

Meeting of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	16 NOVEMBER 2023
Report Title:	OBSERVING TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COUNCIL MEETINGS
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	MONITORING OFFICER
Responsible Officer:	LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.
Executive Summary:	To agree a process for Independent Members of the Standards Committee to observe Town and Community Council meetings and meetings of the Council.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an overview of the process for observing future meetings of Bridgend County Borough Council and Town and Community Council meetings.

2. Background

- 2.1 There are a number of roles and functions of the Standards Committee, one of which is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors and Co-opted Members. As part of the Committee's work programme, it has been agreed that Independent Members of the Standards Committee would attend meetings of Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and Town and Community Council (TCC) meetings to observe meetings with a view to promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in line with the Members' Code of Conduct.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 In deciding which meetings to attend, it is proposed that the Committee consider the following:
- BCBC Council meetings are deemed pivotal as this is where all County Borough Elected Members meet and where political discussions take place and decisions are made.

- Members may wish to observe an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as it provides an opportunity for Members to hold the Executive and Senior Officers to account in relation to decisions made and to be made.
- Observing TCC meetings and the undertaking of observations from Clerks and Chairs of TCCs allows the sharing of good practice.
- The Governance and Audit Committee is regularly observed by external regulators and therefore it may be considered excessive for the Committee to also attend to observe these meetings.
- The Committee may wish to observe a regulatory committee.

3.2 It is proposed that a schedule of future visits is produced and an Observation Evaluation Sheet to provide the Independent Members with a list of questions to consider when undertaking the visits. Chairs of BCBC Council meetings and Clerks of TCCs will then be advised by Democratic Services that Independent Members intend observing. Consideration needs to be given as to whether Council Members will be advised beforehand of the attendance of Independent Members. The arrangements for attending meetings of BCBC will also be shared in advance with Group Leaders.

3.3 Following the observation, it is recommended that the information gathered and any concerns / comments of the Independent Members are fed back to the Committee Chairs, Clerks and / or Chair of the TCCs by the Monitoring Officer. The Independent Members will also report to the next available Standards Committee following their visits. The Monitoring Officer may also seek to receive feedback of how Chairs and / or Clerks intend to take any suggestions made, as a result of observations, forward.

3.4 Whilst the intention of the Committee would be to restrict the observations made to Code of Conduct matters, it is inevitable that other process / governance issues may emerge which Members may include in their observations in the hope they assist BCBC, TCCs and its Members moving forward.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report. This report also assists in the achievement of the following well-being objective under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

A county borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community.

5.2 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members. Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 Independent Members are able to be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. The costs will be met from existing Democratic Services budget.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Members are requested to note the report and approve the process for observing future meetings of BCBC and TCCs.

Background documents:

None