

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday, 30 September 2019
<b>Report Subject</b>	The Role of a Councillor
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Governance)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report gives details of the role of a County Councillor and the potential expectations of them.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the report.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE ROLE OF A COUNCILLOR</b>
1.01	At the June meeting of the Committee, the question was asked: 'What constitutes work or activities which fall outside the role of a County Councillor?' The best way of addressing this is to set out what the role of a County Councillor is.
1.02	Section 21(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that 'For every County there shall be a Council consisting of a Chairman and Councillors and the Council shall have all such functions as are vested in them by this Act or otherwise'. Thus, a Councillor is an integral part of the Council, as

	collectively, all seventy Councillors <b>are</b> Flintshire County Council. This requirement sets aside any political banner under which they stood for election, or the political group in which they sit in the chamber, whether they are a Member of the party or group forming the Council's administration. All seventy Members are the County Council.
1.03	Therefore, County Councillors are not employees. Whilst current 'pay and rations' arrangements, such as referring to Councillors receiving a salary (rather than a Members' allowance as it was termed in the past) and are allocated a payroll number, and have a manager (this falls within the role of the Head of Democratic Services) may have caused confusion, the legal status or position is unchanged. The Council is the employer, and thus all seventy Councillors together are the employer.
1.04	<p>The role description for a Flintshire County Councillor, which we publish on our website, is as follows:</p> <p><b>Accountabilities</b></p> <p>To Full Council</p> <p>To the electorate of their ward</p> <p><b>Role Purpose and Activity</b></p> <p><i>Representing and supporting communities</i></p> <p>To represent ward interests;</p> <p>To be an advocate for the Council in the ward and communities they serve;</p> <p>To be a channel of communication to the community on Council strategies, policies, services and procedures;</p> <p>To represent individual constituents and local organisations, undertaking casework on their behalf and serving all fairly and equally;</p> <p>To liaise with executive Members, other Council Members, Council officers and partner organisations to ensure that the needs of the local communities are identified, understood and supported;</p> <p>To promote tolerance and cohesion in local communities.</p> <p><i>Making decisions and overseeing Council performance</i></p> <p>To participate in Full Council meetings, reaching and making informed and balanced decisions, and overseeing performance;</p> <p>To participate in informed and balanced decision making on Committees and panels to which they might be appointed;</p>

	<p>To adhere to the principles of democracy and collective responsibility in decision making;</p> <p>To promote and ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of Council and other public services.</p> <p><i>Representing the Council (subject to appointment)</i></p> <p>To represent the Council on local outside bodies as an appointee of the Council;</p> <p>To represent the Council on local partnership bodies, promoting common interest and co-operation for mutual gain;</p> <p>To represent and be an advocate for the Council on national bodies and at national events.</p> <p><i>Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships</i></p> <p>To promote and support good governance of the Council and its affairs;</p> <p>To provide community leadership and promote active citizenship;</p> <p>To promote and support open and transparent government;</p> <p>To support, and adhere to respectful, appropriate and effective relationships with employees of the Council;</p> <p>To adhere to the Member's Code of Conduct, the Member/Officer Protocol and the highest standards of behaviour in public office.</p> <p><i>Personal and role development</i></p> <p>To participate in opportunities for development provided for Members by the authority.</p> <p><i>Values</i></p> <p>To be committed to the values of the Council and the following values in public office:</p> <p>Openness and transparency;</p> <p>Honesty and integrity;</p> <p>Tolerance and respect;</p> <p>Equality and fairness;</p> <p>Appreciation of cultural difference;</p> <p>Sustainability.</p>
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	<p>The Local Government Association has published details of being a Councillor on its website, and emphasises that being a Councillor is hard work. Every day, Councillors are expected to balance the needs of their local area, residents and voters, community groups, local businesses, their political party (if they belong to one) and the Council. All will make legitimate demands on a Councillor's time – on top of their personal commitments to family, friends and workplace.</p>
1.05	<p>Whilst Councillors are not employees, they do receive a salary. The salary levels of Councillors in the 22 Welsh principal (County and County Borough Councils) are determined on an annual basis by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW). All Councillors are eligible to receive the basic salary, which for 2019/20 is £13,868. The Council can also pay up to 18 senior salaries. Senior salaries are paid to the Leader and Members of the Cabinet, most Committee Chairs and the Leader of the largest opposition group. Details of payments to Councillors are published on the Council's website.</p>
1.06	<p>As a guide, the IRPW believe that the role of a 'back bench' Councillor is likely to be the equivalent of three working days a week. A senior salary holder such a Cabinet Member is likely to work the equivalent of a 37 hour week.</p>
1.07	<p>The Council is required to encourage Councillors to produce an annual report, but there is no requirement on a Councillor to do so.</p>
1.08	<p>The Welsh Local Government Association publishes a new Councillor guide which sets out the role of a Councillor. A copy is attached as Appendix A and was provided to all 70 Members of the County Council following the 2017 elections. In addition, a Local Government association guide to working within a political environment is attached as Appendix B.</p>
1.09	<p>Councillors are encouraged to attend development events such as workshops and briefings. Some of these are held during the evening, to assist those Councillors who are in employment or who have day time responsibilities.</p>
1.10	<p>Some Members choose to be active by taking roles in one of the six Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees, or on a regulatory Committee, such as Planning, Licensing, or Audit Committee. There is also the Constitution &amp; Democratic Services Committee, which has a statutory role in ensuring support for 'backbench' Councillors.</p>
1.11	<p>This report has dealt with the role of County Councillors. Community and Town Councillors have their own separate roles. There are over 730 Town and Community Councils in Wales. Many Councillors are also Town or</p>

	<p>Community Councillors for their area – but this isn't an essential requirement. It is important that County Councillors and Town and Community Councillors work together in representing their communities and, likewise, County Councils and Town and Community Councils are encouraged to work closely together, and may hold regular liaison meetings and have established protocols on communication and consultation arrangements. We have the Flintshire Forum for this purpose.</p> <p>The level of services which Community and Town Councils deliver vary across Wales, and whilst some are content with largely acting in a representative role, many also deliver a range of services on behalf of the community such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintenance of community halls;</li> <li>• bus shelters;</li> <li>• public spaces;</li> <li>• play grounds.</li> </ul>
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<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	None from this report.

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	None

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	Not applicable for this information report

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	<p>Appendix A: WLGA New Councillors Guide</p> <p>Appendix B LGA: Working in a Political Environment</p>

<b>6.00</b>	<b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>
6.01	<p>Minutes of the Standards Committee June 2019.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Robert Robins, Head of Democratic Services  <b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702320  <b>Email:</b> robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	<p><b>County Council:</b> there are 22 County and County Borough Councils in Wales. They are 'unitary authorities' which provide most local government services. Some, in more urban areas, are called 'County Borough' Councils, and have a Mayor rather than a Chair as their civic head.</p> <p><b>Community and Town Councils:</b> the lower level of democratic representation. There are over 730 in Wales, but not all Counties have Community Councils covering their entire area. In Flintshire we do, with 34 Community and Town councils. There is no difference in status between Town and Community Councils. Any Community Council can resolve to have the status of a town. In that case, the civic head becomes 'town mayor' instead of 'chair'</p> <p><b>Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales</b> – independent body which is responsible for determining Member salaries.</p>