

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 12 March 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Collaboration with Bridgend County Borough Council regarding Standards
Purpose of Report:	To brief Members on the option to increase collaborative arrangements with Bridgend County Borough Council.
Report Owner:	Ms. Debbie Marles, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Mr Mark Thomas, 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
Executive Summary:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To brief Members on the option to increase collaborative arrangements between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Bridgend County Borough Council with regard to Standards - such as when there is a conflict of interest or issues around being quorate. 	

Recommendations

1. T H A T the Standards Committee consider the report from Bridgend County Borough Council regarding increased collaborative arrangements with the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee.
2. T H A T Standards Committee receive a further report following Bridgend County Borough Council's Standards Committee's Meeting on 26th March 2020.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure the Standards Committee are informed of the findings of the Bridgend County Borough Council Standards Committee regarding increased collaborative arrangements between the two Authorities.
2. To progress joint arrangements if approved by Bridgend County Borough Council's Standards Committee on 26th March 2020.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Standards Committee meeting on 21st March, 2019 the Monitoring Officer was requested to explore the potential for joint arrangements with a neighbouring Principal Authority, to apply should conflicts of interest arise or Independent Members have personal and prejudicial interests in a matter to the extent that the Standards Committee would be inquorate.
- 1.2 Independent Members of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee undertake to abide by the Council's Members' Code of Conduct which is contained in the Council's Constitution. If an Independent Member has a 'close personal association' with an individual that is the subject of a matter before the Committee, the Independent Member (as would a Vale of Glamorgan Councillor who sits on the Standards Committee) is required to declare such a personal interest and its nature. Given the nature of the business before the Committee such a personal interest may equate to a prejudicial interest, and the Member would then need to withdraw from the meeting.
- 1.3 Guidance is issued from time to time by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, with the current guidance providing (in part) as follows:

"Who is a close personal associate?"

Close personal associates include people such as close friends, colleagues with whom you have particularly strong connections, business associates and close relatives. It does not include casual acquaintances, distant relatives or people you simply come in contact with through your role as member or your work in the local community.

Close personal associates can also include someone with whom you have been in dispute, or whom you may be regarded as having an interest in disadvantaging. For example, being a member of the same golf club as another person would not of itself constitute a close personal association but having that person as a weekly golf partner might well do. If you are in doubt, you should ask your Monitoring Officer."

- 1.4** In light of the above guidance the occasions on which a Standards Committee would be inquorate would be rare, particularly given that a meeting of the Standards Committee will be quorate if at least 3 members are present (including the Chairman) and at least half the members present (including the Chairperson) are Independent Members. It being noted that the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee comprises 5 Independent Members.
- 1.5** The Chair of the Standards Committee in the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOG) invited members of Bridgend County Borough Council Standards Committee to attend a meeting of their committee as observers. Members of Bridgend County Borough Council's Standards Committee subsequently attended a meeting on 23rd January 2020. A feedback report on their observations is scheduled to be presented to the Bridgend County Borough Council Standards Committee on 26 March 2020.
- 1.6** At the Vale of Glamorgan Council Standards Committee meeting the Monitoring Officer raised with Members the matter of working towards joint arrangements with Bridgend Standards Committee when matters such as a conflict of interest and not being quorate may arise. The Committee were happy for reciprocal arrangements to be put in place.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Committee are asked to consider the potential benefits of a collaborative approach with Bridgend County Borough Council should the need arise in relation to potential future business of the Standards Committee.
- 2.2** For the Committee's reference, Bridgend County Borough Council's report to be presented to Standards Committee on 26th March 2020 is attached at Appendix A.

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

- 3.1 One of the main roles of the Standards Committee is to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Councillors, Co-opted Members and Church and Parent Governors and Members of Community Councils within its area.
- 3.2 The report has regard to the future business of the Standards Committee and references a collaborative approach should the need arise.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1 None as a direct result of this report.
- 4.2 The allowances for Independent Members of Standards Committee are set by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales.

Employment

- 4.3 None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.4 The Council has a statutory duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation as set out in the Standards Committee Rules and Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2006.

5. Background Papers

None

Report Approval	Name	Date
Chief Officer	KW	
Cabinet Member		
Chairperson (Urgent only)		

Legal	LG	
Finance	DE	
Sent to Cabinet_Committee		

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
26 MARCH 2020
REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

COLLABORATION WITH THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To brief Members on the option to increase collaborative arrangements with the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priority

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following well-being objectives / corporate priority/priorities:

Smarter use of resources – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to establish and maintain a Standards Committee as defined by legislation.

4. Current situation / proposal

- 4.1 The Chair of the Standards Committee in the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOG) invited members of this Committee to attend a meeting of their committee as observers. Members subsequently attended a meeting on 23rd January 2020. A feedback report following Members observations will be presented to this Committee on 26 March 2020.
- 4.2 At the VOG Standards Committee meeting itself the Monitoring Officer raised with VOG Members the matter of working towards joint arrangements with Bridgend Standards Committee when matters of a conflict of interest and not being quorate

may arise. The VOG's Standards Committee were happy for reciprocal arrangements to be put in place.

- 4.3 Members will recognise the benefits that could arise by having a collaborative approach with the VOG should the need arise, having regard to the future business of the Standards Committee.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 None.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The allowance for Independent Members of Standards Committee are set by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and will be funded from the existing budget.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 Members are recommended to note the report and consider the merits of a collaborative approach with the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

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Background Documents

None