

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday, 5 <sup>th</sup> September 2022
<b>Report Subject</b>	Independent Member Visits to Town and Community Councils
<b>Report Author</b>	Deputy Monitoring Officer

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018 the Standards Committee resolved that Members who are not County Councillors would attend and observe Town and Community Council meetings across Flintshire. Arrangements were made for the visits to be split between members of the Committee with the intention that, over the course of the year, all Town and Community Councils would be visited. Town and Community Councils were informed by the Monitoring Officer of the intention for members to undertake these visits.

Members were asked for their availability, with a recommendation for them to visit six Council meetings based on the number of members and the number of Town and Community Councils. It was also advised for members to avoid their own wards and visit Town and Community Councils which were closest to their home.

The Team Leader, Democratic Services, provided a list of known meeting dates of Town and Community Councils so that members could identify which ones they were able to attend.

At the meeting of the Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2022, it was agreed that a new cycle of visits would be arranged following the local government elections in May 2022. At the subsequent meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022 it was agreed that this would feature as an item on the forward work programme.

A formal resolution is required to enable officers to draw up a rota, in consultation with the Independent members, as was done in 2018 to enable visits to be undertaken in 2022/23.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That it be approved that officers draw up a list of Town and Community Councils and their meeting dates for 2022/23 to send out to Independent Members for them to select which Town and Community Council meetings
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	they are able to attend.
2	That Town and Community Councils be written to explaining that the process of visits will be undertaken again in 2022/23.
3	That the reporting of visits to Town and Community Councils by Independent members of the Committee is based on workload of the Committee, except where urgent issues need to be fed back and these will be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.
4	That Members undertaking visits to Town and Community Councils take written notes that are suitable to be disclosed and circulated as feedback to Town and Community Councils upon request.
5	That Members inform the Monitoring Officer of a visit to a Town or Community Council and send their written notes of the visit to him, as soon as possible after a visit has taken place, for the purposes of agenda planning for the Committee.

## **REPORT DETAILS**

<b>1.00</b>	<b>VISITS TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS</b>
1.01	Following visits by Independent members of the Standards Committee to Town and Community Councils in 2018, a request for that process to be carried out again was suggested and supported.
1.02	A toolkit, based on the one used in 2018, has been prepared and is appended to this report.
1.03	As was the practice in 2018, it is suggested that Town and Community Councils are written to explaining that the process of the visits would be undertaken again in 2022/23.
1.04	<p>During such visits the following simple guidelines are suggested for how they are conducted for the sake of courtesy and transparency:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) that there should be a published rota;</li> <li>2) that each Council should be told specifically who will attend;</li> <li>3) that each attendee introduces themselves to the clerk when they arrive at the meeting and then takes a seat in the public gallery;</li> <li>4) that the attendee should not speak at the meeting unless invited to do so, and should only explain the nature and purpose of the programme of visits;</li> <li>5) that the attendee should decline to give specific advice on matters under the code such as declaring interests, and should refer any such requests to the clerk, monitoring officer or deputy monitoring officer instead.</li> </ol>
1.05	There are essentially two ways in which member visits to Town and

	Community Councils can be reported to the Committee and in which feedback can be provided to Town and Community Councils. Reports and feedback can either be written or verbal. If agreed, further details on this process will be provided at the next meeting.
1.06	Following visits being undertaken, the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the visit which will ensure the details can be reported to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.
1.07	Previous practice was for the Independent Members to provide the Democratic Services Team with a copy of any notes taken for background information, and that they would provide verbal feedback at the meeting.
1.08	However, any written notes taken by members in respect of visits to Town and Community Council meeting may be disclosable if a request for disclosure is made.
1.09	Whilst it is recommended that reporting back on visits is done by workload, it is important that any big issues identified at any visits to Town or Community Councils that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency are reported as soon as possible so that feedback can be given in a timely manner.

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	The payment of allowances and expenses to Members is overseen by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (“IRPW”), which can stipulate whether a function should be remunerated and, if so, the amount. The IRPW says that Councils should pay Independent Members for attending meetings, training sessions and the like. However, the IRPW rules do not permit Independent Members to be paid for attending other Councils as observers other than expenses.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	N/A.

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	N/A.

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 – Toolkit.

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>5<sup>th</sup> March 2018 – Committee Report:  <a href="https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/s47582/Visits%20to%20Town%20and%20Community%20Councils.pdf?LLL=0">https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/s47582/Visits%20to%20Town%20and%20Community%20Councils.pdf?LLL=0</a></p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> March 2018 – Minutes of the meeting:  <a href="https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4015/Printed%20minutes%2005th-Mar-2018%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&amp;LLL=0">https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4015/Printed%20minutes%2005th-Mar-2018%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&amp;LLL=0</a></p> <p>10<sup>th</sup> January 2022 – Minutes of the meeting:  <a href="https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4999/Printed%20minutes%2010th-Jan-2022%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&amp;LLL=0">https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4999/Printed%20minutes%2010th-Jan-2022%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&amp;LLL=0</a></p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Matthew Georgiou, Deputy Monitoring Officer / Nicola Gittins – Team Leader – Democratic Services</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702330 / 01352 702345</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:matthew_georgiou@flintshire.gov.uk">matthew_georgiou@flintshire.gov.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:nicola.gittins@flintshire.gov.uk">nicola.gittins@flintshire.gov.uk</a></p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	None.