

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 17 July 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 a draft schedule of observation visits of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings by Standards Committee Independent Members for approval.
Report Owner:	V. Davidson, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	A. Rudman, 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"> The Standards Committee plays a vital role in upholding democratic integrity and public trust by promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct among elected and co-opted members across all tiers of local government in the Vale of Glamorgan. Its functions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members, and Church and Parent Governor representatives. Assisting members to observe the Members' Code of Conduct. Advising the Council on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct and associated protocols. Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct. Providing or arranging training for Councillors and Co-opted Members on conduct matters. Granting dispensations from interests declared under the Code of Conduct. Dealing with reports from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and case tribunals. Exercising these responsibilities in respect of Community Councils within the Vale of Glamorgan. Overseeing complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations. Monitoring political group leaders' duties to promote standards and providing support and training where appropriate. 	

- Making an Annual Report to Full Council on how the Committee's functions have been delivered.
- As part of the Committee's forward work programme, and in line with its statutory responsibilities, Independent Members of the Standards Committee undertake observations of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings. This initiative supports the Committee's aim of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by observing how meetings are conducted in practice and offering constructive, impartial feedback.
- Following a recommendation agreed by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 30 January 2025, this report presents:
 - A pro forma for use during observation visits (**Appendix 1**),
 - A draft schedule of Council and TCC meetings to be attended by Independent Members (**Appendix 2**).

Recommendations

1. T H A T the Observation Pro-forma, set out at Appendix 1, be approved.
2. T H A T the allocation of Town and Community Council meetings to individual Independent Members, as set out in Appendix 2, be agreed.
3. T H A T the allocation of the Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings to Independent Member, as set out in Appendix 2, be agreed.
4. T H A T Independent Members confirm to the Principal Democratic Services Officer their intended dates for attendance at meetings listed in Appendix 2, as early as possible.
5. T H A T a copy of this report and the relevant Committee minutes be circulated to all Town and Community Council Clerks for information and awareness.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure the observation criteria remains relevant, consistent and fit for purpose, for use by the Independent Members during observation visits.
2. To commence formal observations of Town and Community Councils for the 2025/26 Municipal Year.
3. To enable structured observations of Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings during the same period.
4. To ensure that the schedule of observations remains up to date and Town and Community Councils may be informed in advance.
5. To share good practice, support local governance, and ensure transparency with Town and Community Councils.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Role of the Standards Committee:
- 1.2 The Standards Committee has a broad remit under the Local Government Act 2000 and the Council's Constitution. It is responsible for ensuring the highest standards of ethical conduct are upheld by:
 - Councillors of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.
 - Co-opted Members, including Church and Parent Governor representatives; and
 - Town and Community Councillors within the Vale of Glamorgan area.
- 1.3 Key responsibilities include monitoring the Code of Conduct, advising the Council, arranging training, granting dispensations, and responding to Ombudsman reports. A core part of its work is supporting good governance through ongoing oversight and regular engagement with Members and Community Councils.

- 1.4** Observations programme background
- 1.5** In March 2018, Independent Members began attending Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings to observe conduct and governance practices. In March 2019, this programme was extended to include Town and Community Councils (TCCs).
- 1.6** Since then, observations of TCC meetings have become a standing item in the Standards Committee’s work programme, supported by a standardised observation pro-forma.
- 1.7** In June 2022, it was agreed that as senior officers routinely attend Vale of Glamorgan Council meetings, they would report any concerns or governance issues to the Monitoring Officer. Nevertheless, Independent Members would continue attending TCC meetings annually.
- 1.8** In September 2022, the Monitoring Officer was given discretion to request additional observations of specific TCCs as needed.
- 1.9** In June 2023, the Committee further refined the approach:
- TCCs deemed to be functioning well would be observed biennially.
 - Additional observations would be undertaken where concerns were identified.
 - Persistent issues could lead to direct engagement with the Clerk and/or Chair of the TCC.
- 1.10** The intention is to assess whether standards continue to be upheld and to offer support to Councils by acting as a “critical friend”.
- 1.11** With the anticipated reduction of TCCs in the Vale from 26 to 19 (following the Community Review by the Boundary Commission, accepted by Welsh Government), the proposed observation schedule may be adjusted accordingly.
- 1.12** Feedback from Independent Members will be collated, anonymised, and reviewed at Committee meetings, while any serious concerns will be escalated to the Monitoring Officer. Summaries of good practice and lessons learned are shared biannually at Clerks’ meetings.
- 1.13** On 30 January 2025, the Committee agreed that:
- Each of the 26 TCCs would be visited once between May 2025 and April 2027.
 - Each Independent Member would also attend one Vale of Glamorgan Council meeting.
 - A total of six visits would be allocated to each Independent Member over the two-year period.
 - Observations would be verbally reported to the Standards Committee and documented by the Monitoring Officer.
- 1.14** The Monitoring Officer also provides TCC Clerks with an overview of observations undertaken, as well as any related points of good practice and areas of concern, at the Monitoring Officer and Clerks meetings which are held on a six-monthly basis.

- 1.15** 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.
- 1.16** Any observation visits undertaken will also inform the Standards Committee Annual Report, a draft of which has also been presented to the Committee within the same agenda.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

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. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** During the period of Coronavirus restrictions Independent Members' observations of TCC meetings were undertaken in the main on a virtual basis. This practice will continue if meetings are undertaken on a virtual basis, reducing both carbon emissions and paper printing however, where meetings are in person only, the Independent Members will be required to attend/travel accordingly.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** Independent Members of the Standards Committee 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

- 5.2** There are no employment implications in relation to this report.
- 5.3** Independent Members are Members who are not either a Councillor or an Officer of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or the spouse of a Councillor or an Officer of the Vale of Glamorgan Council or any other relevant Authority as defined by legislation, appointed in accordance with the procedure set out in the

Standards Committees (Wales Regulations) 2001 (as amended) and the Standards Committees (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.

- 5.4** Independent Members are appointed for a period of not less than 4 no more than 6 years in accordance with Regulation 18(i) of the Standards Committees (Wales Regulations) 2001 (as amended) as amended by Regulation 28a of the Local Government (Standards Committees Investigations, Dispensations and Referral) (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2016 and may be re-appointed for one further consecutive term not exceeding 4 years.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.5** 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.

6. Background Papers

[Report – 8th June 2023 - Observations by Independent Members of Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.](#)

[Report – 13th July 2023 - Observations by Independent Members of Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.](#)

[Report – 28th September 2023 - Observations by Independent Members of Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.](#)

[Report – 23rd November 2023 - Observations by Independent Members of Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.](#)

[Report – 2nd February 2024 - Observations by Independent Members of Town and Community Council.](#)

[Report – 30th January 2025 - Observations by Independent Members of Standards Committee of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Meetings.](#)

Appendix 1 – Observation Pro-Forma.

Appendix 2 – Draft Observation Schedule.

OBSERVATIONS CHECKLIST

Observations ofIndependent 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?				
Room Set Up				
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)?				
Meeting				
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?				
Decision Making				
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
Conduct of Members				
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

DRAFTTown and Community Council ObservationsScheduling Breakdown

	May 2025-26	Last Observation	Commission Proposals	Independent Member	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
1	Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council	Nov '22 Hendicott		Olphert	29.07.25	23.09.25	28.10.25
2	Llantwit Major Town Council	Nov '22 Alexander		Hendicott	24.07.25	25.09.25	30.10.25
3	Penarth Town Council	Nov '22 Tinsley	Plus Cosmeston Ward	Hendicott	24.07.25	11.09.25	16.10.25
4	Barry Town Council	Dec '22 Tinsley	Plus Waterfront Ward	Watkins	28.07.25	20.10.25	15.12.25
5	Sully and Lavernock Community Council	Jan '23 Hendicott		Watkins	06.10.25	10.11.25	
6	St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council	Feb '23 Alexander	Plus Dyffryn Ward	Alexander			
7	St. Athan Community Council	Mar '23 Tinsley		Hendicott	05.08.25	02.09.25	07.10.25
8	Wenvoe Community Council	Mar '23 Tinsley		Alexander	18.09.25	16.10.25	20.11.25
9	Penllyn Community Council	Apr '23 Hallett		Watkins	01.09.25	06.10.25	03.11.25
10	Llancarfan Community Council	June '23 Hallett		Alexander			
11	Dinas Powys Community Council	Sept '23 Tinsley		Olphert	18.09.25	16.10.25	20.11.25

DRAFTVale of Glamorgan Council ObservationsScheduling Breakdown

	May 2025-26	Independent Member	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6	Option 7	Option 8	Option 9
1	Full Council	Olphert	29.09.25	01.12.25	09.03.26	27.04.26					
2	Planning	Watkins	10.07.25	11.09.25	09.10.25	13.11.25	11.12.25	15.01.26	12.02.26	19.03.26	23.04.26
3	Governance & Audit	Hendicott	21.07.25	15.09.25	13.10.25	15.12.25	23.02.26	13.04.26			