

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 11 January 2021
Report Subject	Review Protocol on the Production of Councillor Newsletters
Report Author	Chief Officer Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most Councillors within Flintshire produce their own newsletters periodically as part of their “social contract” with the electorate. Typically, they do so out of their own means. Some newsletters are quite extensive and are part funded by advertising revenues. The current protocol reflects this culture of self-reliance and so prohibits the use of council resources in the production of Councillors’ newsletters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the current protocol is not amended.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE PRODUCTION OF COUNCILLOR NEWSLETTERS
1.01	The protocol on the production of Councillor newsletters was last reviewed in 2016. As part of the rolling review of the Constitution it needs to be tested to ensure that it is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still pertinent; and • Up to date
1.02	Members may recall that as part of the last review the Committee undertook a survey of the number of Councillors who produced their own newsletter. 28 Councillors (40%) responded of whom 26 produced their

	own newsletters. If that result was representative of Councillors as a whole then 65 Councillors will produce a newsletter.
1.03	These newsletters are produced periodically to keep the electorate informed of current issues and a Councillors' activities on their behalf. The newsletters are viewed as part of the "social contract" between Councillors and their residents. As such Councillors produce and distribute the newsletters at their own expense. Some newsletters are quite extensive, resembling community newspapers with local notices in addition to feedback from Councillors, and some are even part funded by carrying local advertisements.
1.04	Members are (perhaps justifiably) proud of this culture of self-reliance. When the protocol was last reviewed Councillors clearly indicated that they were happy to continue the current arrangement and did not want Council resources to be used in the production of newsletters.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Council does not make any provision for the production of newsletters, and if resources were to be made available to Councillors additional funding would need to be found. Likewise, officer time is not set aside for Councillor newsletters. Under the Local Government Measure 2011 there is a facility for Councillors to publish an annual report on the Council's website (utilising officer time to upload it) but this is little used because of the newsletters and Councillors' own blogs/social media pages.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Incumbent Councillors may not use Council resources for electoral purposes, although keeping residents informed is essential, permitted feedback. If resources were made available for the production of Councillor newsletters then there would need to be a provision that they should not be overtly political and they would need to be controlled/prohibited during pre-election periods when campaigning is taking place.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Current Protocol

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	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.