

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 21 st September 2020
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Committee regularly tends to receive reports on a cyclical basis enabling it to complete scheduled work over a period of time or allowing it to build up and maintain its knowledge. That work tends to fall into broad categories

- 1) Promoting compliance with the Code;
- 2) Reviewing codes, protocols and processes;
- 3) Information about the operation of the ethical process;
- 4) Decisions on the effective running of the Committee itself.

These reports can be scheduled so that the work programme gives due attention and weight to each aspect of the Committee's functions during the course of a year. Structuring the work programme also gives an opportunity to re-examine the frequency of meetings which is unusually high within Mid and North Wales.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee schedules its principal meetings every other month with reserved dates in the intervening months in case it needs to determine any requests for dispensation.
2	That the Forward Work Plan at Appendix 2 is approved.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME
1.01	The Committee receives reports on a cyclical basis with items repeated throughout the year and some work being spread over a whole Council term. This enables the Committee to build up its knowledge of the matters within its terms of reference, keep up to date and pace its work over time.
1.02	The table at Appendix 1 shows the items considered by the Committee at each of its meetings since June 2017 i.e. the last 3 full municipal years. In addition to the items listed, every meeting considers dispensations and the Forward Work Plan (FWP). It is possible to categorise the work as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Promoting compliance with the Code e.g. deciding dispensations, the annual meeting with Town and Community Councils, the liaison meetings with the Chair and Leader of Council, planned training for Councillors etc.; 2) Reviewing codes, protocols and processes e.g. the rolling review of the codes/protocols within the Constitution, visits to Town & Community Council meetings etc.; 3) Information about the operation of the ethical process e.g. the overview of ethical complaints, the annual report from the PSOW/APW and the PSOW case book etc.; 4) Decisions on the effective running of the Committee itself e.g. managing recruitment to the Committee, briefing/de-briefing for the NMWW Standards Forum, agreeing the Forward Work Programme etc.
1.03	The cyclical nature of the work enables it to be scheduled in advance and in so doing to spread a task across several meetings, or even, in the case of the review of codes/protocols, across the whole of a Council term. In turn it also gives the Committee the ability to plan its workload over fewer meetings in the confidence that nothing will be overlooked.
1.04	The Committee is aware that, at 8 – 10 meetings per year, it meets more often than any other Standards Committee in Mid and North Wales. Managing the impacts of the pandemic has increased workloads for officers, and it would be helpful to reduce the frequency of meetings.
1.05	Using the above categories of work it is possible to compile a FWP that addresses the Committee's full terms of reference in 6 principal meetings through the year. At each meeting the Committee could consider 2 – 3 items of work in the first 3 categories. Additionally, it could also consider dispensation requests and any reports relating to the running of the Committee which, by their nature, tend to be quicker to write and consider.
1.06	Meetings could be scheduled every 2 months, with a slot reserved in the intervening months in case of requests for dispensation. A suggested FWP based on this approach is attached at Appendix 2 for consideration.
2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Preparing reports for the Committee is undertaken almost exclusively by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer. Allowing for

	despatch deadlines there is usually just 3 weeks between one meeting taking place and the agenda being sent out for the next. With the additional workload caused by managing the response to the pandemic and the recovery period that frequency is unsustainable.
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3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
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3.01	The Committee can agree to set its own meeting frequency.
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4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
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4.01	The key risks associated with setting the Committee's FWP are that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1) does not allow sufficient time thereby compromising the efficacy of the standards regime. This risk has been mitigated by reviewing the previous 3 years' workload to ensure that estimates are evidenced based and accurate; 2) allows too much time thereby incurring unnecessary cost and inconvenience, or, requiring work to be contrived to keep it busy. Again, this has been mitigated by the review of previous work.
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5.00	APPENDICES
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5.01	Appendix 1 – Analysis of the Committee's work since June 2017 Appendix 2 – Draft Forward Work Plan
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6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
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6.01	None Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk
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7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
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7.01	PSOW – Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, a body set up to investigate complaints of, amongst other things, alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by Councillors. APW – the Adjudication Panel for Wales, a tribunal established to determine whether breaches of the Code have occurred and to hear appeals against findings of Standards Committees that a breach as occurred.
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