



LLANNON COMMUNITY
COUNCIL
LOCAL RESOLUTION POLICY

Adopted: 16th November 2022

Reviewed: 21st June 2023

Review Date: May 2026

Llannon Community Council Local Resolution Policy

Background

The Public Service Ombudsman has agreed to the principle of referring some complaints against Members back to Community and Town Councils for a local resolution. However, Members need to be clear on their powers in respect of code of conduct matters. The Ombudsman has seen examples of councils who have deemed it appropriate to fully investigate a code complaint, decide that there has been a breach and some have even thought it appropriate to consider the issue of a sanction.

Investigations of possible breaches of the Code are matters for the Ombudsman. The Local Government Act 2000 gives him the authority to carry out such investigations. The Council has no legal authority to undertake such investigations or to make findings of a breach of the Code of Conduct, which are decisions that can only be reached by a Standards Committee or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

This Local Resolution Process is intended as a starting point for Llannon Community Council. The Clerk, Chair and Vice Chair should undertake appropriate training in facilitation and mediation to be in a position to maximise the benefit of this process.

The Local Resolution Process

Issues which should be considered under this process are low level complaints about Members, including:

- Minor complaints from Members about Members
- Minor complaints from Officers about Members
- Members alleged to have not shown respect and consideration for others – either verbally or in writing

Issues which should not be considered under this process

Complaints which must be directed to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, including:

- Complaints instigated by a member of the public.
- Serious complaints – breaches of the Code of Conduct/failure to disclose interests/bullying/abuse of position or trust/repeated breaches.
- Complaints made by the Clerk/Proper Officer
- Vexatious, malicious, or frivolous complaints
- Members' complaints about officers which should be dealt with using the Council's internal complaints process.
- Repetitive, low-level complaints

The Process

The complaint would need to be sent to the Clerk to undertake a first sift to ensure the complaint is at a low level and should not be dealt with by way of a complaint to the Ombudsman.

If appropriate, therefore, the Clerk should firstly seek an early resolution of any such dispute by liaising informally with the individual members concerned prior to the resolution process described below. It is vitally important that the 'accused' member is given full details of the complaint against them so that in the interests of natural justice they are in a position to prepare their response to the accusation.

Resolution Process

The involvement of the Chair/Vice Chair of the Council in the following process is not to adjudicate on the complaint, but to attempt to get the members/officers involved to come to an agreement as to how the issue(s) could be resolved on an amicable basis.

The Clerk will act as a facilitator for the resolution process below. If the complaint is between Members other than the Chair of the Council, the Clerk and the Chair will meet individually with the complainant and Member subject of the complaint, to seek an agreed resolution.

If the complaint is between Members, one of whom is the Chair of Council, but not the Vice Chair, the Clerk and the Vice Chair will meet with the complainant and Member subject of the complaint, to seek an agreed resolution.

If the complaint has been made by an officer/employee, but not the Clerk, against a Member other than the Chair of Council, the Clerk and the Chair of Council will meet with the officer and the Member subject of the complaint, to seek an agreed resolution.

If the complaint has been made by an officer/employee, but not the Clerk, against the Chair of Council, the Clerk and the Vice Chair of Council will meet with the officer and the Chair to seek an agreed resolution.

If the complaint has been made by the Clerk, then it is likely to be best practice that this complaint is forwarded by way of a complaint to the Ombudsman.

Any meetings held with a view to discussing the issues of complaints and/or resolving matters will at the very least be minuted, if not recorded. This is to ensure that agreements are captured. This will also be useful in the event that matters break down or escalate and need to be referred to the PSOW. It may also be useful as evidence in the event of further similar breaches of the conduct and future conduct.

Possible results of the process

If an agreement is reached by Members and/or officers during this stage then no further action is required.

If agreement cannot be reached the aggrieved Member/officer would always have the opportunity of referring the matter to the Ombudsman.

Examples of agreements might include issue of a letter of apology, a written undertaking or commitment not to breach the Code of Conduct in the future, a commitment to undertake training or an agreement that on the basis of the evidence that no further action should be taken and the matter be closed.

Time for the process

It is the intention that all the processes can be completed as quickly as possible to resolve the issue. However, exact timing will depend on the availability of individuals to attend the meetings.