

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 25 November 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Observations at 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
Executive Summary:	<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.

Recommendations

1. That the verbal updates provided by Standards Committee Independent Members at the meeting be noted.
2. That it be noted that prior to a new schedule of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings being established following the May 2022 Local Government Elections that the Monitoring Officer may advise at any time that particular meetings are observed.

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 (TCC) 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 require specific discussion with the Managing Director of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the Clerk / Chairman of a TCC are undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and / or Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 Due to the fact that there were six TCCs that remained to be visited at the last meeting of the Standards Committee on 15th July, 2021 the Committee resolved (1) that the Principal Democratic Services Officer liaises with Independent Members to ensure that any outstanding Town and Community Council observation visits are undertaken by November 2021.
- 2.2 (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 and a further schedule of visits be drawn up following the Local Government Elections in 2022.

- 2.3** A list of outstanding visits was forwarded to Independent Members during August 2021. However, as discussed at the Standards Committee meeting on 15th July 2021 where meetings of TCCs were to be held in a physical location, it would be a matter for each independent Member to determine whether they wished to attend a face to face meeting in light of the pandemic.
- 2.4** Clerks of the TCCs are advised by Democratic Services of the dates of the meetings the Independent Member intends observing in order that arrangements for the agenda and the link to the virtual meetings can be forwarded to the Member in time for the meeting.
- 2.5** Independent Members that have undertaken visits since the last meeting of the Committee on 15th July are requested to provide a verbal update of their observations at TCC meetings to the Standards Committee on 9th September.
- 2.6** Unless otherwise advised by the Monitoring Officer that an observation of a TCC or a Vale of Glamorgan Council meeting should be undertaken as agreed at the last meeting a further schedule of observations is to be drawn up following the Local Government Elections in May 2022.

3. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 3.1** 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.
- 3.2** In line with Welsh Government Regulations re social distancing, meetings will be observed, where appropriate, on a virtual basis.

Employment

- 3.3** 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)

- 3.4** 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.
- 3.5** 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.

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

- 4.1** 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.

5. Background Papers

None.