

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 6 September 2021
Report Subject	Findings From Independent Member Visits to Committee Meetings
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the visits undertaken by the Independent Members of the Standards Committee to Flintshire County Council Committee meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Independent Members of the Standards Committee make any further recommendations they feel are necessary following their visits.
2	That the findings be formally shared with the Chairs of the Committees.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	In November 2019 the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee met with the Leader and the Chair of the Council following a best practice recommendation within the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in England. It was suggested at the meeting that Independent Members of the Committee should attend Council meetings and Committees in the same way that they had attended Town and Community Council meetings during the course of 2019.
1.02	At the meeting of the Standards Committee on 3 February 2020 such attendance was agreed by the Committee, and it was further agreed that a rota of visits would be arranged.

1.03	There was a period of time where Council meetings could not take place due to the restrictions arising from the Covid 19 pandemic, and until legislation was passed to allow Council meetings to be held virtually/remotely. Once meetings became fully operational, a rota of attendance for Independent Members at Council meetings and Committees was presented, for approval, to the Standards Committee on 11 th January 2021.																																												
1.04	<p>Between 19th January 2021 and 24th March 2021, 10 Committee meetings were observed as shown in the table below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="323 526 1380 1937"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="323 526 587 638">Meeting date</th> <th data-bbox="595 526 850 638">Committee</th> <th data-bbox="858 526 1118 638">Observed by</th> <th data-bbox="1126 526 1380 638">Reported to Standards Committee</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 645 587 678">19.01.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 645 850 678">Cabinet</td> <td data-bbox="858 645 1118 678">Julia Hughes</td> <td data-bbox="1126 645 1380 678">01.03.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 685 587 857">20.01.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 685 850 857">Community & Housing Overview And Scrutiny Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 685 1118 857">Rob Dewey</td> <td data-bbox="1126 685 1380 857">01.03.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 864 587 1010">21.01.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 864 850 1010">Social & Health Care Overview And Scrutiny Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 864 1118 1010">Phillipa Earlam</td> <td data-bbox="1126 864 1380 1010">01.03.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1016 587 1084">26.01.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1016 850 1084">Flintshire County Council</td> <td data-bbox="858 1016 1118 1084">Julia Hughes</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1016 1380 1084">01.03.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1090 587 1263">09.02.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1090 850 1263">Environment & Economy Overview And Scrutiny Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 1090 1118 1263">Rob Dewey</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1090 1380 1263">01.03.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1270 587 1442">11.02.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1270 850 1442">Corporate Resources Overview And Scrutiny Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 1270 1118 1442">Mark Morgan</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1270 1380 1442">01.03.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1449 587 1527">03.03.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1449 850 1527">Planning Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 1449 1118 1527">Jonathan Duggan-Keen</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1449 1380 1527">10.05.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1534 587 1706">18.03.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1534 850 1706">Education, Youth & Culture Overview And Scrutiny Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 1534 1118 1706">Phillipa Earlam</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1534 1380 1706">10.05.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1713 587 1780">24.03.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1713 850 1780">Audit Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 1713 1118 1780">Phillipa Earlam</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1713 1380 1780">10.05.21</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1787 587 1933">24.03.21</td> <td data-bbox="595 1787 850 1933">Constitution & Democratic Services Committee</td> <td data-bbox="858 1787 1118 1933">Jonathan Duggan-Keen</td> <td data-bbox="1126 1787 1380 1933">10.05.21</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Meeting date	Committee	Observed by	Reported to Standards Committee	19.01.21	Cabinet	Julia Hughes	01.03.21	20.01.21	Community & Housing Overview And Scrutiny Committee	Rob Dewey	01.03.21	21.01.21	Social & Health Care Overview And Scrutiny Committee	Phillipa Earlam	01.03.21	26.01.21	Flintshire County Council	Julia Hughes	01.03.21	09.02.21	Environment & Economy Overview And Scrutiny Committee	Rob Dewey	01.03.21	11.02.21	Corporate Resources Overview And Scrutiny Committee	Mark Morgan	01.03.21	03.03.21	Planning Committee	Jonathan Duggan-Keen	10.05.21	18.03.21	Education, Youth & Culture Overview And Scrutiny Committee	Phillipa Earlam	10.05.21	24.03.21	Audit Committee	Phillipa Earlam	10.05.21	24.03.21	Constitution & Democratic Services Committee	Jonathan Duggan-Keen	10.05.21
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1.05	At Standards Committee on 01.03.21 and 10.05.21 the Independent Members gave verbal feedback on their observations from those meetings.																																												

	Observations
1.06	<p>The feedback from each meeting that had been observed was consistent from each Independent Member and summarised in the minutes of the meeting on 01.03.21 and 10.05.21. The main points were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The requirement for clear identification of participants by name or job title to enable distinction to be made between Members and Officers in attendance. 2. Members to be specific when making a declaration of interest as to whether the declaration was personal or personal and prejudicial. 3. Explanations being given when jargon was being used. 4. Explanation to be given about speeches being timed. <p>In presenting their reports the Independent Members advised that meetings had been well conducted and chaired, and a good range of topics considered and debated.</p> <p><u>Point 1</u> Immediately following the feedback to Standards Committee, agenda front sheets were amended and a procedural note added. The Chair now reads out the procedural note and an explanation is given as to who is in attendance at the meeting and that attendees would be addressed using job titles, or Councillor, so that it was clear to anybody viewing the meeting who attendees were.</p> <p>When the feedback was provided to Standards Committee, the authority was using Webex as their platform for holding remote meetings. Webex did not provide the functionality for the host to change names on screen so it was not possible for the host to prefix Councillor names with Cllr. However, since the beginning of July, the authority has switched their remote meeting platform and Zoom is now used. Zoom does give the host the ability to change people's names and this is done when required.</p> <p>The two changes outlined above ensures that the feedback in relation to point 1 is fully addressed.</p> <p><u>Point 2</u> Whichever officer is responsible for advising the Committee ensures that if a declaration of interest is made, that full details are given to ensure transparency. The officer also provides an explanation as to what a declaration of interest is.</p> <p>The change outlined above ensures that the feedback in relation to point 2 is fully addressed.</p> <p><u>Point 3</u> As with point 2 above, the responsible officer ensures that any jargon is fully explained.</p>

	<p>The change outlined above ensures that the feedback in relation to point 3 is fully addressed.</p> <p><u>Point 4</u> Outlined in the procedural note which is read out by the Chair at the start of the meeting, details are provided on the timing of speeches, explaining that speeches at County Council and Planning are timed. It also explains that the speaker will be alerted when they have one minute remaining of their time.</p> <p>The change outlined above ensures that the feedback in relation to point 4 is fully addressed.</p>
1.07	The feedback from the Independent Members was valuable and allowed beneficial changes to be made.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Reports to Standards Committee and associated minutes:</p> <p>03.02.20 https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/s58757/Liaison%20on%20Ethical%20Issues%20with%20the%20Council.pdf?LLL=0</p> <p>https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4570/Printed%20minutes%2003rd-Feb-2020%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&LLL=0</p>

	<p>11.01.21 https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/s62688/Independent%20Member%20attendance%20at%20Committee%20Meetings.pdf?LLL=0</p> <p>https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4803/Printed%20minutes%2011th-Jan-2021%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&LLL=0</p> <p>01.03.21 https://committeemeetings.flintshire.gov.uk/documents/g4805/Printed%20minutes%2001st-Mar-2021%2018.30%20Standards%20Committee.pdf?T=1&LLL=0</p> <p>Contact Officer: Nicola Gittins – Team Leader, Democratic Services Telephone: 01352 702345 E-mail: nicola.gittins@flintshire.gov.uk</p>
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	None.