

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 5 September 2022
Report Subject	Feedback from the Ethical Liaison Meeting
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The third Ethical Liaison Meeting (ELM) was held on 27th June 2022. The meeting discussed and agreed how the Standards Committee should implement its new duty to comment on compliance with the Group Leaders' duty to promote good behaviour in its annual report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee implements the new duty to comment on compliance by Group Leaders with their duty to promote good behaviour as discussed and agreed at the Ethical Liaison Meeting.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ETHICAL LIAISON MEETING
1.01	The third Ethical Liaison Meeting took place on 27 th June 2022. It was attended by the Chair and Leader of Council and one Group Leader as well as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee. The other 2 Group Leaders did not attend.
1.02	The ELMs have been used a forum to discuss how to implement the new duty on Group Leaders to promote ethical behaviour, and how that should be reported as part of the Standards Committee annual report. This meeting considered the draft guidance from Welsh Government on what the duty upon Group Leaders entails and how it might be discharged. The draft guidance also covers how the Standards Committee should

	implement its new obligation to comment on the perceived compliance by each Group Leader with that duty. The guidance has been considered before by the Committee but can be found here .
1.03	The guidance makes clear that failure to comply with the new duty is to be regarded as a potential breach of the Code of Conduct by a Group Leader. How the Committee reports on levels of compliance is therefore of significant importance. It also makes clear that Group Leaders are not to be seen as failing in their duty if they do what they reasonably can to promote good behaviour but one of their group members nevertheless breaches the code.
1.04	It would not be desirable for the Committee to be seen to be operationally involved in managing the behaviour of group members. Such a perception would create a conflict of interest should it be called upon to hold a hearing into the conduct of such a group member. Therefore the Committee will receive a report from Group Leaders once per year in the format agreed by this Committee prior to the ELM. It will hold a private meeting with each Group Leader to discuss their report before commenting publicly in its annual report on perceived levels of compliance. The notes of the ELM are attached at Appendix 1.
1.05	The Committee's annual report must be referred to Full Council. This will take place at the meeting following the annual meeting. The Committee will therefore receive reports from Group Leaders at the end of April each year.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The new duty on Group Leaders will require the Monitoring Officer to keep statistics on the number of incidents or problems with group members during each year as well as the use of local resolution. This should be achievable within existing resources.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	All Group Leaders have been consulted on the proposed reporting process.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	The process of discussing the new duties and how they are to be implemented serves to make Group Leaders aware of their new responsibilities and the expectations upon them. That in turn reduces the risk of non-compliance. The duty itself should help to reduce the chance that councillors will act in unethical manner or breach the code.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – notes of the Ethical Liaison Meeting held on 27 th June 2022.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Insert any hyperlinks to supporting documents if necessary.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer (Governance) Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Ethical Liaison Meetings – meetings between senior Councillors and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee to discuss ethical behaviour within the Council.