

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 6th November 2023
Report Subject	Feedback from the Ethical Liaison Meeting
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The fourth Ethical Liaison Meeting (ELM) was held on 6th October 2023. The meeting discussed:

1. Feedback on the process for preparing the annual report (including reporting on the group leaders' duty);
2. The updated statutory guidance on how Group Leaders and the committee should work together; and
3. Requested training and development for Group Leaders and councillors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee oversees the development of a training programme for county councillors and group leaders.
---	---

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ETHICAL LIAISON MEETING
1.01	The fourth Ethical Liaison Meeting took place on 6 th October 2023. It was attended by the Leader of Council and all the Group Leaders as well as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee.
1.02	The ELMs have been used a forum to discuss how to implement the new duty on Group Leaders to promote ethical behaviour, and how that should be reported as part of the Standards Committee annual report. The first topic of discussion was to seek feedback on how group leaders felt the

	process had worked this year (being the first year such a report was prepared). The consensus was that the process had worked well.
1.03	Welsh Government has issued updated guidance on the group leaders' duty (amongst other things). The guidance has been considered before by the Committee but the updated guidance can be found here . The revised guidance recommends that group leaders meet with the whole committee (not just chair and vice chair) at the start of each year to discuss how to work together to discharge their duty. Our process already includes a meeting between group leaders and the whole committee in around March/April, and so is already compliant. We can use the suggested list of items from the guidance as the agenda for those meetings and review how the previous year has gone whilst looking ahead to the coming year.
1.04	The bulk of the meeting was given over to talking about a programme of training and development for group leaders and councillors. Without revealing the content of the conversation (which is private to ensure that group leaders can speak frankly and openly), it was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would draw up a programme of development and training to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A refresher on the code of conduct, Flintshire Standards and Member/Officer protocol for all councillors 2) A session on respecting diversity (in all its guises, including diversity of opinion); and 3) Skills training/development for group leaders who need to be able to encourage group members to comply with the code. Such training and development to include such topics as mentoring, facilitation and conflict resolution.
1.05	It was also agreed that following the training would be an opportune time to review the Flintshire Standard. That document was due to be reviewed at this meeting. In light of the agreement at the ethical liaison meeting, that work has now been moved back to next year. It was also agreed that, again following the training, it would be appropriate to look at whether a role description should be prepared for group leaders to include the expectations of them under the group leaders' duty.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The training/development programme will need to be delivered by a mix of internal and external training providers. The capacity in house for such training is limited but can be provided within existing resources. It is hoped that the bulk of the externally provided training can be sourced via WLGA and WG's Improvement Programme for local government. An overall cost for the programme will be reported to the committee in due course.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	All Group Leaders were at the ELM and so have been consulted.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The process supporting group leaders to fulfil the new duty should in turn reduce the risk of non-compliance. The duty itself should help to reduce the chance that councillors will act in unethical manner or breach the code.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Insert any hyperlinks to supporting documents if necessary.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer (Governance) Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Ethical Liaison Meetings – meetings between senior councillors and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee to discuss ethical behaviour within the Council.