

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 3 February 2020
Report Subject	Liaison on Ethical Issues with the Council
Report Author	Chief Officer, Governance

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its November meeting, the Committee, following a best practice recommendation with the report of the Committee on Standards In Public Life on the standards regime in England, agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee would meet 6 monthly with the Leader and Chair of Council.

The first such meeting took place in November. Discussion at the meeting covered, amongst other things, the recent work of the Committee and behaviour within the Council. All parties felt the meeting was productive and agreed that -

- 1) the Independent Members should visit Full Council and Committee meetings to observe in the same way as they had attended Town and Community Council meetings; and
- 2) that such meetings should, in future, include group leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Independent Members should observe Full Council and Committee meetings, and that the Democratic Services Team Leader (Committees) arrange a rota of visits with Independent Members.
2	That future ethical liaison meetings should include Group Leaders.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ETHICAL LIAISON MEETING
1.01	<p>The Committee on Standards in Public Life, in its report on ethical arrangements in England, made a best practice recommendation that there should be meetings with senior Councillors to discuss standards. The Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee should meet the Leader and the Chair of Council.</p>
1.02	<p>The first such meeting took place in November. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee will be able to feedback their impression of the meeting but in summary it covered the recent work of the Committee and behaviour within the Council as a whole. The discussion was positive and it was agreed that -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Independent Members should observe Full Council and Committee meetings;2) future liaison meetings should include the Group Leaders.
1.03	<p>The Council has 6 Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Audit Committee, Planning Committee and Licensing Committee. It also meets periodically as Full Council where all members attend and are able to participate. It has a number of employment Committees that meet only when required.</p> <p>Council and Committee meetings are generally open to the public, so Independent Members will be able to attend. They may occasionally transact business in private when the legislative pre-conditions are met and Independent Members would not be able to remain during those parts of the meeting. Full Council and Planning Committee meetings (plus any other public meetings which take place in the Council Chamber) are webcast and can be viewed in full on line.</p>
1.04	<p>As with the visits to Town and Community Councils, it is important to approach such an exercise in the correct way. The chair of each Committee should be informed that an Independent Member will be visiting their meeting. It is not uncommon for the public to visit certain meetings so the identity of the Independent Member and the purpose of their visit need not be publicly explained. Independent Members should not participate in meetings and should simply observe and feedback to this Committee. The Team Leader Democratic Services (Committees) can prepare a rota of visits for Independent Members to see the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Planning Committee, Audit Committee and Full Council.</p>
1.05	<p>The arrangements for Council and Committee meetings at the County Council are all well publicised and typically take place at County Hall. The matters to be observed by Independent Members will therefore need to be different. Rather than commenting on the ease of public access, they should be looking to see whether the Councillors attending meetings follow the Code of Conduct, the Flintshire Standards, the Member/Officer Protocol and, at Planning Committee, the Planning Protocol.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Travel allowance will be payable for attendance as observers.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	None.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Observation of Council or behaviour by Independent Members will help to inform the work of the Committee and may help to reduce the risk of any poor behaviour either at the meeting or in future.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Code of Conduct for Councillors The Flintshire Standard Member/Officer Protocol Planning Protocol</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	None.