

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 27 May 2021
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an update of the meeting held on 19th May undertaken between the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of Town and Community Councils
Report Owner:	Ms. D. Marles, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Mrs. 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
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 in this process, the Monitoring Officer has held meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils to provide opportunities for discussion of matters of mutual concern, to have regard to the principles of standards in public life and to provide networking opportunities. • As a result of the pandemic the Clerks meetings were put on hold, however they have recently resumed, with a meeting having been held on Wednesday, 19th May, 2021. The Monitoring officer will therefore provide a verbal update to the Standards Committee on 27th May regarding discussions and issues raised at the Clerks meeting. Regular updates will also be provided to the Committee on a 6 monthly basis.

Recommendation

1. That the Standards Committee Members considers and notes the Monitoring Officer's verbal update in respect of the Clerks meeting held on 19th May, 2021.

Reason for Recommendation

1. Having regard to discussions at the meeting and the verbal update provided by the Monitoring Officer.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Monitoring Officer has previously informed the Standards Committee of the intention to hold six monthly meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils to provide a formal opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern, to provide open discussion and networking opportunities
- 1.2 In 2019 the meetings commenced and two meetings were held on 22nd March, 2019 and 10th October, 2019.
- 1.3 At the first meeting in March 2019, Town and Community Councils' Clerks were provided with a copy of the current Public Services for Wales Ombudsman's Guidance on the Code of Conduct for Members of Community Councils. The Guidance refers to the principles of standards in public life, with specific reference to the need to register Members' interests and have regard to the provisions under gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Clerks, if they had not already done so, share the guidance with Elected Members of their Town and Community Councils.
- 1.4 It was also noted that through One Voice Wales, Town and Community Councils have access to legal and general advice when they subscribe to the organisation. One Voice Wales is described as a principal organisation for Town and Community Councils in Wales providing a strong voice, representing the Council's interests and a range of high-quality services to support their work. It is the Monitoring Officer's understanding that 25 out of the 26 Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan subscribe to the organisation.
- 1.5 Feedback received following the meetings was that meetings were both useful and informative and a frank exchange of views shared which they were grateful to the Monitoring Officer for hosting.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 As a result of the pandemic the meetings with Clerks were put on hold and resumed on 19th May, 2021.
- 2.2 For Members information previous discussions at such meetings have included for example such topics 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.

2.3 The Monitoring Officer will provide a verbal update to the Standards Committee on 27th May regarding the issues discussed at the Clerks meeting on 19th May which included a discussion / briefing on:

- Generic observations at 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.

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 was intended that the Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils and the way in which the first ways of working proposals aim to promote the role.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

4.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

Employment

4.2 There are no direct employment implications as a result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

4.3 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report, however it is noted that 26 Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan subscribe to One Voice Wales where they are able to obtain legal and generic advice as required as a result of their subscription.

5. Background Papers

Minutes of Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils.