

MEETING	Standards Committee
DATE	2 November 2026
TITLE	The Local Government And Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (“The Act”) Duties of Political Group Leaders and the Standards Committee
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Background

1. Section 52A(1)(a) of the 2000 Act (as emended by the 2021 Act) requires that a leader of a political group consisting of members of a county council or county borough council in Wales, must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the group. A “group” for this purpose is defined as 2 or more members who give notice to the Proper Officer that they wish to be treated as a group for the purposes of political balance requirements and the allocation of seats on Council Committees
2. The guidance makes it clear that this duty does not make leaders of a political group accountable for the behaviour of their members, as conduct is a matter of individual responsibility. However, they do have a role in taking reasonable steps in maintaining standards, setting an example, using their influence to promote a positive culture, being proactive in promoting high standards of conduct in their group and addressing issues as soon as they arise. A leader of a political group who fails to comply with the new duty in a meaningful way, may potentially be regarded as bringing their office into disrepute, and likely to be in breach of the Code.
3. Section 62(3) of the 2021 Act amends section 54 of the 2000 Act to extend the specific functions of a Standards Committee to include monitoring compliance by leaders of political groups with the new duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group. Political group leaders and Standards Committee should agree on the form and frequency of a report from each group leader to the Committee, which would then consider each report and provide feedback to the group leaders. Standards Committee must also provide advice and training or arrange to train group leaders on the new duty. At the start of each Council term this should take place within six months of the election and be reviewed at least annually. The guidance also suggests that the Standards Committee may wish to meet with group leaders periodically to review arrangements.

4. During this year regular meetings were held between the Group Leaders and the Monitoring Officer. The working relationship with each Leader is positive and supportive. In terms of training 62 members have now completed the full Code of Conduct course. The Leaders appreciate and have supported efforts to address this issue. This positive relationship gives confidence that the benefits of the procedure can be further built on .
5. In collaboration with the Group Leaders, in November 2022 the Committee adopted the duty implementation protocol (Annex 1) and then in February 2024 criteria and reporting form (Annexes 2 and 3). It is timely at the end of the Council's period that the Committee revisits these issues.

Recommendation

The Committee reviews the Protocol , Criteria and Reporting Form.