

Meeting of:	Community Liaison Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 05 July 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Observations by Independent Members of the Standards Committee; and meetings held by the Monitoring Officer with Clerks to Town and Community Council Meetings
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an overview of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the process undertaken and observations by Independent Members of the Standards Committee of Vale of Glamorgan and Town and Community Council Meetings; and discussions at Meetings between the Monitoring Officer and with Clerks to Town and Community Councils.
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 of Vale of Glamorgan Council Meetings. In March 2019 this was extended to observations being also undertaken of Town and Community Council (TCC) Meetings. Following such observations, Independent Members report verbally on a regular basis their findings to the Standards Committee, with the observations also relayed to the relevant Clerks. Meetings between the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of TCCs commenced in 2019 with meetings held on 22nd March, 2019 and 10th October, 2019 to provide a formal opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern, share good practice, provide open discussion and networking opportunities and share generic observations of the Independent Members of the Standards

Committee. A meeting had been scheduled for March 2020 but as a result of the pandemic the meeting could not proceed.

- The meetings have been resumed with a recent meeting having been held on 19th May 2021 and the next meeting scheduled for 24th November 2021.

Recommendation

1. That the contents of the report be noted.

Reason for Recommendation

- 1 To apprise Committee of the observations process undertaken and an overview of discussions held between the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of Town and Community Councils.

1. Background

- 1.1 There are a number of roles and functions of the Standards Committee, one of which is:

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 Standards Committee's work programme, the Standards Committee in March 2018 agreed that Independent Members attend a number of Vale of Glamorgan Council Meetings during the Municipal Year 2018/19 with a view to promote and maintain high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 The Committee also agreed that feedback reports be presented to the Standards Committee on a quarterly basis following such observations, with any observations that require specific discussion shared with the Managing Director of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Chairman of the relevant Committee.
- 1.4 In March 2019 the process of undertaking observations was also extended to Town and Community Councils (TCCs).
- 1.5 As Monitoring Officer, I also introduced in 2019 meetings to take place between myself and Clerks of TCCs to provide a formal opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern, share good practice, provide open discussion and networking opportunities and share generic observations of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee.
- 1.6 The first of such meetings took place on 22nd March, 2019 and thereafter 10th October, 2019 with the intention that they take place on a six monthly basis. A meeting had also been scheduled for March 2020 but as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic the meetings were put on hold, having been resumed in May 2021.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 This report is being presented to this Committee for information to provide Members with an overview of observations undertaken by Independent Members and an overview of issues discussed at the Monitoring Officer's Meetings with Clerks of TCCs.

Independent Member Observations

- 2.2** A copy of the proforma checklist that the Independent Members complete following the observations of Vale of Glamorgan and TCC Council Meetings is attached as an Appendix to this report.
- 2.3** The Democratic Services Officers who support the meetings within the Vale of Glamorgan and the Clerks of TCCs are advised by an officer within 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 meeting, if appropriate, can be forwarded to the Member in time for the meeting.
- 2.4** It is a matter for each individual Chairman if they wish to inform their Committee / Council of the Independent Member's attendance.
- 2.5** With regard to feedback reports for TCCs, the Independent Members present their findings by providing a verbal update to the Standards Committee and the observations are shared with the Clerk and or Chairman of the TCC. Generic observations are also shared and discussed with Clerks at the six monthly meetings that take place between the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of TCCs within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 2.6** Some of the findings that have been shared since the introduction of the initiative have been suggestions for improvements have included:
- use of name cards and names on screen to inform the viewer / attendee;
 - that relevant introductions be made in order that the public viewing or attending are clear as to the roles of those attending;
 - consideration of a maximum time to be allocated for a meeting. Where meetings take a long time Councils may wish to consider agreeing a maximum time of two hours for a meeting;
 - the sharing of positive comments regarding a Chairman of a Council's management of a meeting and inclusive approach as well as positive comments regarding the support provided by a Clerk.
- 2.7** Other aspects that have been provided as a result of the observations being undertaken have related to advice and guidance to TCCs regarding dealing with declarations of interests at and prior to meetings, dealing with Part II confidential matters, legislative requirements and reference to the Members' Code of Conduct when matters have been raised.
- 2.8** To date Independent Members' observations have reported that most meetings have been well managed and well run.

Monitoring Officer's Meetings with Town and Community Councils

These meetings resumed on 19th May, 2021.

- 2.9** For Members' information discussions have included, for example, topics such as -

- Training: The Monitoring Officer recommending that Clerks may wish to consider that all new Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen are provided with relevant training;
- The use of Standing Orders to regulate meetings, if required;
- Governance Toolkit: A copy of the Toolkit that had been prepared in England for Parish and Town Councils had been shared which identified some good practice examples that the Monitoring Officer suggested may be useful being mindful that the document had been prepared for England as opposed to Wales;
- The use of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure;
- Sharing of Good Practice;
- Items to be raised by Clerks;
- Generic observations following the viewing of TCC Meetings by Independent Members of the Standards Committee;
- Dates of pending visits from Independent Members of the Standards Committees;
- A briefing / discussion on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's action plan in respect of the provisions of the Act.

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 processes adopted within this report will aim to promote that role.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** Independent Members of the Standards Committee are remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales 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 are currently being observed, where appropriate, on a virtual basis.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** 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.
- 4.4** 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.

5. Background Papers

Minutes of Standards Committee Meetings.

OBSERVATIONS CHECKLIST

Observations of Independent Members of Standards Committee at Council Meeting of
Town/Community Council on

	Yes	No	Comments
Were you welcomed by the Clerk and seated in the public gallery?			
Were Members advised that you were observing the Meeting?			
Room set up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the seating arrangement was it clear who the Members, the Officer(s) and the public were? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did Members and Officer(s) have name cards identifying who they were? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the room well lit? 			

	Yes	No	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you hear what was being said? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the room of an appropriate size? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were a reasonable number of copies of the agenda available in the public gallery (other than any Part II reports)? 			
<p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the meeting commence on time? • Does the Council have a procedure for public speaking or is there an opportunity to suspend Standing Orders to allow a person to speak? 			
<p>Decision Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were motions moved and seconded? 			

	Yes	No	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there wasn't agreement by the meeting as a whole was the motion voted on? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were any amendments moved and seconded? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were votes on the amended motion taken before the original motion? [A vote on an original motion is only necessary if the vote on an amendment is lost] 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was only one amendment at any given time the subject of discussion prior to taking a vote on the amendment? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the meeting follow the agenda? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were rulings by the Chair adhered to? 			

	Yes	No	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If Part II items appeared on the agenda, did Members agree to move into Part II of the agenda? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were Members of the Public (including the Independent [Standards Committee] Member) asked to leave the meeting room prior to the discussion of Part II matters? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were there any other items discussed at the meeting without a report being available and no prior notice given? 			
<p>Conduct of Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did Members show respect and consideration for others? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a Member declared a personal interest, did the Member explain the nature of the interest? 			

	Yes	No	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a Member declared a personal and prejudicial interest in a report did they leave the Meeting Room during the consideration of the relevant report? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did a Member declare a personal and prejudicial interest and that they had a dispensation to speak from the Standards Committee? And if so, did the Member leave the Meeting Room having spoken on the matter? 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did a Member declare a personal and prejudicial interest and that they had a dispensation to speak and vote? 			
What time did the Meeting end?			