

Meeting of:	<b>Standards Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 23 June 2022</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Observations by Independent Members of Town and Community Council Committee Meetings
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an overview of observations.
Report Owner:	Debbie Marles, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	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"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• In March 2019 the above process was extended to observations also being undertaken of Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings.</li> <li>• 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 / Chairman of a TCC are undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and / or Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer.</li> <li>• An overview and lessons learned report of all visits undertaken was presented to the Standards Committee meeting in March 2022.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

1. That the report and the feedback received in respect of the observation visit undertaken by an Independent Member of Sully and Lavernock Community Council be considered and accepted by the Standards Committee
2. That it be noted that a new schedule of Town and Community Council meetings will be prepared for observations to be undertaken by Independent Standards Committee members commencing from September 2022.
3. That it be accepted that at any time during the year ( September 2022 to August 2023) that the Monitoring Officer may advise that additional, specific Town and Community Council and Vale of Glamorgan meetings be also observed.

## **Reason for Recommendations**

(1-4) 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 had been 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 2022/23 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 with verbal generic updates of the reports presented to the Standards Committee by the Independent Members 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 Town and Community Council Clerks with an overview of observations undertaken at the Monitoring Officer and Clerks meetings which are held on a six monthly basis.
- 1.5 Chairs of Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings and Clerks of 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 Independent Member in time for the meeting.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** During the period of Coronavirus restrictions Independent Members' observations were undertaken in the main on a virtual basis. This practice will continue if meetings are undertaken on a virtual basis however where meetings are in person only the independent members will attend accordingly.
- 2.2** Since the last meeting of the Committee in March 2022, following a decision of the Committee the then Chair of the Standards Committee undertook an observation of a meeting of the Sully and Lavernock Community Council on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The observations were shared at a meeting with the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk of the Community Council; and the Chair of the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer will provide an overview of the observations and discussions at the Standards Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022.
- 2.3** The proforma that is completed by Independent Members following the visits can be found at Appendix 1 to this report for Committee's information.
- 2.4** The proforma attached at Appendix 1 provides the Independent Member with a list of questions to consider when undertaking the visits. It is recommended to Committee that the information gathered from previous observations is considered by Independent Members prior to undertaking further observation visits.
- 2.5** Following the 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.
- 2.6** The Monitoring Officer has also drawn attention to generic good practice and areas of concern at the Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks that are held on a six monthly basis.
- 2.7** The introduction of the programme of observations by Independent Members has been received positively by the Clerks and the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer has recently consulted with Clerks for any further feedback from their point of view in respect of the benefits of the process they have found and whether it has been of assistance with regard to Members' standards of conduct.
- 2.8** An overview and lessons learned report of all visits undertaken was presented to the Standards Committee meeting in March 2022.
- 2.9** Having regard to resourcing implications the Monitoring officer recommends that as a number of Senior officers and Democratic Services officers are present at Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings such officers be requested, to report to

the Monitoring Officer matters that may require attention and/or suggestions for improvement and that such matters subsequently be reported to the Standards Committee as appropriate.

- 2.10** With regard to observations of Town and Community Council meetings it is recommended that the 5 Independent Members of the Standards Committee undertake observations of each TCC over the next 12 months commencing from September 2022. The Principal Democratic Services will therefore provide the Independent Members over the next few months with the dates of future meetings of the Town and Community Council's and maintain a schedule of visits.

#### **Financial**

- 2.11** 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 10 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

#### **Employment**

- 2.12** 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)**

- 2.13** 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.
- 2.14** 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.

### **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. Background Papers**

None.

## OBSERVATIONS CHECKLIST

Observations of .....Independent Member of Standards Committee at Council

Meeting of ..... Town/Community Council on .....

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
1. Were you welcomed by the Clerk and seated in the public gallery?				
2. Were Members advised that you were observing the Meeting?				
<b>Room Set Up</b>				
3. From the seating arrangement was it clear who the Members, the Officer(s) and the public were?				
4. Did Members and Officer(s) have name cards identifying who they were?				
5. Was the room well lit?				
6. Could you hear what was being said?				
7. Was the room of an appropriate size?				

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
8. Were a reasonable number of copies of the agenda available in the public gallery (other than any Part II reports)?				
<b>Meeting</b>				
9. Did the meeting commence on time?				
10. Does the Council have a procedure for public speaking or is there an opportunity to suspend Standing Orders to allow a person to speak?				
<b>Decision Making</b>				
11. Were motions moved and seconded?				
12. If there wasn't agreement by the meeting as a whole was the motion voted on?				
13. Were any amendments moved and seconded?				
14. 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]				

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
15. Was only one amendment at any given time the subject of discussion prior to taking a vote on the amendment?				
16. Did the meeting follow the agenda?				
17. Were rulings by the Chair adhered to?				
18. If Part II items appeared on the agenda, did Members agree to move into Part II of the agenda?				
19. 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?				
20. Were there any other items discussed at the meeting without a report being available and no prior notice given?				

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
<b>Conduct of Members</b>				
21. Did Members show respect and consideration for others?				
22. If a Member declared a personal interest, did the Member explain the nature of the interest?				
23. 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?				
24. 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?				
25. Did a Member declare a personal and prejudicial interest and that they had a dispensation to speak and vote?				

	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
26 What time did the Meeting end?				

**Any additional general comments**