

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in working with Conwy County Borough Council.

Our Standards Committees provide valuable independent input into the procedures and protocols that Councillors must follow, and recruiting people with the right skills and outlook is key to their success. Within the Committee our role as Independent Members is to bring impartiality to the work of the Committee and to help it set ethical benchmark which Councillors should achieve.

I hope this opportunity is of interest to you and look forward to receiving your application.

Yours

Clive Wolfendale

Chair of Conwy County Borough Council Standards Committee

1. Role and work of the Standards Committee

1.1 The Standards Committee plays a central role in the ethical framework that governs the conduct of Local Authority Members. Every member of a local authority and of every Community and Town Council has undertaken to abide by the Code of Conduct for Members. The main role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives on the Council. This is carried out in practice in a number of ways:-

- The Committee oversees the training and induction programme for Councillors in respect of ethical issues.
- It considers and makes recommendations on the Council's Code of Conduct and the protocol/procedures that expand upon and explain the Code of Conduct.
- It monitors the operation of the Code of Conduct and levels of compliance.
- It also carries out these functions in respect of Town and Community Councils within the Conwy County Borough Council area.

- It considers applications made by Members for dispensations to allow them to take part in discussions even though they have a prejudicial interest under the Code.
- 1.2 The Standards Committee also has an enforcement role. If a complaint about a councillor is made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and he thinks that a potential breach of the Code may have taken place, then he can refer that matter to the Standards Committee for a hearing. The role of that hearing will then be to determine whether or not a breach of the Code has in fact taken place, and if it has, to decide what (if any) is appropriate.
 - 1.3 Lastly, the Standards Committee determines requests for representation by Councillors who have been reported to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in accordance with the Council's Indemnity Scheme for Members and Officers.

2. Meetings and Workload

- 2.1 The Committee normally meets at 2 pm on a Monday every three months at Bodlondeb, Conwy; although some flexibility is required as the Committee can sometimes be called at short notice. Conversely a Committee meeting can sometimes be cancelled if there are no items for the agenda
- 2.2 The meetings are recorded and then placed on the Council's website for public view. Candidates may wish to view past meetings to see the work of the committee and can do so by following the following link –
[Conwy Local Democracy : Browse meetings - Standards Committee](#)
- 2.3 The agenda and reports for every meeting are sent out 3 clear working days in advance of each meeting. Papers for previous meetings can be viewed on the Committee's web page by following the link –
[Conwy Local Democracy : Browse meetings - Standards Committee](#)
- 2.4 All new Members of the Council are given an induction and training programme that is tailored to their needs and experience. Should you be successful in your application then we will discuss with you what training you may require.
- 2.5 Hearings into alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct are not commonplace. When hearings do arise, their duration will depend upon the scale of the alleged breach of the Code and the number of witnesses to be called. Ordinarily though, such cases can be expected to be resolved in a day.
- 2.5 In addition, all the Councils in Wales run a Standards Conference, normally every two years and the Chair of the Standards Committee attends a National Standards Committee Forum that meets twice a year.

3. Composition of the Standards Committee and the role of Independent Members

3.1 The Standards Committee consists of:

- five independent members;
- three Conwy County Borough Councillors; and
- one member of a Town or Community Council.

3.2 This means that Independent Members are in the majority on the Committee. Their role is very important. Their presence is designed to ensure that the Committee is as independent as possible of the Council in order to ensure that its decisions are, and are seen to be, impartial. As informed “lay” members of the Committee they are there to bring an external perspective to the deliberations of the Committee and to help look at issues with a “fresh pair of eyes”.

3.3 The importance of that role is reflected in the rules for how the Committee operates. Independent Members must make up at least half of the number of Members present at any individual meeting. If that is not the case then the meeting is deemed to be “inquorate” and will not be able to take place. Whilst we accept that Independent Members cannot always make it to every meeting, it is clearly important that they attend whenever possible, in order to avoid the Committee being inquorate.

3.4 The position of Chair of the Committee must also be held by an Independent Member. This ensures that the role, which is responsible for shaping the work, direction and culture of the Committee, is held by someone independent, reinforcing its impartiality.

4. Number of Vacancies and Duration of Appointment

4.1 The length of time that an Independent Member can serve on the Standards Committee is specified in legislation. Independent Members can serve for between 4 – 6 years in their first term. They are then eligible to be reappointed for a second term, but overall may not serve more than 10 years in total.

5. Payment and Expenses

5.1 Independent Members of the Standards Committee are paid an allowance for attending Committee meetings, pre-briefings and training. That allowance is set by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

5.2 The allowance is currently £205 for a full day’s attendance (between 4-8 hours) and £105 for a half day (up to 4 hours). In addition, expenses are payable (such as travelling) in accordance with the Council’s Scheme of Allowances.

6. Process of Appointment

6.1 Applicants will be shortlisted by a panel comprising of three Independent Members of the Standards Committee and an independent panel member. The panel will be advised by the Monitoring Officer, Matt Georgiou.

6.2 Applicants will be expected to show through their application forms and at interview that they meet the following criteria:

- Be of good character and integrity
- Have listening skills
- Have the ability to understand and weigh up evidence
- Have the ability to come to an objective view and explain that view by reference to the evidence
- Have team working skills
- Have respect for others and an understanding of diverse issues
- Be discrete
- Not actively participate in local or national politics
- Not have had significant previous disputes with the Authority
- Not have a close relationship with any Member/Officer of the Authority

6.3 In addition, applicants must be demonstrably independent of Conwy County Borough Council and Local Government. Therefore restrictions apply, and anyone who falls into one or more of the following categories will not be eligible to be an Independent Member:

- He/she should not be a Member or Officer of Conwy County Borough Council or another County Council, County Borough Council, National Park Authority, Fire Authority or Community Council.
- He/she should not be the spouse or partner of a Member or Officer of Conwy County Borough Council another County Council, County Borough Council, National Park Authority, Fire Authority or Community Council.
- He/she should not have been at any point in the past a Member/Officer or spouse/partner of a Member/Officer of Conwy County Borough Council or Conwy's predecessor Councils (i.e. Gwynedd County Council, Clwyd County Council, Aberconwy Borough Council, Colwyn Borough Council)
- He/she must be able to meet the time commitment involved. Some flexibility is required as meetings may be held irregularly or at short notice.

6.4 Shortlisted applicants will then be invited for interview.

6.5 The interview will consist of a series of questions which you will be expected to answer.

6.6 Following the interviews, the favoured applicants will be considered by the Standards Committee. The Standards Committee will then make its recommendation to Council, which will make the final appointment.

6.7 The timetable for the application process is as follows:

3/8/2023	Deadline for applications
4/8/2023	Shortlisting
7/8/2023	Notification of selection for interview
14/8/2023	Interviews
19/10/2023	Full Council makes the formal appointment

When submitting an application, please indicate whether or not you will be available to attend an interview on this date.

6.8 Data Protection

Conwy County Borough Council will process personal data using its official authority and only use it for the purpose of recruitment onto and membership of the Standards Committee. The information will only be shared with those officers and Members involved in the recruitment process (noting that the final appointment will be made by way of publicly accessible report to the whole County Council). If you are successful we will retain your application form for the term of your service on the Standards Committee. If you are unsuccessful your application form will be securely destroyed at the end of the recruitment process. Further information on your rights and how to complain if you are unhappy with how your personal data has been handled can be found on the Council's [website](#).