

## **Protocol describing the principal functions of the Monitoring Officer and the manner in which the authority expects him/her to discharge those functions**

### **1 Functions**

The principal functions of the Monitoring Officer shall be:

- 1.1 To report to the Council and to the Executive in any case where he/she is of the opinion that any proposal, decision or proposal of the authority in respect of any “reportable incident” (being any matter which, in his/her opinion, has given rise to or is likely to or would give rise to any illegality, or breach of statutory code or which has given rise to any maladministration under Sections 5 and 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989);
- 1.2 To investigate any matter which he/she has reason to believe may constitute, or where he/she has received an allegation that a matter may constitute, a reportable incident or a failure to observe the authority’s Code of Conduct for Members;
- 1.3 To act as the principal adviser to the authority’s Standards Committee;
- 1.4 To maintain the register of members’ interests;
- 1.5 Where so appointed by the Council, to act as the proper officer for the preparation, publication and retention of records of decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council and the Executive;
- 1.6 Responsibility as set out in Council policies or regulations for Complaints, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and Whistle-Blowing functions of the authority;
- 1.7 To consult regularly with the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer, Head of Human Resources and the Chief Internal Auditor to identify areas where the probity of the authority can be improved or better protected, and to take appropriate actions;
- 1.8 To respond to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in respect of any complaint of a breach of the authority’s Code which is referred to him/her for local investigation and/or determination;
- 1.9 A power to investigate any application for a dispensation and to report and recommend to the Standards Committee;
- 1.10 To secure that members and officers of the authority are fully aware of their obligations in relation to probity;
- 1.11 To report to the Executive and to the Council on the resources which he/she requires for the discharge of his functions;
- 1.12 To report regularly to the Standards Committee on the performance of his/her functions and to make any recommendations, which would better enable those functions to be performed;
- 1.13 To undertake all statutory Monitoring Officer functions, including:

- 1.13.1 advice on the requirement to adopt a Local Code within 6 months of the publication of the relevant Model Code;
- 1.13.2 advice on the requirement upon members to sign an undertaking to observe their authority's Local Code within two months of the authority adopting its Local Code and within one month of election to the Council;
- 1.13.3 advice on the requirement for members to notify the Proper Officer of the Council of any personal interests where such interests will form part of a public register, and means of gaining access to that register.
- 1.13.4 advice on the need to apply to the Standards Committee for any dispensations and of the arrangements agreed by the Standards Committee for receiving and determining any such applications, and for maintaining a register of such dispensations and advising the applicant and the Council of any dispensations which are granted;
- 1.13.5 advice on any provisions under which individual complaints of misconduct by members may be referred or delegated to the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee for investigation and determination, and any arrangements agreed by the Monitoring Officer and the Standards Committee for dealing with such complaints; and
- 1.13.6 advice and action under the terms of the Council's Local Resolution Protocol and Procedure for complaints against members of the authority under that Protocol and/or the obligation of any member to report a potential breach of the Code of Conduct.
- 1.13.7 advice to individual members on enquiries as to their obligations to declare or notify particular interests, on the need to apply for a dispensation, and on any consequent restrictions on the member's participation in consideration of the matter.
- 1.13.8 the provision of support and advice to Community and Town Councils within the area of the authority in maintaining probity, including advice on the requirement for members to notify the Proper Officer of that Council of any personal interests where such interests will form part of a public register, means of gaining access to that register, and of any arrangements to ensure that the Proper Officer of Community and Town Council are kept informed of any such declarations.

## **2 Resources**

For the purpose of carrying out these functions, the Monitoring Officer shall be provided with the following resources:

- 2.1 The right of access to all documents and information held by or on behalf of the authority, including documents and information held by any officer or member of the authority. For the purpose of clarification, this right does not extend to documents and information held by or on behalf of any political party or group represented on the Council;
- 2.2 The right of access to any meetings of officers or members (or both) of the authority, whether or not such meetings include any other persons. For the purpose of clarification, this right does not extend to any meetings held by or on behalf of any political party or group represented on the Council;

- 2.3 The right to require any officer or member of the authority, or any contractor of the authority, to provide an explanation of any matter under investigation;
- 2.4 A right to report to the Council, the Standards Committee, and to the Executive, including a right to present a written report and to attend at meetings and to advise verbally;
- 2.5 The right to require the assistance of any officer of the authority in carrying out an investigation and to delegate to that officer any of the powers of the post of Monitoring Officer in relation to the investigation;
- 2.6 The right of access to the Head of the Paid Service and to the Section 151 Officer and the Corporate Management Team;
- 2.7 The consent of the authority to disclose information and documents to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, even where such disclosure would otherwise be in breach of the Monitoring Officer's duty of confidentiality to the authority;
- 2.8 The right, after consultation with the Head of the Paid Service and the Section 151 Officer, to notify the Police, the authority's auditors and other regulatory agencies of his/her concerns in respect of any matter and to provide them with information and documents in order to assist them with their statutory functions;
- 2.9 The right to obtain at the authority's expense legal advice, either internally or from an independent external solicitor or barrister, on any matter which he/she believes may be a reportable incident, and sufficient financial resource to enable him/her to do so.

### **3 Discharge of Functions**

- 3.1 It is recognised that the Monitoring Officer will be most effective if he/she is able to advise on any issue at an early stage of policy formulation or implementation. Accordingly, officers and members of the authority should routinely inform and consult the Monitoring Officer in respect of new policy proposals and action programmes;
- 3.2 The Monitoring Officer will seek to resolve potential reportable incidents by avoiding the illegality, etc, or by identifying alternative and legitimate means of achieving the objective of the proposal. Accordingly, officers and members of the authority may consult the Monitoring Officer in confidence in respect of any proposal, and the Monitoring Officer will only need to make a public report on the matter if the proposal were to be a potential reportable incident and the officer or member subsequently took any action to progress that proposal despite being advised to the contrary by the Monitoring Officer;
- 3.3 Where the Monitoring Officer receives a complaint of a potential reportable incident, he/she shall in appropriate cases seek to resolve the matter amicably, by securing that any illegality, failure of process or breach of code is rectified, that the complainant is informed of the rectification, with or without a compensation payment and/or apology. However, it is recognised that the Monitoring Officer may determine that the matter is of such importance that a statutory report is the only appropriate response.
- 3.4 In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may rely upon existing processes within the authority (such as internal appeals procedures or insurance arrangements) to resolve any potential reportable incident, but may intervene in such processes to identify that the particular matter is a potential reportable incident and to ensure the satisfactory resolution of the issue;
- 3.5 In appropriate cases, and to secure the rapid resolution of a potential reportable incident or avoid a separate statutory report, the Monitoring Officer shall be entitled to add his/her written advice to the report of any other officer of the authority;

- 3.6 Notwithstanding the above, the Monitoring Officer retains the right to make a statutory report where, after consultation with the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer, he/she is of the opinion that such is necessary in order to respond properly to a reportable incident.
- 3.7 Where the Monitoring Officer becomes aware of facts which, if substantiated, would indicate a failure by one or more members of the authority to observe the Code of Conduct for Members, the Monitoring Officer may:
- 3.7.1 advise any member or complainant to report the facts to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ( PSOW ) ; or
  - 3.7.2 conduct, or arrange for the conduct of, a preliminary investigation (see below); or
  - 3.7.3 Report the matter to the PSOW without any investigation
- 3.8 Where, upon preliminary investigation, the Monitoring Officer is of the opinion that there is substantive evidence to suggest that a member of the authority has failed to observe the Code of Conduct, he/she shall consider whether the matter is capable of local resolution and, if so, take such action as is necessary to seek to resolve the matter in accordance with the Council's local resolution procedure.
- 3.9 Where the Monitoring Officer is of the opinion that such a matter is not capable of local resolution, is so serious that local resolution is not appropriate or where such efforts have failed, the Monitoring Officer may report the matter to the Public services Ombudsman for Wales. Before so reporting, the Monitoring Officer shall where practicable consult the Chief Executive (or in his/her absence the Section 151 Officer).

#### **4 Conflicts**

Where the Monitoring Officer is in receipt of a complaint or is aware of a potential reportable event relating to a matter upon which he/she has previously advised the authority, he/she shall consult the Chief Executive who may request an independent person or a neighbouring authority to make their Monitoring Officer available to the authority to investigate the matter and report to the Chief Executive and/or the authority as appropriate.