

THE CONSTITUTION – SECTION 18

B. MEMBERS' SELF REGULATORY PROTOCOL

1. General Principles

- 1.1 To promote high standards of conduct and behaviour as a means of strengthening respect and trust among members. It is NOT intended to replace the Code of Conduct, rather it is intended to sit alongside the Code, enabling behaviour which may not reach the threshold to become a breach to be dealt with; and that which justifies a formal complaint to the Ombudsman.
- 1.2 The protocol does not replace the Member-Officer Relations Protocol set out in the Council's Constitution.
- 1.3 Members must make all reasonable attempts to resolve disputes through agreed internal processes subject to their obligations under the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 1.4 Referral to external regulators will become a last resort subject to Members' obligations under the Code of Conduct.
- 1.5 Members will avoid personal confrontation in any public forum, especially full Council and through the media
- 1.6 These commitments will not stifle legitimate political debate or scrutiny
- 1.7 Group discipline will become the cornerstone of self-regulation with Group Leaders taking responsibility for their own members
- 1.8 Group Leaders individually and collectively will work to ensure compliance with this protocol
- 1.9 Members will commit to undertaking training and development in support of this protocol.

2. Working to avoid problems

To minimise the number of instances of alleged breaches all Group Leaders have committed to :-

- (i) Member Development Strategy – to which they will seek to secure the commitment of their group members. All reasonable endeavours will be made to ensure that the Member Development Strategy identifies and responds to the needs of members.
- (ii) Attending relevant Member training events - in particular those relating to the Code of Conduct or probity courses within the scope of their role.
- (iii) WLGA Charter – The Council is committed to retaining the WLGA's Charter for Member Support and Development and supports its objectives. Group Leaders will seek to secure individual member commitment to training and keep this under review.

3. Role of Group Leaders

- 3.1 A complaint by a member relating to a member of the same group will be referred to the Group Leader. A complaint by a member concerning the activities of a member of a different political group will be discussed with the complainant's own Group Leader, who will then refer the issue to the Group Leader with responsibility for the member against whom the complaint is made.
- 3.2 Upon receiving a complaint, it is the role of Group Leaders to take responsibility for discipline within their groups. Group discipline should seek to be informal, resolved through face to face meetings. Group Leaders will need to retain some records but the process will not be "document heavy". The emphasis should be on training, education, mediation and conciliation.
- 3.3 When appropriate, a sanction such as removal from a committee or an outside body, may be used in extreme cases or after persistent breaches and the matter will be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
- 3.4 Prior to considering any sanction, or training, the relevant Group Leader may consult with the Chair of the Standards Committee in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer. The Standards Committee will seek to ensure fairness and consistency in the discipline imposed within each Group.
- 3.5 At the next available Group Leaders' meeting any issue of discipline which has been referred to a Group Leader will be discussed with the Group and with the objective of seeking to ensure that fair and consistent sanctions are applied.
- 3.6 Where the complaint relates to the Group Leader themselves, the Mayor will be requested to consider the complaint, just as with non aligned or unaffiliated members.

4. Non Aligned or Unaffiliated Members

- 4.1 As far as non-aligned or unaffiliated members are concerned, the Mayor will fulfil the role of "Group Leader". Concerns regarding the conduct of an unaffiliated member should be referred to the Mayor who will apply the same principles and standards as those of the Group Leaders in terms of training/mediation/conciliation.

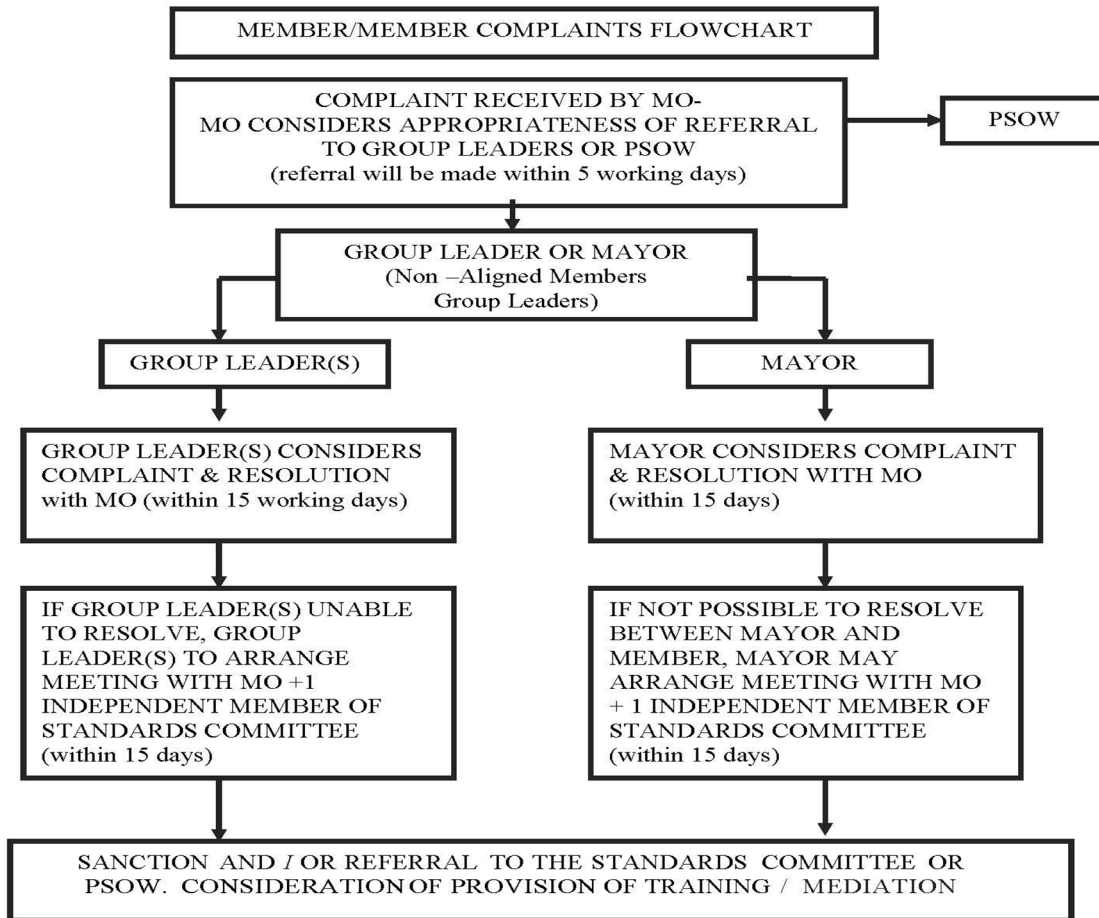
5. Persistent Breaches

- 5.1 In the case of persistent breaches, or areas where the Group Leaders have concerns that the conduct of an individual member or members is damaging to relations between political groups or to the reputation of the Council, then the Group Leaders will meet with the Chief Executive Officer and the Monitoring Officer to agree a way forward. Consideration will be given to joint references to the Ombudsman, by the Group Leaders, for persistent low level breaches.

6. Standards Committee

- 6.1 Owing to any potential issues of conflict, any involvement as referred to in paragraph 3.4 above will include no more than one independent member of the Standards Committee. This will be subject to a rotational basis and in accordance with availability.
- 6.2 The Standards Committee Members will play a supporting/advisory role to the Group Leaders. This process will be initiated at the request of the Group Leader, in a particular case.
- 6.3 Such meetings will be private and informal.
- 6.4 Any documentation, attendance notes, file notes or advisory notes passing between a Group Leader (or as appropriate the Mayor) and the members of the Standards Committee shall remain private and confidential (subject to compliance with Freedom of Information legislation).

Appendix A comprises a flow chart of the steps set out in the Members' Self-Regulatory Protocol described in Section 18B above.



IN THE CASE OF PERSISTENT BREACHES, GROUP LEADERS WILL MEET WITH THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND MONITORING OFFICER TO AGREE WAY FORWARD. CONSIDERATION MAY BE GIVEN TO JOINT REFERENCES TO THE OMBUDSMAN BY GROUP LEADERS FOR PERSISTENT, LOW LEVEL BREACHES.

MO = Monitoring Officer
PSOW = Public Services Ombudsman for Wales