

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 9 th April 2018
Report Subject	Visits to Town and Community Councils
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its March meeting the committee resolved to undertake visits to Town and Community Councils within the county. As part of the discussion, Members asked for a further report on the potential financial consequences of such visits.

The payment of allowances and expenses to Members is overseen by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (“IRPW”), which can stipulate whether a function should be remunerated and, if so, the amount. The IRPW says that Councils should pay Independent Members for attending meetings, training sessions and the like. However, the IRPW rules do not permit Independent Members to be paid for attending other Councils as observers other than expenses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Members undertaking observational visits to Town and Community Councils be able to claim travel expenses for doing so.
2	That Members note the suggested “toolkit” for undertaking such visits.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	VISITS TO OTHER COUNCILS
1.01	The Local Government Wales Measure 2011 sets out the powers of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) to set the activities for which Members (including co-optees such as Independent Members) should be remunerated and at what level.

1.02	<p>The authorised meetings and events eligible to receive an attendance allowance are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal meetings of the committee on which the claimant is a voting member. <p><i>For Standards Committee members these are the formal meetings of the Standards Committee.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training events, conferences, regional or sub-regional meetings where a lay-member's attendance has been requested and therefore authorised by the Council. • Official pre-meeting briefings with the committee or officers to discuss the committee's business. • Attendance on behalf of the Council at the North Wales Standards Committee Forum. <p>From this list it will be seen that attending as an observer at Town and Community Councils is not included.</p>
1.03	<p>The Council has slightly more flexibility in respect of travelling expenses which it pays at 45p per mile. The Council is therefore able to pay for Members' travelling expenses. The current budget of circa £15,200 is routinely underspent and the money is therefore available to fund such payments. A copy of an expenses claim form is attached as Appendix A and copies will be given to co-opted members.</p>
1.04	<p>Officers will need to monitor expenses claims to ensure that they remain within budget. As there is no fixed timetable for visiting Town and Community Councils it will be possible to delay meetings until a subsequent financial year should the current year's travel budget be used up.</p>
1.05	<p>On attendance at authorised meetings outlined in 1.02 above, previous practice has been for the representative from Committee Services to automatically process a claim for attendance for co-opted members. A form has now been produced that is appended to this report as Appendix B, copies of which will be given to co-opted members, for them to complete following attendance at meetings. Following receipt of those forms, details will be checked and details passed to the payroll section.</p>
1.06	<p>Following recent guidance from the IRPW, the Democratic Services Manager agreed that a two hour time limit could be claimed for preparation of meetings. However, following feedback this has been revised and one hour preparation time is now the guide. The budget for attendance at meetings by co-opted members is £7,171 with an actual spend of £10,537 as at month 11.</p>
1.07	<p>Following last month's meeting, a suggested toolkit for undertaking such visits has been prepared and is attached as Appendix C.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	See above.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None required.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix A – Mileage claim form. Appendix B – Attendance allowance claim form. Appendix C – Toolkit

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None 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.