

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Monday, 6 March 2023
<b>Report Subject</b>	Survey on the Production of Councillor Newsletters
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Officer (Governance)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of its rolling review of the Constitution, the Committee needs to review the protocol on production of Councillors' newsletters. Currently the protocol says that Councillors are not permitted to use Council resources for this task. This reflects longstanding practice of Councillors producing their own, sometimes quite extensive, newsletters often defraying the costs through advertising from local businesses.

Prior to reviewing the protocol the Committee has previously surveyed Councillors to see who does produce their own newsletter already and to gauge their opinion on the use of Council resources. It is proposed that the same approach is taken this time and a suggested survey form is attached.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the attached survey is sent to Councillors.
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### REPORT DETAILS

<b>1.00</b>	<b>EXPLAINING THE SURVEY ON THE PRODUCTION OF COUNCILLOR NEWSLETTERS</b>
1.01	<p>The Councillors' Code of Conduct governs the use of Council resources at paragraph 7:</p> <p>"7. You must not — (b) use, or authorise others to use, the resources of your authority — (i) imprudently;</p>

	<p>(ii) in breach of your authority's requirements;</p> <p>(iii) unlawfully;</p> <p>(iv) other than in a manner which is calculated to facilitate, or to be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the authority or of the office to which you have been elected or appointed;</p> <p>(v) improperly for political purposes; or</p> <p>(vi) improperly for private purposes.</p>
1.02	<p>Providing purely factual information to the public can legitimately be undertaken by Councillors using Council resources provided the Council does not prohibit this. The current protocol does impose such a prohibition which reflects the preferences of Councillors during the last Council term. Many Councillors produce their own newsletters. Some of these are quite extensive, featuring other community services (e.g. local churches, WI groups etc) and the costs are defrayed by advertising from local businesses. Newsletters often also include the political position of the Councillor which could not be permitted if they were to be produced using Council resources. Councillors have therefore previously preferred to produce their newsletters at their own expense.</p>
1.03	<p>The Committee has previously surveyed the views of Councillors when reviewing this protocol. It is recommended that the Committee should similarly survey Councillors this time as well. The questions from the last such survey are attached at Appendix 1.</p>

<b>2.00</b>	<b>RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b>
2.01	<p>The Council provides Councillors with iPads and laptops that could be used to design or create content for an electronic newsletter. It does not currently have a budget for the production of printed newsletters and does not supply Councillors with papers/printers. Printers are available at Council premises that, in addition to the hire charge (which is paid anyway), cost 1 pence per side of monochrome and 10 pence per side of colour printing. The additional cost of printing a single page, double sided newsletter in monochrome for every household in the county (approximately 60,000 properties) would be in the region of £1,200.</p>

<b>3.00</b>	<b>CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT</b>
3.01	<p>It is proposed to consult Councillors on whether to permit newsletters to be produced using Council resources.</p>

<b>4.00</b>	<b>RISK MANAGEMENT</b>
4.01	<p>None arising directly from this report.</p>

<b>5.00</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
5.01	Appendix 1 - Current Protocol Appendix 2 - Proposed Survey Questions

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

<b>7.00</b>	<b>GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
7.01	None