

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 23 January 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Monitoring Officer Meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an update of the meetings undertaken between the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of Town and Community Councils
Report Owner:	Ms. D. Marles, Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Mrs. K. Bowen, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report does not require consultation to be undertaken
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for decision by the Standards Committee
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the roles of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives of the Council. • To assist in this process, the Monitoring Officer has undertaken to arrange regular meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils to provide opportunities for discussion of matters of mutual concern, to have regard to the principles of standards in public life and to provide networking opportunities. 	

Recommendation

1. That the Standards Committee Members consider and note the contents of the report.

Reason for Recommendation

1. Having regard to meetings that have taken place between the Monitoring Officer and Clerks of Town and Community Councils.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Monitoring Officer has previously informed the Standards Committee of the intention to hold six monthly meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils to provide a formal opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern, to provide open discussion and networking opportunities

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 To date, two meetings have been held, the first on 22nd March, 2019 and the second on 10th October, 2019.
- 2.2 At the first meeting in March 2019, Town and Community Councils' Clerks were provided with a copy of the current Public Services for Wales Ombudsman's Guidance on the Code of Conduct for Members of Community Councils. The Guidance refers to the principles of standards in public life, with specific reference to the need to register Members' interests and have regard to the provisions under gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer suggested that the Clerks, if they had not already done so, share the guidance with Elected Members of their Town and Community Councils.
- 2.3 It was also noted that through One Voice Wales, Town and Community Councils have access to legal and general advice when they subscribe to the organisation. One Voice Wales is described as a principal organisation for Town and Community Councils in Wales providing a strong voice, representing the Council's interests and a range of high-quality services to support their work. It is the Monitoring Officer's understanding that the 26 Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan subscribe to the organisation.
- 2.4 The process for applications for dispensations to the Standards Committee was discussed, with all Clerks being informed that Town and Community Council Members should be encouraged to attend Standards Committee meetings when their applications are being considered to provide the Committee with any further detail that may be required. Town and Community Councillors are also encouraged to speak to their Clerks prior to the submission of applications in order that Clerks can provide advice and guidance to the Member prior to submission. Following meetings of the Standards Committee, Town and Community Council Clerks are provided with copies of all dispensations granted to Town and Community Councillors for their information.

- 2.5** Observations undertaken by Independent Standards Committee Members at Town and Community Council meetings were discussed in general terms. Clerks were advised of the process that has been introduced together with the proforma used Standards Committee Independent Members when undertaking their observation role of Town and Community Councils' meetings. Any generic observations received by the Monitoring Officer following such observations are presented to all Clerks at the six monthly meetings, however specific issues relating to a particular Town or Community Council are relayed to the Clerk / Chairman directly.
- 2.6** The Head of Finance also attended the first meeting in March 2019, referring to the Wales Audit Office reports in respect of audit arrangements and governance for Town and Community Councils, with the offer that if they had any concerns in relation to their audits, they could contact her for initial advice.
- 2.7** Topics discussed at the second meeting included:
- Training: The Monitoring Officer recommending that Clerks may wish to consider that all new Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen are provided with relevant training;
 - The use of Standing Orders to regulate meetings if required;
 - Governance Toolkit: A copy of the toolkit that had been prepared in England for Parish and Town Councils identified some good practice examples that the Monitoring Officer suggested may be useful being mindful that the document had been prepared for England as opposed to Wales;
 - The use of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure;
 - Sharing of Good practice;
 - Items raised by Clerks;
 - Town and Community Council Charter with the Vale of Glamorgan Council: All Clerks were updated on the work being undertaken in relation to the Town and Community Councils Charter which had been revised following discussions with a Working Group of Elected Members, staff and Town and Community Councils' Clerks. The Charter, having now been endorsed by the Council's Community Liaison Committee on 8th October 2019 and the Council's Cabinet on 4th November 2019;
 - Town and Community Council Engagement in Operating Local Services and Assets - As part of the Vale Council's Reshaping Programme, following an engagement event in July 2019 with Town and Community Councils, a report had been produced as a basis for the development of specific proposals and discussions with individual Town and Community Councils;
 - The Mayor of the Vale of Glamorgan's Foundation Grant Fund and the Strong Communities Grant Fund - Town and Community Councils were reminded of the Mayor's Foundation Grant Fund application process and the Strong Communities Grant Fund application process, which were both available on the Council's website.

- 2.8** All who attended both meetings considered the meetings to be a useful and informative exchange of views which they were grateful to the Monitoring Officer for hosting.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The role of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governor representatives. It was intended that the Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils and the way in which the first ways of working proposals aim to promote the role.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

Employment

- 4.2** There are no direct employment implications as a result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report, however it is noted that 26 Town and Community Councils in the Vale of Glamorgan subscribe to One Voice Wales where they are able to obtain legal and generic advice as required as a result of their subscription.

5. Background Papers

Minutes of Monitoring Officer meetings with Clerks of Town and Community Councils.