

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday 3 rd July 2023
Report Subject	Independent Member attendance at Committee Meetings
Report Author	Chief Officer Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Independent Members of the Committee have previously attended meetings of Council, Cabinet and Committees at the County Council in the same way that they had attended Town and Community Council meetings. The last series of visits took place during the course of 2021. At the last meeting of the Standards Committee it was suggested that the Committee should consider an item at a future meeting on setting up a second round of visits.

In attending such meetings the following simple guidelines are suggested for how they are conducted for the sake of courtesy and transparency:

- 1) that there should be a published rota of attendance by Independent Members of the Committee;
- 2) that the Chair of each Committee meeting should be told specifically who will attend their meeting;
- 3) that the attendee should not speak at the meeting unless invited to do so by the chair of the Committee, and if invited to do so should only explain the nature and purpose of the programme of attendance if invited to do so;
- 4) 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 monitoring officer or deputy monitoring officer instead;
- 5) that Independent Members will not remain in attendance during the consideration of any confidential reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee agrees a rota of attendance and the guidelines for how they should be undertaken.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING INDEPENDENT MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT COMMITTEE MEETINGS
1.01	During 2021 Independent Members visited Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings of the county Council in the same way as they have undertaken visits at Town and Community Councils. At the last meeting of the Committee establishing a further round of visits was suggested for the Forward Work Programme.
1.02	The purpose of attendance should be looking to see whether Councillors attending meetings and Committees follow the Members' Code of Conduct, the Flintshire Standard, the Member/Officer Protocol and, at Planning Committee, the Planning Code of Practice. Previously, it was agreed that one Independent Member would attend each meeting aside from Full Council meetings, which it was agreed would be attended by two Independent Members of the Committee.
1.03	In attending such meetings the following simple guidelines were previously agreed for how they are conducted for the sake of courtesy and transparency: 1) that there should be a published rota of attendance by Independent Members of the Committee; 2) that the chair of each Committee meeting should be told specifically who will attend their meeting; 3) that the attendee should not speak at the meeting unless invited to do so by the chair of the Committee, and should only explain the nature and purpose of the programme of attendance if invited to do so; 4) 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 monitoring officer or deputy monitoring officer instead; 5) that Independent Members will not remain in attendance during the consideration of any confidential reports.
1.04	Note the final bullet point on the previous guide is at odds to how we have tried to handle visits to Town and Community Councils. For those visits we ask that Independent Members should be allowed to remain for confidential items and I would suggest that this bullet point is changed this time around.
1.05	Since 2021 all meetings must take place either entirely remotely or in hybrid form (i.e. with some people physically present and others on line). At present Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Planning Committee take place in hybrid format, and the others meet remotely. Given the matters to be checked it is suggested that remote attendance should be sufficient for the Committee's purposes.
1.06	The list of meetings is attached at Appendix 1 and the calendar of meetings is here . As with the visits to Town and Community Councils it is suggested that Independent Members contact the Democratic Services Team Leader (Committees) and she will draw up a rota of visits.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Preparing a rota can be achieved within available resources.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	The chairs of all Committees will be contacted in advance to inform them of the rota and proposed attendees.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Observation of Council meetings or behaviour of Councillors by Independent Members of the Committee will help inform the work of the Committee and may reduce the risk of poor behaviour at the meeting or in the future.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1- list of Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings to be viewed.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None