

Report to	Standards Committee
Date of meeting	2 nd December 2022
Lead Member / Officer	Gary Williams, Corporate Director, Governance and Business/ Monitoring Officer
Report author	Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Title	Remuneration for independent members' attendance and observations at meetings and consideration of a structured approach to attendance/observation at meetings.

1. What is the report about?

The Committee has requested a report to consider a structured approach to their attendance and observation at meetings and feedback and to confirm the Council's position in relation to members being remunerated for attendance at meetings.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

One of the Committee's methods of overseeing adherence to the Code of Conduct is to attend County, City, Town or Community Council meetings either online or in person and a structured approach is preferable hence this report. This is in addition to attendance at Standards' Committee. At the time of writing, feedback on the issue of remuneration from a pan Wales meeting of Heads of Democratic Services is awaited, which the Committee will be updated upon. Further a number of neighbouring Councils have agreed to fund such attendances.

3. What are the Recommendations?

3.1 That members note the position in relation to remuneration.

3.2 That Members consider and agree a co-ordinated and structured approach.

4. Report details

4.1 County Council Meetings

Members of Standards Committee in previous terms have generally attended the main full Council meeting rather than any other Committee, such as Democratic Services or a Scrutiny Committee for example. A list of the public meetings is attached at Appendix 1 for information and details of the latest meeting can be accessed on the Councils website. Standards members have traditionally focused their efforts on Town, City and Community Councils but may wish to attend and observe occasional County level meetings. A legal advisor or Monitoring Officer is not present at all Committees and not all Committees are webcasted therefore Members may wish to discuss whether they wish to increase their activity at County level or indeed focus priorities within the resources available on community meetings instead.

4.2 Town, City and Community Meetings.

In previous terms the Committee' approach has been to work through the list of Councils and agree which Member will attend particular Councils. The attendance has previously been covered by the independents and the town and community member representative, therefore 5 members to cover the 'rota'. Members have shared the workload and reported back their findings as and when they are able to feasibly attend the meetings. A central record of attendances has been kept by the Monitoring Officer in previous years albeit since the pandemic this has not been kept up to date, and can be recommenced if agreed. Members may wish to review the attendance, coverage and progress in respect of covering the whole County at each Standards' meeting rather than ad hoc; they may wish to focus on particular localities in their area, or alternatively attend as observer outside of their immediate local area. Members may wish to align attendance with the information provided in respect of Public Services' Ombudsman complaints; or may have other suggestions on approach such as the level of complaints.

Appendix 2 in table format is the list of Councils Members may wish to indicate their preference to attend, with the proposal that each Member attends a maximum of 2/3 meetings per year, over the next 4 years, with a mid term review of any that are missed or may need a re-attendance (subject of course to the budget at the time). Members will need to indicate their preference and ability to commit the time.

Members may wish to discuss the approach regarding post attendance feedback to the Council visited, any observations found at the visit.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

A fully functioning and representative Standards Committee which upholds the high standards expected of members helps underpin the Council's exercise of its democratic functions.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The Council has a Members' budget with a budget line in respect of travel costs which has not been fully exhausted due to the option of attending certain meetings on a hybrid basis now in place. Meetings have taken place with the relevant finance officer who maintains the members' budget code and it has been identified that the Council could agree to fund attendance providing this is capped so that the total cost of travel and the attendance rate per year is limited – currently £2000 maximum per annum. As with all costs this will need to be kept under review regularly with no guarantee that this will be available year on year.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

A Well Being Impact Assessment is not required.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

No other consultations are considered required.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There are no identified risks.

11. Power to make the decision

The Local Government Act 2000; the Standards Committee (Wales) Regulations 2001 and the Standards Committee (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2006.