

Meeting of:	<b>Standards Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 30 January 2025</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	National Standards Committee Chairs Forum Update
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an update regarding the forthcoming meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum for Independent Standards Committee Members
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 the Standards Committee
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To apprise Members of the agenda for the meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum to be held remotely on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2025.</li> <li>- To receive a verbal update from the Chair of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Standards Committee following attendance at the Forum meeting.</li> </ul>

## **Recommendations**

1. That the Agenda for the meeting of the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum be noted.
2. That the verbal update provided by the Chair relating to the discussions held at the Forum be noted and considered by the Committee.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To apprise Committee.
2. To seek the Committee's views in relation to any matters discussed at the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 In September 2019 Committee were apprised of the Terms of Reference and overview of the work of the North Wales Standards Forum and the feedback received regarding establishing a Standards Forum in South and East Wales.
- 1.2 Lack of resources and capacity were raised as barriers to establishing a similar Forum in South and South East Wales at that time. However, since then discussions have been ongoing for the establishment of a National Forum.
- 1.3 In March 2021 the then Minister for Housing and Local Government announced her intention to commission an independent review of the Ethical Standards Framework for Local Government (ESF) in Wales that was established by the Local Government Act 2000. Mr. Richard Penn, an independent consultant, was subsequently commissioned to undertake the review.
- 1.4 The Standards Committee considered at its meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2021 a report on the first phase of Richard Penn's review of the Ethical Standards Framework in Wales. In the first phase review Richard Penn suggested that an all-Wales Forum for Chairs of Standards Committees be established and that the Annual Conference for Independent Chairs and Independent Members of Standards Committees across Wales be re-established.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 The National All Wales Standards Committee Chairs Forum is a body for the sharing of good practice and the co-ordination of activity. The Forum is not a formal decision-making body and does not have delegated powers to act on behalf of the Standards Committees in Wales.
- 2.2 Members will recall that Committee was keen to be part of an all-Wales Forum.
- 2.3 The WLGA send out the agendas, prepare minutes and prepare basic reports analysing practice across Wales with the agenda for the meetings being prepared

by the Monitoring Officers Group with Members of the Forum being able to suggest items of future business.

- 2.4** The agenda for the meeting to be held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025 is to include the following items -
- Pam Lucas - Local Government Policy Division, Public Services and Welsh Language Group, Welsh Government.
    - a) Ethical framework review - position update.
    - b) Standards Committee annual reporting arrangements.
  - Michelle Morris – Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).
    - a) Update.
    - b) Independent Review – Consultation on Recommendation 2 of Dr McCullough’s independent report – Whether the PSOW should consider reverting to the previous practice of notifying the accused Member of the complaint once it is received.
  - Matters raised by the Monitoring Officers Governance Group (MOGG).
    - a) PSOW Consultation.
  - Matters raised by exception by the Chairs.
    - a) Have other Authorities signed up to the [SLCC | Civility & Respect Pledge](#) and / or encouraged their Town and Community Councils to do so
  - Forum discussion on:
    - a) Recent cases of interest - Adjudication Panel for Wales (APW) and Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) in previous 6 months.
    - b) Hearings - Opportunity to share experiences in a safe learning environment.
    - c) Group leader responsibility – How can Chairs assess, challenge and report in the right way.
  - Feedback from Chair and Panel Advisor - Evidence to the Senedd Local Government and Housing (LG&H) Committee on the role and value of Town and Community Councils in Wales. Emphasis on aspects relating to standards, including interactions with Local Authority Monitoring Officers and Standards Committees.
  - National Standards Conference – Online.
  - Remuneration – Payments to Co-opted Members.
  - Any other business.
    - a) Forum Chair and Vice-Chair.
  - Date of next meeting – Monday 23 June 2025, 14.00 – 16.00, online.
- 2.5** At the Standards Committee meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January the Chair, who will be attending the Forum meeting on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> January, will provide Members with an update on the discussions held at the Standards Forum for the Committee’s consideration.

- 2.6 Committee is therefore requested to consider and note the contents of this report.

### **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 is intended that the process adopted within this report will aim to promote that role with the sharing of good practice.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1 None as a direct result of this report.

### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 5.1 Members are able to be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

#### **Employment**

- 5.2 Members will be remunerated for attendance under the allowance scheme agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel and the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Constitution. Independent Members are able to claim for a maximum of 15 days per annum as detailed within the Council's Constitution.

#### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3 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.

### **6. Background Papers**