

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 21 November 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Update Report National Standards Committee Chairs Forum Wales
Purpose of Report:	To provide Standards Committee with an opportunity to provide their views on agenda items for the next meeting of the Forum in January 2025
Report Owner:	Victoria Davidson, Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	Karen 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> <p>A verbal report was presented by the Chair of the Standards Committee at its meeting on 29th July 2024.</p> <p>Subsequently following the Monitoring Officers Group meeting on the 4th October 2024, the Standards Committees view on proposed agenda items for the upcoming Forum meeting in January 2025 are currently being sought.</p>	

Recommendation

1. Committee is requested to note the report and to provide any suggestions for additional agenda items to be considered by the Monitoring Officer Group prior to the next Forum meeting scheduled for January 2025.

Reason for Recommendation

1. For Committee information and consideration.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Chair of the Standards Committee provided the following verbal update following his online attendance at the meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum held on 24th June 2024.

- 1.2 **Introduction of New Leadership**

- Judge Claire Sharp, the outgoing President of the Adjudication Panel for Wales (APL), and her successor, Judge Meleri Tudur, were both in attendance at the Forum.
- Judge Sharp shared insights on the key issues she considers when deciding whether to permit an appeal against a decision made by a Standards Committee.

- 1.3 **Support from One Voice Wales (OVW)**

- Mr. Lyn Cadwallader, Chief Executive, and Paul Egan, Deputy Chief Executive of One Voice Wales (OVW), the primary organisation representing Community and Town Councils in Wales, provided an update on OVW's activities.
- They discussed the range of training, support, and information offered by OVW to local councils, particularly around standards of behaviour and Code of Conduct matters.

- 1.4 **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Update**

Michelle Morris, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, gave a report on the Ombudsman's Office's work. Key highlights include:

- A total of 8,000 enquiries and 3,000 complaints received regarding the public sector, including the NHS.
- 328 Code of Conduct complaints had been received in the last year. The Ombudsman's office aims to resolve these cases within 12 months, although this timeline is not always achievable.
- The final report on the inappropriate social media posts made by a former employee of the Ombudsman's office is expected in autumn.

1.5 Group Leader Duty under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021

- The Forum discussed the implementation of the Group Leader duty established by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 across 22 local authorities in Wales.
- It was noted that the interpretation and management of this provision are being handled differently in various authorities.
- The Vale of Glamorgan was specifically mentioned, with the Chair of the Forum noting that the Vale appeared to be progressing well with its approach to the duty.

1.6 The next meeting of the National Forum of Chairs of Standards Committees is scheduled for January 2025.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 The Monitoring Officer Group met on 4th October 2024. In light of discussions at the previous National Forum of Chairs of Standards Committee in June 2024 it was agreed that Standards Committees would be invited to submit their views on potential agenda items for the Forum in January 2025. These will be reviewed at the Monitoring Officer Group meeting in December 2024, with a view to finalising the agenda in consultation with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) during December 2024.

2.2 Proposed agenda items include:

- A potential review of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure;
- An update from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Michelle Morris, on the Independent Review of Investigations into Code of Conduct complaints;
- Localised training for Chairs and members of Standards Committee including in relation to hearings before the Standards Committee.

2.3 After consideration and discussion by the Panel, any additional proposals from the Standards Committee will be referred back to the Monitoring Officer Group for further consultation.

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

3.1 This report relates to the role of the Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of Members as detailed in the Council's Constitution.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

4.1 None as a direct result of this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

5.1 None as a direct result of this report.

Employment

5.2 None as a direct result of this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

5.3 None as a direct result of this report.

6. Background Papers

None.