

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 28 January 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Report following Observations at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an update of the observations by Independent Standards Committee Members at Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings
Report Owner:	Ms. Debbie Marles, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Mrs. Karen Bowen, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report does not require consultation to be undertaken
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for decision by the Standards Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the roles of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives of the Council. • To assist this process, in March 2018, Independent Members of the Standards Committee agreed to undertake observations at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings. In March 2019 this was extended to observations being also undertaken of Town and Community Council meetings. • Following such observations, Independent Members report verbally on a regular basis their findings to the Standards Committee. • The Monitoring Officer also holds six monthly meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils (in part) to brief them on generic observations received, with feedback to individual Clerks following each visit by an Independent Member of the Standards Committee. However, these have been put on hold in light of the Covid pandemic and will be reintroduced in due course. 	

Recommendations

- 1.** That the verbal updates provided by Standards Committee Independent Members at the meeting be noted.
- 2.** That the intention to continue to undertake observations of Town and Community Council and Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings by Standards Committee Independent Members be noted.

Reason for Recommendations

- 1-2** Having regard to the observations undertaken and the role of the Standards Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1** There are a number of roles and functions of the Standards Committee, one of which is:
 - (a)** To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives of the Council.
- 1.2** As part of the Committee's work programme, it was agreed that Independent Members of the Standards Committee would attend meetings of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings during the Municipal Year 2020/21 to observe meetings with a view to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 1.3** Feedback reports would also be presented to the Monitoring Officer and verbal generic updates of the reports presented to the Standards Committee by the Independent Member on a quarterly basis following the observations. Any observations that required specific discussion with the Managing Director of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the Clerk / Chairman of a Town and Community Council would be undertaken by the Monitoring Officer.
- 1.4** As a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, some Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings had been put on hold. However, from September 2020 Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings had been reinstated to take place on a virtual basis.
- 1.5** Having regard to the calendar of meetings for Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Councils' meetings, Independent Members were requested to consider the dates and advise the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer of the meetings they wished to attend, on a virtual basis. It being noted that at the meeting of the Standards Committee in September 2020, the Committee agreed that Independent Members consider attending one meeting of the Vale Council and one meeting of a Town and Community Council over the next few months up to December 2020.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Following the last meeting of the Committee in November 2020 it was further agreed that a programme of visits be provided to Independent Members in order for observations to be undertaken in early 2021.
- 2.2** Following attendance at meetings, each Independent Member is requested to report their findings verbally to a subsequent Standards Committee meeting.
- 2.3** The Monitoring Officer will also look to re-establish a schedule of virtual meetings going forward with Clerks of Town and Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan on a six monthly basis to discuss Monitoring Officer matters. These meetings, as Members of Standards Committee have been previously advised, will include discussions of matters of mutual concern and the sharing of information and good practice.
- 2.4** The Monitoring Officer will also discuss any findings arising from the observations undertaken by Independent Members of the Standards Committee with the intention being to brief the Clerks of Town and Community Council's with generic guidance. Feedback will also be provided to the Managing Director of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and individual Clerks / Chairmen of Town and Community Councils following attendance at the respective Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town or Community Council meeting.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives. It is intended that the process adopted within this report will aim to promote that role.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Members will be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 10 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.
- 4.2** In line with Welsh Government Regulations re social distancing, meetings will be observed, where appropriate, on a virtual basis.

Employment

- 4.3** Members will be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 10 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4** The Council has a duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation as set out in the Standards Committees Rules and Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2006.
- 4.5** The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor Representatives.

5. Background Papers

None.