STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Monday, 6 November 2023
Report Subject	Feedback from the Independent members' Visits to Town and Community Councils.
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Independent Members of the Committee have attended meetings of all town and community council in Flintshire over the past 12 months. The visits have been carried out in order to observe how town and community council meetings are run across the County, with a particular focus on issues pertaining to the members' Code of Conduct (the Code), and to provide any feedback arising from the visits that may be useful.

As with the previous series of such visits, the overriding feedback is that the majority of town and community council meetings in Flintshire are well organised and attended and that town and community councillors and their clerks should be commended for their hard work and commitment in this respect.

Letters have been sent to town and community councils following each report back to the Committee by Independent members of the Committee, and this report is intended to summarise the common themes arising from the visits and to endorse them as recommendations to town and community councils in Flintshire as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	That this report is circulated to all town and community councils in Flintshire and the common themes and suggestions at paragraph 1.04 of this report are endorsed as recommendations of best practice to those councils.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND
1.01	The Independent members of the Committee have attended meetings of all town and community councils in Flintshire over the past 12 months. This is the second such round of visits, which have been undertaken in order that members can observe how town and community council meetings are organised and carried out across Flintshire, with a particular focus on any issues arising pertaining to the Code. Written feedback has been provided to town and community council clerks (copies of these letters are appended to this report).
1.02	The main message that has emerged is that most meetings are well attended by town and community councillors, local issues appear to be thoroughly debated and considered, and that councillors and their clerks should be commended for their hard work and commitment. In a couple of instances specific feedback has been provided with town and community councils where problems were observed.
1.03	As before there are common themes that have arisen where members of the Committee consider improvements should be made to meetings of town and community councils in Flintshire. The feedback letters referred to at paragraph 1.01 of this report have advised town and community councils of these matters.
1.04	The key matters are summarised at paragraph 1.04 below: 1. Declarations of Interest should appear as a standing item early on the agenda before substantive items are listed, and the chair should remind councillors that an interest can be declared at any point should a councillor realise later on in the meeting that a declaration is required 2. summary guidance on when to declare an interest has been circulated for inclusion on agendas 3. When someone declares a personal interest they can (and should) remain in the room but must leave when they declare a personal & prejudicial interest 4. For on-line meetings the screen login should show whether someone is a councillor or an officer and their name so that role are clear and it is clear which code of conduct applies to them; 5. Good chairing is the first line of defence against complaints under the code and this works best where: • during a meeting only one person is speaking at a time; • the chair retains self-control and has themselves made appropriate declarations of interest. 6. agendas should specify the nature of the business to be transacted under each agenda item with sufficient precision to allow councillors to be able to identify whether they need to declare an interest.

	7. there is an automatic exemption in the code for town and community (not county) councillors in any funding request up to and including £500 in value.

2.00	**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
2.01	N/A

3.00	**CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT**
3.01	Town and community council clerks throughout Flintshire were consulted about the visits prior to them commencing and were provided with written feedback and the matters reported back to the Committee.

4.00	**RISK MANAGEMENT**
4.01	The recommendations within the report should reduce the risk of complaints about breaches of the Code and should improve the publics' experience of town and community council meetings.

5.00	**APPENDICES**
5.01	App 1 - Letters of feedback on visits sent to town and community councils in Flintshire.

6.00	**LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**
6.01	**Contact Officer:** Gareth Owens, Monitoring Officer **Telephone:** 01352 702344 **E-mail:** gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**
7.01	N/A