

Standards of Conduct Committee

Legacy: Sixth Senedd

March 2026



The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

An electronic copy of this document can be found on the Welsh Parliament website: **www.senedd.wales/SeneddStandards**

Copies of this document can also be obtained in accessible formats including Braille, large print, audio or hard copy from:

Standards of Conduct Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Tel: **0300 200 6565**

Email: **SeneddStandards@senedd.wales**

© **Senedd Commission Copyright 2026**

The text of this document may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium providing that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading or derogatory context. The material must be acknowledged as copyright of the Senedd Commission and the title of the document specified.

Standards of Conduct Committee

Legacy: Sixth Senedd

March 2026



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 23 June 2021. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddStandards

Current Committee membership:



Committee Chair:
Hannah Blythyn MS
Welsh Labour



Mick Antoniw MS
Welsh Labour



Tom Giffard MS
Welsh Conservatives



Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Plaid Cymru

Contents

Recommendations	5
1. Role of the Standards of Conduct Committee	6
Membership.....	6
The make-up and structure of the Committee.....	7
Senedd Commissioner for Standards	7
Acting Commissioner for Standards	8
2. Standards of Conduct Committee in the Sixth Senedd	9
Complaint reports considered by the Committee.....	9
Complaints relating to Social Media	9
Reports leaked to the media	10
Reading Room	11
Dignity and Respect.....	11
Individual Member Accountability.....	11
Registration and Declaration of Interests.....	12
Oversight of the Standards of Conduct regime.....	13
Revising the Code of Conduct.....	13
Cross-Party Groups monitoring	13
3. Forward Look for the Seventh Senedd	15
Appointment of a new Commissioner and considerations for recruitment process.....	15
Developing recall guidance to be agreed by the Senedd (including a public consultation).....	15
Appointment of lay Members and any associated work with modelling how lay members will interact with the Standards process.....	16
Introduction of a correction notice procedure.....	16

Review of the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints.....17

Lobbying and Donations: ongoing work and areas requiring further
consideration17

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Committee recommends that the next Committee considers how emerging technologies—such as AI-generated content, deepfakes and impersonation—may affect Member conduct, and assess whether updates to the Code or guidance are required..... Page 10

Recommendation 2. The Committee recommends the next Committee follows up and highlights the relevant recommendations in the Dignity and Respect report to the relevant parties, as well as taking forward the recommendations relevant to the Committee, to ensure progress continues in this area.Page 11

Recommendation 3. The Committee recommends that the next Committee considers further post legislative scrutiny of the Commissioner for Standards Measure 2009 in terms of how the measure has operated.....Page 12

Recommendation 4. The Committee recommends that the next Committee do a short review at the mid-point of the Senedd to ensure the amendments to registration and declaration of interests are working effectively.....Page 13

Recommendation 5. The Committee recommends that our successor committee consider, at the outset, the level of tolerance it will apply to instances of non-compliance with the Cross Party Group rules and communicate that expectation and the consequences of non-compliance to groups.....Page 13

Recommendation 6. The Committee recommends that the next Committee consults widely in developing the guidance for recall and seeks professional and expert advice from those with expertise in related spheres, such as professional disciplinary procedures.....Page 15

Recommendation 7. The Committee recommends amending the procedure for dealing with complaints against Members of the Senedd to reflect the recommendations in the Committee’s Dignity and Respect report and the legislative changes in the Members Accountability Bill.....Page 17

Recommendation 8. The Committee recommends that the next Committee continues the work on individual Member accountability by considering lobbying and donations..... Page 18

1. Role of the Standards of Conduct Committee

1. The Standards of Conduct Committee (“the Committee”) was established on 23 June 2021.
2. The Committee’s role is to carry out the functions set out in Standing Order 22.1. These include:
 - the investigation of complaints referred to it by the Standards Commissioner;
 - consideration of any matters of principle relating to the conduct of Members;
 - establishing procedures for the investigation of complaints; and
 - arrangements for the Register of Members’ interests and other relevant public records determined by Standing Orders.

Membership

3. At the end of the sixth Senedd the Committee membership stood as:
 - Hannah Blythyn
 - Peredur Owen Griffiths
 - Mick Antoniw
 - Tom Giffard
4. Previous members of the Committee were:
 - Vikki Howells
 - Heledd Fychan
 - John Griffiths
 - Mark Drakeford
 - Andrew RT Davies
 - Natasha Asghar

- Samuel Kurtz

5. We would like to thank these members for their contribution to the work of the Committee during the Sixth Senedd.

The make-up and structure of the Committee

6. The Sixth Senedd has seen a continuation of the significant workload of the Standards of Conduct Committee which started in the Fifth Senedd. This has been in part due to the increase in number and complexity of complaints, but also due to the work around Individual Member Accountability.

7. The Senedd Cymru (Member Accountability and Elections) Bill (“Member Accountability Bill”) currently awaiting Royal Assent, will make the Standards of Conduct Committee a mandatory Committee. This is an important indicator of the importance the Senedd attaches to the highest standards of Member conduct.

Senedd Commissioner for Standards

8. Douglas Bain CBE, TD was appointed as the third Commissioner for Standards (the Commissioner). His appointment commenced on 1 April 2021 just before the beginning of the Sixth Senedd and will come to an end on 31 March 2027.

9. The Commissioner is appointed by the Senedd. However, the office is independent of the Senedd.. The officeholder is required to produce an annual report, which is laid before the Senedd, outlining how they have performed the functions of that office during the year, the expenditure of the Commissioner’s office and what is planned for the following year.

10. The Commissioner is responsible for investigating complaints made to them in relation to the conduct of Members of the Senedd. The Commissioner must conduct their investigation in accordance with rules of the ‘Procedure for dealing with complaints against Members of the Senedd’¹ approved by the Senedd but cannot otherwise be directed by the Senedd as to the conduct and findings of investigations.

¹ [Procedure for dealing with complaints against Members of the Senedd](#)

Acting Commissioner for Standards

11. During this Senedd, the provision for Acting Commissioner provided for under section 4 of the National Assembly for Wales Commissioner for Standards Measure 2009 (the Measure), was used on one occasion when the Commissioner considered himself conflicted, and so unable to act. On 21 November 2024, the Senedd agreed to the appointment of Melissa McCullough (Commissioner for Standards for the Northern Ireland Assembly, and the Pan-Island Commissioner for Standards) as the Acting Commissioner on that occasion.

2. Standards of Conduct Committee in the Sixth Senedd

Complaint reports considered by the Committee

12. The Committee considered 27 full complaint reports from the Commissioner. Four of these related to matters that had not been completed in the fifth Senedd and involved Members who had not been returned to the Senedd.

13. This was the first occasions reports had been received in relation to former Members and the Committee notes that there are limited actions that can be taken in these circumstances, beyond the publication of the report (or a summary thereof) with an indication of the sanction that would have been imposed had the Member been returned.

14. The Commissioner also submitted 12 ‘no breach’ reports to the Committee. These are complaints that have been investigated under the admissibility criteria set out in paragraph 4.2 of the Procedure, however the Commissioner has concluded that no breach of the Code of Conduct (“the Code”)² has occurred. This was significantly increased from previous Seneddau and provides a useful indication about what does and does not constitute a breach of the Code.

15. The Commissioner has also submitted a number of reports under the rectification procedure, as outlined in paragraphs 7.6 and 7.7 of the Procedure.³ This has allowed matters which are small technical breaches of the Code to be dealt with in a proportional manner, while ensuring that any patterns of failure to comply can be addressed.

16. The Committee has published a list of the rectifications on its website during the sixth Senedd.⁴

Complaints relating to Social Media

17. Throughout the Sixth Senedd, the Committee has observed a significant increase in complaints concerning Members’ conduct on social media, as has been the case in many other Parliaments. This trend is a matter of serious concern. In our report on dignity and respect, we highlighted the substantial

² [Code of Conduct on the Standards of Conduct of Members of the Senedd](#)

³ [Procedure for dealing with complaints against Members of the Senedd](#)

⁴ [Completed work and Published Reports - Standards of Conduct Committee](#)

challenges and abuse faced by many on online platforms. As elected representatives, we have a responsibility to show leadership in this space by ensuring that online debate is conducted honestly, respectfully, and in a manner befitting the office we hold.

18. In view of these observations the Committee considered whether the Members' Code of Conduct required revision, and proposed amendments to the Code for the Seventh Senedd. The Committee has sought to set clear expectations for Members' behaviour on social media. This includes making Members solely accountable for any information bearing their name, whether posted directly by themselves or by staff acting on their behalf. An obligation is now placed on Members to correct or retract inaccurate or misleading information they publish or repost. The future Standards of Conduct Committee may want to consider how it would like to formalise a procedure for correcting the record. This is explored further under paragraphs 41 – 44 of this report.

19. The Committee recognises that this is an area of rapid change. A future Committee may therefore wish to receive updates from the newly established Social Media Monitoring Unit within the Senedd Commission, to better understand emerging challenges and inform the provision of any additional support, clarification of guidance or amendment to the Code.

Recommendation 1. The Committee recommends that the next Committee considers how emerging technologies—such as AI-generated content, deepfakes and impersonation—may affect Member conduct, and assess whether updates to the Code or guidance are required.

Reports leaked to the media

20. The Committee dealt with a number of reports this Senedd, which were unfortunately shared with the media at different points in the process. In particular, the reports relating to Rhys ab Owen MS and Laura Anne Jones MS received a lot of media speculation and coverage while the complaints were under investigation by the Commissioner and while the Committee were undertaking their considerations. This is a matter of regret and frustration for the Committee. While we appreciate the length of time taken can be frustrating to those involved, it is incumbent on all involved to respect the confidentiality requirements. This is important to protect everyone involved in the process and to allow time for a fair and proper investigation to take place.

Reading Room

21. An innovation adopted by the Committee was to establish a secure reading room for the sharing of the Commissioner's full report and evidence in the case of Rhys ab Owen MS. The Committee adopted this approach due to the sensitivity of the material. It ensured that Members of the Senedd were able to access the information utilised by the Committee in reaching its decision, while giving those involved as much protection from identification as possible. The rationale behind this decision was to create a way for Members to be able assure themselves of the fairness of this decision and the appropriateness of the significant sanction recommended by the Committee.

Dignity and Respect

22. The Committee reported on its work around Dignity and Respect at the beginning of March 2026. In this report the Committee called for more independence in the complaints process, but also that more consideration is given to the wider everyday interactions and the impact that can have on the culture within the Senedd and people's experience interacting with the Senedd.

23. The Committee considers work in this area an ongoing process aimed at enhancing the Senedd Standards regime. Our aim is to improve transparency and support in those processes and, in turn, inspire greater trust in our political institution as a whole. The report contains a number of recommendations for relevant parties within the Senedd to consider and implement.

Recommendation 2. The Committee recommends the next Committee follows up and highlights the relevant recommendations in the Dignity and Respect report to the relevant parties, as well as taking forward the recommendations relevant to the Committee, to ensure progress continues in this area.

Individual Member Accountability

24. The Committee undertook consideration of matters relating to individual Member accountability, namely recall and deliberate deception. This work initially arose from a recommendation by the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform and then developed further following proposals put forward during the amending stages of the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act 2024.

25. The Committee recommendations in both these reports⁵ have formed the basis for significant parts of the Member Accountability Bill. The Committee welcomed the acceptance of the majority of recommendations in these reports, and recommends that the next Committee undertakes further work in this area – both in relation to the responsibilities assigned to the Committee via the legislation but also in terms of the wider public discussions on deliberate deception.

26. The Committee welcomed the agreement of a number of amendments tabled by its Chair, Hannah Blythyn MS to the Senedd Cymru (Member Accountability and Elections) Bill. The amendments were based on this Committee’s review of the National Assembly for Wales Commissioner for Standards Measure 2009 (“the 2009 Measure”). These amendments should bring more clarity and transparency to the standards process.

27. The amendment tabled at stage two in relation to the creation of an offence of obstructing a Commissioner’s consideration and investigation of a complaint was not successful. The basis behind the idea of the offence was experiences in the fifth Senedd. Other people, such as Member’s Support Staff, may seek to influence or intimidate potential witnesses or complainants. The Committee was of the view that the existence of such an offence and awareness of the criminal sanction would of itself be a significant deterrent to such conduct.

28. The Committee considers there may be a benefit to undertaking further post legislative scrutiny on the 2009 Measure at some point in the Seventh Senedd. This would allow consideration to be given to how this role has developed and grown since its inception.

Recommendation 3. The Committee recommends that the next Committee considers further post legislative scrutiny of the Commissioner for Standards Measure 2009 in terms of how the measure has operated.

Registration and Declaration of Interests.

29. The Committee undertook an inquiry into the registration and declaration of interests and published two reports.⁶ The recommendations in these reports came into effect at the start of the Seventh Senedd.

⁵ [Individual Member Accountability](#)

⁶ [Inquiry into the Registration and Declaration of Interests](#)

30. The recommendations in these reports were aimed at bringing more clarity and transparency to the requirements and guidance around the registration and declaration of interests. It may be prudent for the next Committee to undertake a mid-point review into these changes to gauge whether they have had the intended impact.

31. The Committee did not consider the ending of dual reporting to the Electoral Commission and Senedd in relation to donations over £5000 but this is something which the Committee may wish to consider in future, particularly in light of the work around simplifying the information to be declared and increasing transparency.

Recommendation 4. The Committee recommends that the next Committee do a short review at the mid-point of the Senedd to ensure the amendments to registration and declaration of interests are working effectively.

Oversight of the Standards of Conduct regime

Revising the Code of Conduct

32. The Committee has kept the Code of Conduct under review throughout the Sixth Senedd and, in late 2025, issued a consultation proposing updates to the Code for implementation in the Seventh Senedd. The revised Code was agreed on 18 March 2026 and will come into force at the start of the Seventh Senedd.

33. The Committee considers this rolling approach—reviewing the Code during each Senedd term and proposing amendments for the following Senedd at its conclusion—to be both proportionate and effective. The Committee suggests that its successor may wish to undertake a further review, in collaboration with the new Commissioner and Lay Members once appointed.

Cross-Party Groups monitoring

34. The Committee has considered the annual monitoring reports on cross-party groups. While overall compliance during the Senedd has been good, there has been a notable amount of minor, repeated non-compliance with the rules. Given that the next Senedd is a four-year term, a future Committee may wish to set out, at the outset, the level of tolerance it will apply to instances of non-compliance.

Recommendation 5. The Committee recommends that our successor committee consider, at the outset, the level of tolerance it will apply to instances

of non-compliance with the Cross Party Group rules and communicate that expectation and the consequences of non-compliance to groups.

3. Forward Look for the Seventh Senedd

35. There will be a number of key priorities in the next Senedd in relation to Members' standards of conduct. These will most likely fall to the mandatory Standards of Conduct Committee as a result of the passing of the Senedd Cymru (Member Accountability and Elections) Bill ("Member Accountability Bill").

Appointment of a new Commissioner and considerations for recruitment process

36. The Commissioner's appointment ends on 31 March 2027. The next Committee will need to input into the decisions about the next recruitment of this key post. In the Committee's report on Dignity and Respect the Committee suggested that the successor Committee consider the balance of expertise required for the role of the Commissioner in terms of investigating the range and nature of complaints that come forward to the Commissioner's office.

37. The Members Accountability Bill, as passed, includes a requirement for the Commissioner's office to be covered by the Welsh Language standards. This will also need to be considered as part of the recruitment.

Developing recall guidance to be agreed by the Senedd (including a public consultation)

38. The Member Accountability Bill requires the Committee to produce guidelines on the circumstances in which the recall sanction may be applied. The Committee recommended this approach in its report on recall as it allows the sanction to be used proportionately and enables the framework to adapt to changing circumstances.

39. The development of the statutory guidelines on the application of the recall sanction, is a crucial stage in the implementation of the system of recall established by the Member Accountability Bill. The identification of the triggers for the sanction of recall (and potentially the other sanctions available to the Committee) will be key early task for the next Committee.

Recommendation 6. The Committee recommends that the next Committee consults widely in developing the guidance for recall and seeks professional and expert advice from those with expertise in related spheres, such as professional disciplinary procedures.

Appointment of lay Members and any associated work with modelling how lay members will interact with the Standards process

40. Another key recommendation from the Committee’s work on individual Member accountability was around the appointment of lay members. This has been incorporated in the Member Accountability Bill, and a requirement has been placed on the Senedd for the Standards of Conduct Committee to have lay members by November 2027. The Committee gave some initial consideration to the appointment of lay members and skill sets required for such a role. An important factor is the need for a broad range of experience and the ability to take evidence based decisions. The skill sets needed should include at least one lay member with expertise in dignity and respect matters, and one with relevant legal qualifications.

Introduction of a correction notice procedure

41. The amended Code requires Members to correct the record at the earliest opportunity where they have made a statement that is incorrect or calculated to mislead.

42. As a key part of the work around tackling deception and building public trust, the Committee considers it important for consideration to be given to a comprehensive correction notice procedure.

43. Recommendation nine in the Committee’s report on deliberate deception⁷ was around publishing information relating to breaches of the Code in a more transparent way :

“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.”

44. The Committee has collated some information on the current procedure and some views on what is needed in this regard and which will be available to a future committee. In developing work in this area consideration should be given to how to record and inform the public about corrections, for example whether they should be recorded on the Committee webpages similar to the publication

⁷ [Individual Member Accountability: Deliberate Deception](#)

of reports on breaches of the Code or on Members' own Senedd web pages, or both.

Review of the Procedure for Dealing with Complaints

45. At the beginning of the Sixth Senedd, the Committee revised the procedure for handling complaints. Since then, the Committee has been seeking feedback on how these amendments have operated in practice and identifying potential further changes that may be required.

46. The Committee has not progressed the amendments identified in reports, such as the report on Dignity and Respect, in view of the additional changes that will be necessary to reflect provisions in the Member Accountability Bill, including the new power for the Commissioner to initiate their own investigations. This work will need to be undertaken early in the next Senedd to ensure that these powers can operate effectively.

Recommendation 7. The Committee recommends amending the procedure for dealing with complaints against Members of the Senedd to reflect the recommendations in the Committee's Dignity and Respect report and the legislative changes in the Members Accountability Bill.

Lobbying and Donations: ongoing work and areas requiring further consideration

47. During the Sixth Senedd, the Committee undertook work relating to lobbying and donations. The Committee began examining lobbying early in the term; however, following the decision to broaden its focus to individual Member accountability, this work was incorporated into the wider programme to reflect the interconnections. The then First Minister, Vaughan Gething MS wrote to the Committee in May 2024 requesting that it revisit the case for establishing a "register of lobbyists" in Wales. He suggested that, by drawing on best practice elsewhere, the Senedd and the Welsh Government could benefit from a more transparent system that enables organisations to engage with decisionmakers in a way that sustains long-term public confidence.

48. In the same correspondence, he requested that the Committee undertake work on donations. The Committee agreed that lobbying and donations should be considered in parallel owing to the strong connections between these areas.

49. The Committee further agreed that this work should follow the Electoral Commission's own review and update of guidance for elected office holders, including Members of the Senedd, on donations.

50. In considering the work on lobbying to date, the Committee identified several important factors:

- The need for an improved definition that distinguishes between lobbying and advocacy, recognises the positive role that lobbying can play, and acknowledges the issues that contribute to its negative public perception.
- The need for regular training and refresher sessions on the lobbying rules. The guidance should be actively promoted, enhanced through practical examples, and provide clear explanations of responsibilities. Such training should be extended to support staff.

Recommendation 8. The Committee recommends that the next Committee continues the work on individual Member accountability by considering lobbying and donations.