

Agenda – Standards of Conduct Committee

Meeting Venue:

Video-conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 12 May 2025

Meeting time: 09.00

For further information contact:

Meriel Singleton

Committee Clerk

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SeneddStandards@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting

(8.45 – 9.00)

Public

(9.00 – 9.45)

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

2 Inquiry into dignity and respect: Evidence session 4

(9.00 – 9.45)

Anthony Cooper, Head of Office, Welsh Labour

Francess Ifan, Chief of Staff, Plaid Cymru

David TC Davies, Chief of Staff, Welsh Conservatives

3 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting

Private

(9.45 – 11.00)

4 Inquiry into dignity and respect: Evidence session 4

(9.45 – 10.00)

Anthony Cooper, Head of Office, Welsh Labour

Francess Ifan, Chief of Staff, Plaid Cymru

David TC Davies, Chief of Staff, Welsh Conservatives



5 Consideration of evidence

(10.00 – 10.15)

6 Review of the Senedd's rules and practice on the Declaration of Members' Interests: Proposals for reform

(10.15 – 10.35)

(Pages 1 – 12)

7 Inquiry into Individual Member Accountability: Donations

(10.35 – 10.55)

(Pages 13 – 20)

8 Dignity and Respect engagement questionnaire – summer events

(10.55 – 11.00)

(Pages 21 – 22)

9 Papers to note

9.1 Letter to the Chair of Business Committee

(Pages 23 – 25)

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Rt Hon. Elin Jones MS, Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

By email

1 May 2025

The Standards of Conduct Committee's reports on its inquiry into Individual Member Accountability

Dear Elin

As you may already be aware, the Standards of Conduct Committee ('the Committee') has been conducting an inquiry into Individual Member Accountability. It has recently reported on two of those areas: [Recall](#) and [Deliberate Deception](#).

Some of the recommendations in those reports relate to Senedd procedures and are for the Business Committee's consideration. We have been awaiting responses from the Welsh Government before writing to draw your attention to the relevant recommendations, as some would depend on the Minister making the necessary legislative changes recommended by the Committee. We have since received the [Welsh Government's response to the recall report](#) and the [Welsh Government's response to the deliberate deception report](#), accepting all recommendations, either in full or in principle.

We would therefore like to draw your attention to the recommendations listed below.

The Committee has already started to develop ideas of how some of these recommendations can be put into practice and intends to bring forward more detailed suggestions for Business Committee to consider. We intend to bring forward proposals on recommendations 8 and 9 towards the end of the Autumn term, however, as the other recommendations are dependent on the Welsh Government making the relevant changes to legislation, it is likely the Committee will make proposals on these early in the Spring term for the Seventh Senedd to consider.

Recall

Recommendation 6 (see also recommendation 10 of the 'Deliberate Deception' report). The Committee recommends that the legislation should require, in Standing Orders, the responsible committee to produce guidelines on the application of recall, including matters which may result in automatic recall (if not included on the face of the bill). This guidance should be subject to a vote by the Senedd –

Accepted in principle

This recommendation is dependent on the detail contained in the legislation brought forward by the Welsh Government.

Deliberate Deception

Recommendation 1. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government, on the basis of the evidence gathered by the Committee on related definitions within existing legislation, should clearly define deliberate deception in legislation relating to Senedd elections; and that it is replicated in any associated Standing Orders and guidance. – Accepted in principle

This recommendation is dependent on the detail contained in legislation brought forward by the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 2. The Committee recommends that section 28 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 is amended to allow the Senedd to appoint lay members to the Standards of Conduct Committee. - Accepted

This recommendation is dependent on the Welsh Government making the required legislative change.

The Committee intends to build on the evidence it has gathered as part of this inquiry, including exploring the model adopted by the House of Commons, to bring forward some detailed proposals on how this may work in practice.

Recommendation 8. The Committee recommends that Standing Orders, and associated guidance, are amended to introduce a two-stage formal process for Members to correct the record. This would include:

- *A procedure to allow Members to voluntarily, or at the request of another Member, correct the record/withdraw statements in cases of unintentional and minor inaccuracies;*
- *Introducing a requirement for Members to correct factually incorrect statements at the earliest opportunity when required to do so on the recommendation of the Commissioner for Standards, via a 'correction notice';*
- *A requirement that corrections are published with equal prominence to the inaccurate statement; and*
- *A provision that failure to comply with a correction notice is a breach of the Code of Conduct and sanctioned as deceptive conduct by the Member. – For consideration of the Business Committee and the Senedd, noted by the Welsh Government.*

The Committee's view is that the issuing of correction notices could play an important role in stopping the spread of misinformation in the simplest and fastest way. The Committee has already received evidence suggesting ways such a procedure could be introduced in the Senedd. We therefore intend to develop a more detailed proposal for Business Committee to consider.

Recommendation 9. The Committee recommends that reports published on breaches of the Code of Conduct, as well as correction notices issued, should be published on Members of the Senedd's web

pages and, where applicable, to the Record of Proceedings. – For consideration of the Business Committee and the Senedd, noted by the Welsh Government.

To improve transparency, and to reinforce the seriousness in which the Committee considers breaches of the Code of Conduct, we believe that correction notices should be published on the Record of Proceedings where inaccurate statements have occurred on the floor of the Senedd, and that correction notices and breach reports should be published on Members' profile web pages.

Recommendation 10 (see also recommendation 6 of the 'Recall' report). The Committee recommends that, should legislation be brought forward to introduce a remove and replace procedure, that:

- *Sanctioning guidelines are agreed and published by the Senedd; and*
- *Any guidelines that contain deliberate deception as a trigger, should specify that it is only to be recommended when the breach is severe in nature. - Accepted*

This recommendation is dependent on the detail contained in legislation brought forward by the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 11. The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government introduces a legislative mechanism to enable any future appeals procedure, to be brought into force by the Senedd. –

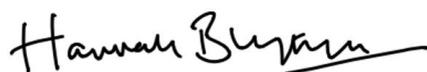
Accepted in principle

This recommendation is dependent on the detail contained in legislation brought forward by the Welsh Government.

Further detail about the context to these recommendations may be found in the narrative of the reports.

The Committee would welcome the Business Committee's consideration of these matters as part of its procedural work programme.

Yours sincerely



Hannah Blythyn MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.