

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 25 September 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 of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council meetings by Standards Committee Independent Members since the last Standards Committee meeting.
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. 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. Feedback reports in respect of observations undertaken by Independent Members of Town and Community Councils (TCCs) 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. 	

Recommendations

1. T H A T the reports and the feedback received in respect of observation visits undertaken by Independent Members of the Standards Committee be noted.
2. T H A T where matters following observation visits are highlighted by Independent Members, as issues requiring further attention or further visits and / or requests are made by the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services for visits to be undertaken, these be arranged as and when required.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. Having regard to the observations undertaken and the role of the Standards Committee.
2. To maintain a watching brief having regard to the role of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

1. Background

1.1 The Role of the Standards Committee:

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.

1.2 Its functions include:

- 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.

A core part of its work is supporting good governance through ongoing oversight and regular engagement with Members and Community Councils.

As part of the Committee's work programme, it had been agreed that Independent Members of the Standards Committee would attend Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings to observe meetings with a view to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct.

Observations Programme background:

- 1.3** Chairs and Clerks of the 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 invitation for the meeting can be forwarded to the Independent Member in time for the meeting.
- 1.4** Following an observation, feedback reports are 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.
- 1.5** Feedback from Independent Members is 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.
- 1.6** Any observation visits undertaken will also inform the Standards Committee Annual Report. The Annual Report was last presented and approved by the Committee at its 17th July meeting.
- 1.7** 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.

Observations Programme Timeline:

- 1.8** 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.
- 1.9** 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 TCC meetings. 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.

1.10 Independent Member Observations of TCCs were added as a standard item on the Standard Committee's Forward Work Programme for the 2020/21 Municipal Year and a Pro-forma agreed for use by Independent Members during observations.

1.11 On 23rd June, 2022 having regard to resourcing implications it was accepted that as a number of Senior Officers and Democratic Services Officers were 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.

It was however, agreed, that Independent Members would continue to undertake observation visits of TCC meetings on an annual basis and report to the Standards Committee as appropriate.

1.12 In September 2022, the Monitoring Officer was given discretion to request additional observations of specific TCCs, as needed.

1.13 On 8th June 2023, the Committee subsequently agreed:

- T H A T 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.

- T H A T where matters following observation visits of Town and Community Council meetings are highlighted by Independent Members as issues requiring further attention or further visits and / or requests are made by the Monitoring Officer/ Head of Legal and Democratic Services for visits to be undertaken, these be arranged as and when required.

- T H A T where poor practice continued, consideration be given for meetings to be arranged for the Chair and Clerk to either attend a meeting of the Standards Committee or a meeting with the Chair of the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

1.14 On 30th January 2025, the Committee subsequently agreed:

- T H A T 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 2027 when the timetable of the relevant Council meetings were known.

- T H A T the 26 Town and Community Councils be visited once in the period May 2025 to April 2027 by an Independent Member of the Standards Committee unless further visits were deemed to be required following the observations.

- T H A T the five Independent Members consider the Vale of Glamorgan Council timetable of meetings and undertake an observation of one meeting each in the period May 2025 to April 2027.
- T H A T 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.
- T H A T observations following the above visits be verbally reported by the Independent Member to the next available Standards Committee following the visits.

In order that a total of 6 observation visits be undertaken by each Independent Member of the Standards Committee, over a two year period could be undertaken during the Municipal Years 2025/26 and 2026/27, and that the timetable be assessed on an annual basis to align with the outcomes of the Boundary Commission for Wales Community Review currently under consideration by Welsh Government Ministers.

- 1.15** At the same January 2025 meeting, the consensus of the Committee was that TCC visits were a worthwhile exercise and that the allocation of 6 visits per Independent Member (5 x TCC and 1 x VoG) was not considered excessive over a two-year period. Conducting observations provided the Committee with the opportunity to assess if standards were being maintained since previous observations had taken place, as well as offer invaluable support and a critical friend approach for TCCs.
- 1.16** The following suggestions of the Committee were also agreed:
- That, in terms of allocations, Independent Members be rotated across TCC visits to avoid any duplicated observations by the same Independent Member.
 - An attempt would be made to conduct visits for half of the 26 TCCs within the 2025-26 Municipal year and the second half in the 2026-27 Municipal Year.
 - TCCs to be given advance notice of the Independent Member Observation taking place; and
 - Independent Members should remain mindful of the varying size and composition of TCCs when conducting observations.
- 1.17** At the 17th July 2025 Committee Meeting, Members were presented with a report to agree both the Observation Pro-forma and Allocations. Independent Members were also asked to confirm with the Principal Democratic Services Officer their intended dates for attendance at meetings listed in Appendix 2 to that report, as early as possible.

A series of amendments were made to the Observation Pro-forma that was subsequently shared with all Independent Members. To ensure the observation criteria remained relevant, consistent, and fit for purpose.

Following the meeting, the Observation report and the relevant Committee minutes were circulated to all TCC Clerks for information and awareness. To share

good practice, support local governance and ensure transparency with TCCs.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Independent Members will present their findings verbally to Committee at this meeting in respect of any observation visits undertaken since the last meeting of the Committee held on 17th July, 2025.
- 2.2** **Appendix 1** to this report sets out current progress in relation to observations.
- 2.3** Since the 17th July Meeting, four observations were scheduled to take place as follows:

Member	Council	Meeting Date
Hendicott	Llantwit Major Town Council	24 th July 2025
Alexander	St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council	12 th August 2025
Hendicott	St. Athan Community Council	2 nd September 2025
Hendicott	Penarth Town Council	11 th September 2025

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.](#)

[Report – 17th July 2025 - Observations by Independent Members of Vale of Glamorgan Council and Town and Community Council Committee Meetings.](#)

Appendix 1 – Observation Tracker.

Standards Committee Independent Member Observation Tracker

Schedule agreed by Standards Committee:	17th July 2025
Reviewed Observation Pro-Forma shared with Independent Members:	28th July 2025
Report and relevant minutes circulated to all Town and Community Council Clerks:	28th July 2025

2025 - 26		Observation Date	Date confirmation received from IM.	Notice provided to relevant Clerk / Chair.	Meeting details confirmed with IM.	Completed Pro-Forma returned to Democratic Services.	Feedback presented to Standards Committee.	Feedback presented to Clerks Meeting.
Alexander	St. Nicholas and Bonvilston Community Council	12.08.25	04/08/2025 09:04	Mon 04/08/25 09:28	Weds 06/08/25 12:31	Weds 13/08/2025 17:34	Due 25th September.	Due November '25
	Wenvoe Community Council	16.10.25	04/08/2025 09:00	Weds 17/09/25 20:12				
	Llancarfan Community Council							
Hendicott	Llantwit Major Town Council	24.07.25	17/07/2025 14:30	Mon 21/07/2025 08:23	Mon 21/07/2025 10:33	Pending	Due 25th September.	Due November '25
	Penarth Town Council	11.09.25	17/07/2025 14:30	Mon 28/07/2025 14:45	Wed 30/07/2025 19:42	Pending	Due 25th September.	Due November '25
	St. Athan Community Council	02.09.25	17/07/2025 14:30	Mon 28/07/2025 14:48	Wed 30/07/2025 13:47	Pending	Due 25th September.	Due November '25
	VoG Governance & Audit	15.12.25	17/07/2025 14:30	Mon 28/07/2025 15:00				
Olphert	Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council	28.10.25	17/07/2025 14:44	Mon 28/07/2025 15:07	Wed 30/07/2025 17:49			
	Dinas Powys Community Council							
	VoG Full Council	01.12.25	17/07/2025 14:44	Mon 28/07/2025 15:14				
Watkins	Barry Town Council							
	Sully and Lavernock Community Council							
	Penllyn Community Council							
	VoG Planning							

2026 - 27		Observation Date	Date confirmation received from IM.	Notice provided to relevant Clerk / Chair.	Meeting details confirmed with IM.	Completed Pro-Forma returned to Democratic Services.	Feedback presented to Standards Committee.	Feedback presented to Clerks Meeting.
-----------	--	------------------	-------------------------------------	--	------------------------------------	--	--	---------------------------------------