							1
Brymbo Community	1							1
Caldicot Town	1							1
Cefn Community			1	2				3
Coity Higher	1							1
Colwinston Community						2		2
Connah's Quay Town	1							1
Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town	3							3
Cwmbran Community	1							1
Forden Community		1						1
Glyneath Town	1							1
Goldcliff Community	1							1
Gorseinon Town						1		1

## COMMUNITY/ TOWN COUNCILS (CONTINUED)

Community/ Town Councils	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Gresford Community	2							2
Hay-on Wye Town	1							1
Hirwaun & Penderyn Community	2							2
Holyhead Town	1							1
Kidwelly Town	1							1
Killay Community	1							1
Knighton Town	2							2
Laleston Community	1							1
Langstone Community	2							2
Llanbadrig Community	1							1
Llandrindod Wells Town	2			1		1		4
Llandudno Town	3							3
Llanelli Rural							2	2
Llanfaelog Community				5				5
Llanfynydd Community [Carmarthenshire]	3							3
Llangennith, Llanmadoc & Cheriton Community	2							2
Llangwm Community [Pembrokeshire]	1							1



**COMMUNITY/ TOWN COUNCILS (CONTINUED)**

Community/ Town Councils	Closed after initial consideration	Discontinued	No evidence of breach	No action necessary	Refer to Standards Committee	Refer to Adjudication Panel	Withdrawn	Total Cases Closed
Llantrisant Community	1							1
Llanwrtyd Wells Town	1							1
Mathry Community	1							1
Montgomery Town	1							1
Mumbles Community	26							26
Nelson Community	2							2
Old Radnor Community	1							1
Old St. Mellons Community Council	1							1
Pembrey & Burry Port Town	1							1
Penmaenmawr Town	1			1				2
Pennard Community	2							2
Porthcawl Town	1							1
Prestatyn Town	8						1	9
Rogiet Community	1			1				2
St Florence Community	2							2
Sully Community					1			1
Talgarth Town	1							1
Trellech United Community	1							1
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>115</b>

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Standards Committee</b>
<b>Date :</b>	<b>29 September 2014</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Web- Casting</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Monitoring Officer</b>
<b>Action :</b>	<b>For Information and for comments</b>

### **Background**

1. Attached is a copy of a report presented to a meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on 9 September 2014. It provides an update on the work programme for introducing a web-casting regime for meetings.

### **Recommendation**

2. The Committee is asked to note the information in the report and to put forward any comments it may have on the subject.

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
<b>DATE</b>	<b>9 September, 2014</b>
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Web-casting</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>To present the latest information on web-casting developments</b>
<b>AUTHOR</b>	<b>Geraint George Head of Democratic Services</b>

1. The committee will recall the report at the last meeting of this committee on the proposed programme for introducing web-casting in Gwynedd.
2. The latest position is that the system has been installed and, over the summer months, we have been testing the technology to a certain extent. At the beginning of September, the officers who will be operating the system will have received the appropriate training and we will move on from there to record some meetings without web-casting them.
3. On the afternoon of 26<sup>th</sup> November, there will be a training session on web-casting aimed at all members. We hope that the session will include:-
  - An explanation of the system, how and how frequently it will be used
  - A demonstration of the system to members to get a taste of how it will work in practice
  - Sharing guidelines on the implementation of the system (The Welsh Local Government Association has prepared guidelines for this purpose and the intention is to adapt those. A copy of the Association's guidelines is attached as an appendix to this report)
4. From then until Christmas, the intention is to trial and practice further the use of the system with the system going live at the start of the year to coincide with the launch of the Council's new web-site.
5. To remind members, the intention is that the following meetings will be web-cast in due course:-
  - Every meeting of the full Council
  - Every meeting of the Planning Committee (when sitting in Caernarfon)
  - The remainder of the hours will be used on the basis of an assessment of the work programmes of individual committees (including the Cabinet and Scrutiny) in terms of public interest
6. The committee's views are sought.



WLGA • CLILC

# Guidance for Members: Webcasting

August 2014

# Contact

## Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

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## Preface



I am extremely pleased to present this guidance from the WLGA on the webcasting of council meetings. It provides members with a useful overview of the subject, and offers some important tips

on how to make the most of an exciting technological development that offers huge potential for improving how councils engage with their communities.

The webcasting of key council meetings and decisions represents a significant step forward in ensuring that the process of local government is both transparent and accessible to the public, and it is already helping people to engage with the decisions that affect their lives and community on a daily basis. We know that people trust their local council, more than any other level of government, to deliver on the issues that matter the most to them. As we enter one of the most challenging periods for local government in Wales, the active broadcasting of how

key decisions are made will play a vitally important role in helping to ensure that this level of public trust continues into the future.

Alongside a rising use of social media, the webcasting of council meetings is quickly becoming a well-established part of local government processes. This means that communities can view the business of their council as it happens, while also taking an active role within decision making through the use of social media tools like Facebook and Twitter. I hope that councils will continue to build on these initiatives to foster further transparency and encourage more people to actively participate in the local democratic process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Fox', written in a cursive style.

**Councillor Peter Fox**

Leader Monmouthshire County Council  
WLGA spokesperson for ICT and Digital  
Inclusion

## What is a Webcast?

A webcast is a live or recorded transmission of a video on the internet. It is not edited prior to broadcast and can be viewed by anyone with access to the Internet, both during the live broadcast and for as long as an authority makes it available on their website.

Webcasting is now being introduced in councils across Wales to broadcast a range of council meetings to the public. This is clearly of significance to councillors as there is a potential for the public to be more widely involved in the democratic process, and for the business of local government to be made more transparent. It also means that the actions, opinions and positions taken by local councillors may potentially be more closely scrutinised by the public.

## Why Wales is Webcasting

Councils in Wales are committed to promoting local democracy and facilitating public participation. The Welsh Government has assisted councils to promote democracy and engagement in local government by providing £1,125,000 funding in 2013/14 to broadcast council meetings, introduce remote attendance and assist community councils to establish websites. Although there is currently no requirement on local authorities to webcast their meetings, the Minister for Local Government and Government Business has encouraged councils to webcast some or all of their meetings in the interests of public engagement and transparency. The White Paper - *Reforming Local Government*,<sup>1</sup> currently out for consultation, states that the Welsh Government intends to introduce

a mandatory requirement on all authorities to broadcast their meetings.

The draft *Revised Code of Recommended Practice in Local Authority Publicity*,<sup>2</sup> says that "Society now expects to have far greater access to information than in the past, in particular in relation to the decision-making procedures of its elected bodies. This should be embraced by political representatives as providing an opportunity to communicate directly with their electorate. Local authorities are encouraged to make arrangements for their proceedings to be made more accessible to the public by allowing them to be broadcast."

## Progress

Webcasting is now underway in most authorities for those meetings which are judged to be of most interest to the public, particularly full Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee meetings. Some authorities are also broadcasting proceedings from their scrutiny committees.

Most authorities have commissioned commercial providers for this service, however, some have developed their own distinct approaches. For example Monmouthshire uses Google Plus and YouTube, Ceredigion uses Livestream to broadcast bilingually and Bridgend has developed a solution with Auditel and Vimeo.

Viewing figures for council webcasts vary according to the type of meeting and authority, but generally the number of website hits suggest that there is real and growing public interest in these broadcasts. Typically, there are more viewings of archived webcasts than live meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/localgovernment/white-paper-reforming-local-government/?lang=en>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dsilq/consultation/130322revised-codelapublicityen.pdf>

## The Benefits of Webcasting

Webcasting has produced a wide range of benefits which have been summarised below. Some were intended and anticipated, while others were unforeseen and identified by authorities from their webcasting experiences.

### Engagement and Transparency

- More open and transparent governance and accountability.
- Improved public engagement in and understanding of decision making.
- Easier public access to meetings minimising travel and allowing more flexible viewing times.
- Will facilitate the understanding of the overview and scrutiny function by the public in line with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.
- Can be used with social media to further promote public engagement. This is possible through a social media conversation which can run alongside the meeting when it is in progress.
- The public can access the papers and presentations made at the meeting as well as see the meeting footage.
- Provides good "PR" for the council as council meetings can be seen as more constructive than, for example, Prime Ministers question time.

### Benefits for the Council

- A step towards remote attendance at meetings - a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 which will allow members to attend meetings from a location which is convenient to them.

- Provides an incentive for high standards of member attendance, engagement and conduct at meetings.
- An effective means of communicating to officers and other members key information and decisions.
- A useful part of member and officer induction and training.
- Opportunities for members to learn good practice from peer observation and inform potential candidates about their role to encourage democratic renewal.
- Fewer press enquiries as journalists can now watch broadcasts rather than ask for quotes.
- A reduced need for space for the public at popular or controversial meetings.
- Equipment and venues can be used for purposes other than committees, such as staff training and inter authority meetings.
- Provides a true record of the meeting. This helps to supplement minutes and to counteract any misleading use of "edited highlights" by anyone filming the meeting.

## Challenges Associated with Webcasting

Some concerns have been expressed about the costs of webcasting, particularly as it is being introduced at a time when severe reductions are being made to council budgets. The main costs are that of equipment, whether purchased or hired, and also for the staff time required to operate the equipment.

The major challenge for authorities now, is to undertake cost benefit analyses to see if outcomes from webcasting are worth the expense. The Welsh Government is hoping



to work with the WLGA and local authorities to secure savings through a joint procurement of webcasting providers. In the future, webcasting may provide opportunities for saving money and generating income for example: minutes can be shortened and used to record actions rather than the full debate; equipment may be hired out, and there is some evidence to suggest that there are fewer time-consuming Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to councils when council meeting records can be so easily viewed.

## **Blogging, Tweeting and Filming During Meetings**

About half of the Local Authorities in Wales allow or encourage the use of social media by members in meetings. Filming by the public or journalists is less common, and where it is allowed, usually requires permission.

The Welsh Government is of the view that the use of Social Media is useful as long as members use it appropriately. Authorities who restrict it do so on the grounds that members might be accused of not concentrating on the matter under discussion. Members may wish to consider how the public might perceive their using social media in a meeting and their ability to concentrate on the matter at hand if they are blogging or tweeting during a debate, a vote, or a planning decision.

See also the WLGA guidance for members on using social media available at: <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/member-support-and-development-publications1/social-media-a-guide-for-councillors/>

## **The Law and Protocols Relating to Webcasting**

### **Data Protection**

It is not likely that the Data Protection Act will affect the broadcasting of council meetings as sensitive information relating to individuals should not be discussed at any public meeting, broadcast or otherwise. In the case of exempt items, where the public and press are excluded, the broadcast is switched off and replaced with a message saying why the broadcast has been temporarily suspended.

### **Freedom of Information**

The Freedom of Information Act should also not apply to broadcasts as it only applies to information which is not already in the public domain. If people request information under the FOI act which has been broadcast or is available on the website through the meeting archive the council is under no obligation to respond.

### **Copyright**

The Council is the `author` of the webcast whether live or archived. As such, they own copyright. If anyone, including individual members or the public, wishes to use it they should ask permission of the council. However, it is unlikely that a council would invoke the law if the broadcast is used for legitimate and positive purposes such as information or training. If a broadcast is used inappropriately, for example for political or satirical purposes the council could take legal action. Video sharing websites such as YouTube and Google Video already actively state in their terms and conditions that you must be the copyright owner and have the permission of all those involved in order to upload videos to their sites.

## Consent

In the early stages of webcasting it is advisable to consult with any potential meeting participants to ensure that they are comfortable with being filmed. Some people might wish to have opportunities for development or coaching before appearing.

Participants at every meeting should be informed that the meeting will be webcast and should be given notice of this when the meeting agenda is distributed. Meeting participants will be deemed to have agreed to consent to be filmed and to the future use of the film if they are present.

At the start of each meeting to be filmed, an announcement should also be made to the effect that the meeting is being webcast live and will also be available for future viewings. No exempt or confidential agenda items should be broadcast.

## Voting

The process of voting is the same in a broadcast as in any other public meeting. Webcasting should simply be seen as an extension of the 'openness' of meetings which are already, by definition, in the public domain. Voting will be undertaken either by a show of hands or by using the council's electronic system. Depending on the webcasting system used, the public may be able to see how each councillor votes.

## Terminating a Webcast

The Chair of the meeting has the discretion to terminate or suspend the webcast if, in his/her opinion, continuing to broadcast would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting. For example:

- (i) If the meeting is suspended due to a public disturbance.
- (ii) When it has been agreed that the public and press are to be excluded.

- (iii) When the Chair and committee agree that webcasting would prejudice the proceedings of the meeting.

## Editing a Webcast

Clearly it is not possible to edit a live broadcast. Evidence suggests that if a member accidentally says something inappropriate, offensive or illegal the chair should ask them to immediately apologise. Editing an archived broadcast is possible, because, once archived, the material is a publicly accessible digital file and making offensive material available such as inadvertent racist comments may amount to an offence. Making defamatory material available carries a civil law risk. In the circumstances, it is permissible to allow a 'bleep' to be inserted. In the undoubtedly rare instance where editing is required - an unedited copy of the recording should be retained as evidence should it be required for any future proceedings.

## Personal Skills

### Appearance

There are certain skills and behaviours that are helpful to be aware of when you are appearing in a webcast. You might find the following useful:

- Don't move too much! This can reduce the picture quality and may be hard for the camera to follow. Bending over to speak into a microphone looks awkward on screen, so some councils are considering changing their meeting procedure so that members may remain seated.
- When considering what to wear, bear in mind all the possible camera angles and watch out for clothing or jewellery which might rub against the microphone and stop what you are saying being heard. Mayoral chains are particular culprits!

- Don't watch the broadcast live on your own equipment as this may create sound interference.
- Be aware of the range of the camera view as talking with colleagues, eating, adjusting clothing can also be distracting if it is behind the member who is speaking.
- Watch your body language, slumping can be misinterpreted as disengagement and eye resting as sleeping.

## Speaking

Although the general rules about public speaking apply at all public meetings, there are some behaviours that will help you come over well in a broadcast and make the meeting more interesting and useful to the viewers. Above all be natural and be yourself!

- Be direct, to the point and as brief as possible.
- Don't speak too quickly, if you are stumbling over words you may be rushing too much.
- Prepare your contributions in advance (bullet points which enable you to speak naturally rather than a prepared speech which looks and sounds unnatural).
- Be aware of how your messages could be interpreted by the public, both what you say and how you say it.
- You may have to be more clear about some of the information that you give so that it is clear to a lay person what you are doing and why you are doing it. A good example of this is declaring interests. It will be helpful to say not only that you have an interest but what the interest is whether it is personal or prejudicial and also how you intend to act as a result.

- Avoid jargon and "council speak" - this applies to officers too!
- Heckling doesn't work well on a webcast as usually it is only the chair and the member who has the floor who can be seen and heard. Other comments are often unintelligible as they are off microphone.
- Make sure that you are in range of the microphone and keep your head turned towards it. Don't speak until your light comes on, or the first part of your contribution will be lost! Make sure that you turn your microphone off when you have finished speaking.
- Be aware of how what you say could be used by the media.

## Chairing Skills

The chair of the meeting is vital to the viewing experience of the public, just as if there was a full public gallery. Here are some tips for chairs to consider.

- Introduce the key players at the meeting so that viewers know who they are looking at. This might include the chair themselves, officers, and witnesses. It is important to say what their role is at the meeting too.
- Be prepared to explain some meeting procedures if these are not obvious to viewers. For example, if the meeting is going into recess, explain why this is and when the meeting will reconvene.
- Be prepared to enforce time restraints on speakers, either formal ones if they apply or if someone's contribution is long and unproductive.
- Don't forget to remind everyone that the meeting is being broadcast and will be available in future on the internet.

- Make clear the different elements of the agenda, such as what is for information or a decision, or a vote. Also if the Webcast is going to be suspended for exempt or confidential items you'll need to say when and why this will happen.
- As a chair you may be required to handle the equipment, for example operating a speaker queuing and permission system. Make sure that you have guidance in advance on how to do this.

## Future Opportunities

As webcasting use and technology develops, there is a potential to use webcasting facilities to improve and broaden a number of council activities.

These include:

- Live communication to officers and members over the internet, this might include briefings by the Leader or Chief Executive.
- Live and recorded training sessions for the home council and also potentially for all councils in Wales.
- Greater interactivity with broadcasts through social media which works alongside it.
- Live links in meetings to community groups and schools for debate and reaction to plans and policies.
- Opportunities to 'advertise' council services and provide public information broadcasts.

The technology required for webcasting also provides a foundation for councils introducing remote attendance by councillors at council meetings. By law, councils are obliged to state in their constitutions the circumstances under which they will make remote attendance at council

meetings available. More information is available on the following link.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/publications/statutory-guidance-section-4-remote-attendance/?lang=en>

## Watch other Authorities' Broadcasts

Blaenau Gwent

<http://www.blaenau-gwent.public-i.tv/core/>

Brecon Beacons

<http://www.breconbeacons.public-i.tv/core/>

Cardiff

<http://www.cardiff.public-i.tv/core/>

Carmarthenshire

<http://www.carmarthenshire.public-i.tv/core/>

Ceredigion

<http://new.livestream.com/ceredigion/events/2493787>

Conwy

<http://www.conwy.public-i.tv/core/>

Denbighshire

<http://www.denbighshire.public-i.tv/core/>

Flintshire

<http://www.flintshire.public-i.tv/core/>

Newport

<http://www.newport.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Pembrokeshire

<http://www.pembrokeshire.public-i.tv/core/>

Powys

<http://www.Powys.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Torfaen

<http://www.torfaen.public-i.tv/core/>

## Examples of Use in Local Authorities

### Torfaen County Borough Council

Torfaen County Borough Council took a decision to webcast meetings (starting with Council and Cabinet) in the spring of 2013. Following the usual contractual processes, the equipment needed (supplied by public-i) was installed in the Council Chamber during August 2013. We saw the training of all members and relevant officers (Democratic Services staff and officers who regularly present reports) as very important, and sought the expertise of Melanie Doel (of Brecon Beacons NPA) to provide training. The training was provided over several weeks and sessions, to small groups of members and officers, who were able freely and confidentially to share and discuss any concerns or issues they had with Melanie Doel (who, as a career journalist and member of the NPA, which had been webcasting for some time, was able to pass on many useful tips and a large degree of confidence).

We started webcasting Council and Cabinet meetings in October 2013, as well as webcasting a budget update from the Cabinet Member for Resources and 3 members' seminars which were deemed to be of particular "public interest". Our Democratic and Members Services staff operate the equipment, very successfully, with remote support from public-i as needed. To date there has been no failure of the webcast system. Before a webcast takes place, we promote it via our social media channels, along with a link to the agenda for that meeting, so that people are alerted to it in advance of the meeting.

As at 10 June 2014, our 8 Cabinet meetings which have been webcast attracted 6373 viewings (1641 live and 4732 via the archive). This is an average of 797 per meeting. Council (8 meetings) has attracted 9154 viewings (2987 live and 6167 archive);

an average of 1144 per meeting. The 3 seminars were viewed 1849 times (385 live and 1464 via archive); an average of 616 per meeting (albeit the budget seminar alone attracted 1097 viewings) and the budget update attracted 519 (1 live and 518 via archive). In January 2014, we decided also to webcast overview and scrutiny committees of particular public interest, with 4 meetings webcast so far and 987 viewings (156 live and 831 via archive); an average per meeting of 247.

We know many Council staff watch the meetings, to find out more about how Council, Cabinet and other meetings work, or because they are associated with or impacted upon by decisions being made. We also know that meetings are watched by the public and other people in local government across Wales and further afield. These people could of course be anywhere. We are unable to tell where or who our viewers are, but the system records that we have had 8992 unique visitor addresses (i.e. IP addresses) access the webcasts. Of those, 5358 people have watched once and 3634 people have watched several times/meetings. An IP address could represent an individual person, or a group of people (e.g. a local business).

With a very small public gallery in the Council Chamber (holding about 20 people) it is very clear that the business of the Council has reached thousands of people which it would not otherwise have reached. The Council believes webcasting to be a significant improvement in promoting openness, transparency and, as a result, the working of local democracy. The Council on 24 June 2014 is consequently expected to extend webcasting to all meetings of Scrutiny Committees, as well as the Planning and Licensing Committees. Meetings and the decisions made/events which occurred in them have been the result of significant public debate in Torfaen, as evidenced through our social media and other communication channels – and the initial concerns of many members and



officers have been all but forgotten by most people, as everyone concerned has got used to webcasting and begun to accept it as the norm. There is some perception that meetings are more business-like since webcasting was introduced (e.g. they are a bit shorter in most cases, repetition has reduced and they are more focussed), but no evidence that anyone has been put off speaking in any way. Otherwise, meetings take place exactly as they did before (albeit all meetings now have to take place in the same room), but they have been viewed nearly 19,000 more times than they would otherwise have been viewed.

In conclusion, webcasting meetings in Torfaen has been a huge success and has very clearly reached the parts which otherwise we didn't reach. The engagement of the public and staff has increased substantially as a result of webcasting. Leadership from the front, buy-in from all members and officers (via Council), the training and reassurance provided by others who've gone through it already and our determination to promote and open up democracy were all essential elements.

Torfaen would thoroughly commend webcasting and encourage others to take the plunge.

### **Powys County Council**

Webcasting in Powys developed following a successful "broadcast" of a Council meeting to approximately 2000 people outside the Welshpool Livestock Market in 2011 where a special meeting was held by the Council to discuss wind farm developments in Powys.

Based on the significant probability that future meetings considering wind farm proposals, which would be held at County Hall, would attract attendance by large numbers of the public, the Council investigated the possibility of webcasting as a means of both of controlling the numbers attending the venue and also of ensuring that interested members of the public could

have easy access to the Council's proceedings. This has also assisted the Council in planning these events which can be undertaken far quicker now due to the experience of the team of individuals involved in the process.

Subsequently Welsh Government provided the Council with £40,000 which was used for webcasting, to stimulate an increased use of webcasting by Councils in Wales and to provide greater transparency and accountability of the Council's work.

Overall Powys has had 23395 views based on 17 events. Some examples of total viewing figures for events are listed below:

Major wind farm developments	2705 2877
Planning Committee	1509 1301 1096 782
County Council	1878
County Council – budget meetings	1804 3175
Cabinet	1731 1037
Have Your Say Day (Budget Consultation)	1951
Scrutiny Committee	254

There have been 4 other meetings where viewing figures range from 150 to 490.

### **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority**

The National Park Authority has been webcasting the full Authority meetings, Planning Committee and Audit and Scrutiny Committee for just over two years now and total views stand at 31,500. On average, the National Park Authority meetings receive 671 views, Planning receives 556 and Audit and Scrutiny 436. Both the total and average views per meeting have continued to rise steadily over the two years and the cost per view has reduced from £2.40 to 81p.

We have found the following benefits from webcasting meetings.

- Webcasting encourages good governance and preparation for meetings (by both members and officers!)
- An opportunity to get some messages out into the public domain in the face of criticism on any specific issue
- An opportunity for members to give reports on meetings they have attended or events at which they have represented the Authority demonstrating the wider role of a member
- The public can see the Wales Audit Office presenting their Annual Improvement Reports and the members' responses (sometimes refuting the conclusions of the WAO!)
- We can now hire our meeting facilities complete with webcasting opportunities (we can host this or direct to customer sites)
- We can respond to claims that issues have not been considered or debated properly by sending links to points in meetings where items were debated. We can also prove the accuracy of minutes.

- We have used webcasting to broadcast presentations to meetings – recent examples include: a presentation by the Department of Culture Media and Sport, Welsh Water and Costain.

Future plans include

- Using webcasting to deliver our education programme
- Recording interviews with female members for the Welsh Government or the WLGA to use to encourage more women in public life
- Recording interviews/discussion with members on member development for the Advanced level of the Wales Charter for member support and development
- Exploring options for the use of social media to encourage interest in specific items
- Sharing our *State of the Park Report* with a wider audience
- Engaging more people in the strategic planning for the Park through involving the public in the review of the National Park Management Plan
- Webcasting seminars on topics such as mobile phone coverage and masts.