

COMMITTEE	The Standards Committee
DATE:	18 April 2023
TITLE:	Report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on an investigation into a complaint against Councillor Louise Hughes of Cyngor Gwynedd
AUTHOR:	Siôn Huws, Propriety and Elections Manager
ACTION:	To decide on a complaint against Cllr. Louise Hughes of breaching the Members' Code of Conduct for Cyngor Gwynedd

Background

1. Following a complaint that Councillor Louise Hughes had breached the code of conduct for members of Gwynedd Council, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales decided to conduct an investigation. The Ombudsman concluded that the matter should be referred to the Monitoring Officer for consideration by the Standards Committee.

2. On 13 February 2023 the Committee, in accordance with the Local Government Investigations (Functions of Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees) (Wales) Regulations 2001 ("the Regulations"), decided that Councillor Hughes should be given the opportunity to make representations, either orally or in writing in respect of the findings of the investigation and any allegation that he or she has failed, or may have failed, to comply with the authority's code of conduct.

3. The procedure for dealing with allegations made against members and referred to the Committee can be found in **Appendix A** to this report. Should the Committee be required to consider whether or not to impose a sanction it will have regard to the Sanctions Guidance produced by the Adjudication Panel for Wales, a copy of which is attached as **Appendix B** to this report.

4. The Ombudsman has produced a report on his investigation. Members will be sent this report separately as **Appendix C**, together with any further correspondence from the member and the Ombudsman (**Appendix Ch**)

5. The Standards Committee's procedure includes a step for the Advising Officer and the Chair to consider the need for any further steps to ensure that all the necessary information is available to the Committee. Following this discussion it was decided that it would be beneficial for the Committee to have confirmation from the authority as to exactly what the situation is in terms of members' access to the Council's translation service. The Democratic Services and Language Manager was therefore contacted and the questions raised and the answers will be sent to members separately as **Appendix D**. The Member and the

Ombudsman were given an opportunity to submit further observations on this evidence. Observations were received from the Ombudsman's and are also included in the appendix

6. (These appendices are not made public in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government (Standards Committees, Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (which amended the Standards Committees (Wales) Regulations 2001)

Recommendation

7. That the Committee consider the complaint against Councillor Hughes. The Regulations (reg.9) provide that, after hearing any representations, the Committee must come to one of the following decisions:

(a) that there is no evidence of any failure to comply with the authority's code of conduct and that therefore no action needs to be taken in respect of the matters which are the subject of the investigation;

(b) that the member has failed to comply with the authority's code of conduct but that no action needs to be taken in respect of that failure;

(c) that the member of the authority has failed to comply with the authority's code of conduct and should be censured, or

(d) that the member of the authority has failed to comply with the authority's code of conduct and should be suspended or partially suspended from being a member of that authority for a period not exceeding six months