

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 20 November 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25.
Purpose of Report:	To present to Members the Annual Report and Accounts for the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales for the year ending 31st March, 2025 in respect of Members' Code of Conduct matters.
Report Owner:	Victoria Davidson, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Amy Rudman, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report does not require consultation to be undertaken.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for decision by the Standards Committee.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Annual Report 2024/2025 provides details relating to the functions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman). Turning the page - Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 • Standards Committee Members are requested to consider the references detailed in the Ombudsman's Report in respect of complaints of Members of Local Authorities who have breached their Authority's Members' Code of Conduct. • The Annual Report of the Ombudsman has been produced in a different format to previous reports and the relevant sections for the Committee's consideration can be found on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key Statistics: pages 12 and 13. - Code of Conduct Complaint: pages 32 – 41. 	

Recommendation

1. T H A T the Standards Committee consider the aspects within the Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales referring to Code of Conduct matters within the remit of the Standards Committee.

Reason for Recommendation

1. For consideration by Members of the Standards Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Annual Report is a combined report addressing matters relating to the dual functions of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (the Ombudsman) including financial management.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The Ombudsman's Report addresses the three main roles of the Ombudsman, which are to investigate complaints about public service providers in Wales, to consider complaints of Members of Local Authorities who have breached their Authority's Members' Code of Conduct and to drive systematic improvement of public services. The full report is available via the link below:

[Turning the page - Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25](#)

- 2.2 The Ombudsman's Office has also produced an Executive Summary, Easy Read Version of the document and Video which can also be found via the Ombudsman's website on the links below:

[Turning the page - Annual Report and Accounts 2024-25 - Executive Summary](#)

Easy read - [Public Service Ombudsmen for Wales Annual Report](#)

Video - https://youtu.be/8_4ZBKmvKVw?si=CvlckLOAUVbD6FFt

- 2.3 With particular reference to Members' Code of Conduct complaints, the Ombudsman may consider complaints about the behaviour of:

- County and County Borough Councils;
- Town and Community Councils;
- Fire Authorities;
- National Park Authorities;
- Police and Crime Panels.

- 2.4** The Annual Report notes that all the Authorities' Members' Code of Conduct set out in detail how Members must follow recognised principles of behaviour in public life. The Ombudsman further states that if a County Councillor wishes to make a complaint about another County Councillor in their own Authority, it is expected that they first of all make their complaint to that Authority's Monitoring Officer as it may be possible to resolve the matter locally without the Ombudsman's involvement.
- 2.5** The Ombudsman's office sets out on pages 12 and 13 of the report infographics which provide, amongst other statistics, some key statistics on the percentage of enquiries and complaints received; public awareness of the service, percentage case intervention.
- 2.6** A summary of finding is as follows:

Total complaints received: 315 (↓ 4% from previous year; ↑ 36% since 2019-20).

Source breakdown:

60% from town and community councils.

40% from county councils.

Most common breach: Failure to promote equality and respect (56% of complaints).

Investigations:

49 complaints investigated (≈15% of those closed).

15 cases referred to Standards Committees or Adjudication Panel for Wales.

85% of referred breaches were upheld.

Sanctions imposed:

Suspensions (2–6 months), censures, and disqualifications (up to 3 years).

Whistleblowing:

26 complaints potentially met whistleblowing criteria.

13 proceeded to investigation; 3 referred to Adjudication Panel.

Independent review:

Conducted following a social media incident.

Found processes fair, impartial, and politically neutral.

All recommendations implemented by March 2025.

Quality assurance:

New KPIs introduced; 5% of decisions sampled.

100% of sampled decisions deemed appropriate.

Staff support and training:

Updated policies on social media, unconscious bias, and resilience.

Recruitment now includes values-based assessments and social media checks.

- 2.7** The Full Annual Report has not been reproduced in its entirety in this report as the remaining sections refer primarily to the organisation's strategic aims, internal governance arrangements, and accountability, a people section, sustainability, and the organisations financial management. Set out with the report is the organisations Corporate Governance report from page 93 including the annual governance statement for 2024/25.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** This report relates to the role of the Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of Members as detailed in the Council's Constitution.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** None as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** None as a direct result of this report.

Employment

- 5.2** None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** None as a direct result of this report.

6. Background Papers

None