

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 30 January 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an overview of observations.
Report Owner:	V. Davidson, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	K. 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 and were reported to the Standards Committee. On 23rd June, 2022 having regard to resourcing implications it was accepted that as a number of Senior Officers and Democratic Services Officers are present at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings, that such officers be requested to report to the Monitoring Officer any matters that may require attention and / or suggestions for improvement and that such matters subsequently be reported to the Standards Committee as appropriate. • In March 2019 the process of observing Council meetings was also extended for Independent Members of the Standards Committee to observe and report their findings of Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings. On 8th June, 2023 the Committee subsequently agreed that where observations of TCC meetings are advised by Independent Members to have been managed effectively with no material issues identified observations of such meetings be undertaken on a biennial basis as opposed to on an annual basis. • Feedback reports in respect of the observations undertaken are presented to the Monitoring Officer and verbal generic updates of the reports are presented to the Standards Committee by Independent Members on a regular basis. Any observations that require specific discussion with the Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or Chair of a Committee and the Clerk / 	

Chair of a TCC are undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and / or Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer. Generic overviews of observations are also provided to Clerks at the Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks that take place on a six monthly basis.

Recommendations

1. That a schedule of observations visits of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings be prepared and forwarded to the five Independent Members on the Standards Committee to commence from May 2025 to April 2026 when the timetable of the relevant Council meetings are known.
2. That the 26 Town and Community Councils are visited once in the year May 2025 to April 2026 by an Independent Member of the Standards Committee unless further visits are deemed to be required following the observations.
3. That the five Independent Members consider the Vale of Glamorgan Council timetable of meetings and undertake an observation of one meeting each in the year May 2025 to April 2026.
4. That it be accepted that during any year the Monitoring Officer may advise that additional meetings of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Councils be observed as considered appropriate.
5. That observations following the above visits be verbally reported by the Independent Member to the next available Standards Committee following the visits.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 1-3 In order that observation visits by Independent Members of the Standards Committee can be undertaken during the Municipal Year 2025/26.
4. Having regard to any Code of Conduct matters.
5. For information and consideration by 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. The proforma is attached at Appendix 1. On 23rd June, 2022, having regard to resourcing implications, it was accepted that as a number of Senior Officers and Democratic Services Officers are present at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings, that such officers be requested to report to the Monitoring Officer any matters that may require attention and / or suggestions for improvement and that such matters subsequently be reported to the Standards Committee as appropriate. With regard to observation visits to TCCs, on 8th June,

2023 the Committee subsequently agreed that where observations of TCC meetings are advised by Independent Members to have been managed effectively with no material issues identified, observations of such meetings be undertaken on a biennial basis as opposed to on an annual basis.

- 1.3** Feedback reports have been and will continue to be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer and verbal generic updates of the reports presented to the Standards Committee by the Independent Members on a quarterly basis following the observations. Any observations that require specific discussion with the Chief Executive of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the Clerk / Chair of a TCC are undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and / or Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.
- 1.4** The Monitoring Officer also provides the Clerks with an overview of observations undertaken at the Monitoring Officer and Clerks meetings which are held on a six monthly basis.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Following discussions with the Chair and the Monitoring Officer having regard to the proposed review of the Vale Council's Local Dispute Resolution Procedure, the work being undertaken by the LGA and WLGA in relation to Civility in Public Life it is considered timely that observation visits recommence from May 2025 to April 2026.
- 2.2** The proforma that is completed by Independent Members following the visits can be found at Appendix 1 to this report for information.
- 2.3** A schedule of meetings for May 2025 to April 2026 is proposed to be prepared and forwarded to the five Independent Members to consider following the timetable of meetings of the relevant Councils being available.
- 2.4** Following observation visits the comments and / or any concerns of the Independent Members are fed back to the Clerks and / or Chair of the TCCs by the Monitoring Officer and / or Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer. The Independent Members also report to the next available Standards Committee meeting following their visits.
- 2.5** The Monitoring Officer will also continue to draw attention to generic good practice and areas of concern at the Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks that are held on a six monthly basis.
- 2.6** For Committee's information the introduction of the programme of observations by Independent Members has been received positively and in particular comments received from TCCs Clerks have included the benefits of the process and how the comments have been of assistance. This has also included the sharing of good practice and advice in respect of matters relating to good governance.
- 2.7** Any observation visits undertaken will also inform the Standards Committee Annual Report later in the year in the interests of promoting and maintaining high standards of Conduct as well as having regard to the meetings held between

the Monitoring Officer and Clerks which also allow for the sharing of good practice and ideas for improvement. A link to the current Standards Committee Annual Report can be found [here](#).

- 2.8** The Committee is requested to consider the contents of this report and to make any further comments / recommendations as required.

3. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 3.1** Members are able to 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 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

Employment

- 3.2** 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 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 3.3** 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.
- 3.4** 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.