

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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| <b>Date of Meeting</b> | Monday, 6 September 2021                  |
| <b>Report Subject</b>  | Feedback from the Ethical Liaison Meeting |
| <b>Report Author</b>   | Chief Officer (Governance)                |

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The second Ethical Liaison meeting took place in August. It was attended by the Chair and Leader of the Council, the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee and the majority of Group Leaders. The meeting focussed on the forthcoming duty on Group Leaders to assist the Committee in promoting adherence to the Code of Conduct.

The meeting reviewed the existing ways in which Group Leaders help to promote good conduct and what further actions they might take to fulfil the duty. The focus of future actions was on the induction of councillors after the elections in May 2022. Group Leaders agreed to be involved with the induction to help set expectations about behaviour with the new cohort of councillors (and to reinforce those expectations with returning councillors). They also agreed to hold further such meetings in future.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1 | That the Committee welcomes the outcomes of the ethical liaison meeting and agrees to hold a third meeting in the new calendar year. |
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### REPORT DETAILS

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| <b>1.00</b> | <b>EXPLAINING THE ETHICAL LIAISON MEETING</b>  |
| 1.01        | The second Ethical Liaison meeting took place in August. It was the first such meeting to which all Group Leaders had been invited. In order to give the meeting focus the agenda centred on the new duty on Group |

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|      | Leaders under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 to help promote good behaviour. That duty comes into effect in May 2022 after the elections that are due to be held. The meeting looked first at existing ways in which Group Leaders already help to promote compliance with the Code of Conduct before looking at suggestions for further actions that could be taken to fulfil the duty.   |
| 1.02 | Whilst each election is different, based on past experience, it is reasonable to expect a turnover in the region of 20 – 30% of Councillors. Immediately after the election the Council provides induction training for new Councillors, and this will be a valuable early opportunity to set expectations about the desired standards of behaviour. It should also be seen as a chance to remind returning councillors of the requirements under the Councillors' Code of Conduct and expectations around conduct.   |
| 1.03 | The induction will include a session on the Code of Conduct and Group Leaders have agreed that all Councillors (returning and new) should attend. There will also be sessions on how to do business at the Council. These will include information on essential processes, who to contact etc. and will also cover the conventions around behaviour set out within the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Flintshire Standard. Having returning senior Councillors helping to deliver that session will serve to demonstrate that these values are shared across the whole membership.  |
| 1.04 | The larger groups agreed to adopt a "mentor system" where an experienced Councillor helps a newly elected member. In the smaller groups this role is often fulfilled by the Group Leader themselves. We will provide some preparatory training to those who intend to be mentors so that they are confident in the role and to help ensure consistency of approach.   |
| 1.05 | The division of responsibilities between elected members and officers plays an important part in ensuring that the respective Codes of Conduct are observed. That is to say that members risk breaching their Code of Conduct if they get too involved in operational issues which should be left to officers and vice versa for officers who get too involved in strategic or political issues. The division of responsibilities works best if there is a clear understanding of the respective roles and expectations of each other (as set out in the Member/Officer Protocol). Senior officers and Group Leaders will meet after the elections to ensure that those roles and expectations are thoroughly understood. |
| 1.06 | The Group Leaders found the meeting to be useful and agreed to meet again early in the new calendar year.   |

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| <b>2.00</b> | <b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>   |
| 2.01        | The Ethical Liaison meeting can be accommodated within existing resources. |

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| <b>3.00</b> | <b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>   |
| 3.01        | Ethical Liaison meetings are themselves a form of consultation between Group Leaders and the Committee to ensure that each is meeting/fulfilling the expectations of the other. |

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| <b>4.00</b> | <b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>   |
| 4.01        | The involvement of Group Leaders in induction for new Councillors will help to establish expected standards of behaviour for new councillors after the elections. This will reduce the risk of poor behaviour. It is an example for the positive benefits such Ethical Liaison meetings can bring. |

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| <b>5.00</b> | <b>APPENDICES</b> |
| 5.01        | None              |

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| <b>6.00</b> | <b>LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS</b>  |
| 6.01        | None<br><br><b>Contact Officer:</b> Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance<br><b>Telephone:</b> 01352 702344<br><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:Gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk">Gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk</a> |

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| <b>7.00</b> | <b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>  |
| 7.01        | <b>Group/ Group Leaders</b> – Councillors typically organise themselves into political groups which can, but not have to, reflect national political parties. These are the basis for the allocation of seats, certain positions of chair of committee etc. They also provide a support mechanism for group members. Each group has a group leader who tends to be a senior/respected Councillor. |