



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2022

NATIONAL FORUM FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

At the All Wales Standards Conference held on 9th February 2022 a discussion took place in respect of the establishment of a National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, a recommendation emanating from the Penn Review into the Ethical and Standards Framework in Wales. This report seeks Members' views on this proposal.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Committee supports the creation of an All Wales forum for Standards Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Penn Report on the Review of the Ethical Regime in Wales ("the Penn Report") commented on the variety of practice across Wales in how Standards Committees discharge their duties. It recommended that a national forum for the Chairs of Standards Committees be established modelled on the forum that exists in North and Mid Wales.

3.2 At paragraph 4.4.1 the report says:

"I was struck by the variation in the way that Standards Committees in Wales see their remit and at the role played by the Independent Chairs of Standards Committees. At the one extreme Standards Committees and their Independent Chairs seem to have either been given or have adopted a very limited role, meeting infrequently and only really active when there is a Hearing of a case referred by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. At the other extreme there are Standards Committees and Chairs that see their remit much wider than

this, and as leading the development and maintenance of the ethical standards framework in that local authority.”

- 3.3 Richard Penn then went on to comment positively upon the work of the forum for Chairs of Standards Committees in North and Mid Wales. Whilst acknowledging the place for local decision making, he recommends that a national forum be established along the same lines - see paragraph 4.4.5

“I attended a meeting of this Forum and had a very useful exchange with the Chairs and Monitoring Officers who attended. Although a Forum for the Chairs of Standards Committees in South Wales no doubt would serve a similar purpose in the facilitation of exchange of information and experiences about the work of Standards Committees in that part of Wales, I suggest that there should be an all-Wales Forum ... would encourage consistency of approach and the adoption of best practice across Wales.”

- 3.4 A discussion around this recommendation took place at the recent All Wales Standards Conference. Monitoring Officers in Wales have agreed to consult their Standards Committees on the issue.

- 3.5 There are a number of issues to consider with the creation of such a national forum but these are common issues that are considered when establishing such a forum and it is considered workable solutions could be found for all. They include 1) Resources 2) Meeting format and location 3) Administration and advice 4) Agendas 5) Meeting dates and frequencies.

- 3.6 Officers do therefore consider it would be beneficial to establish such a forum and recommending such a proposal be supported by Members.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A national forum would not, of itself, require significant resources. Physical meetings would entail small cost for venue hire and travel which can be accommodated within existing budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications aligned to the report.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 All Local Authorities in Wales are being consulted about his proposal.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Penn Review of the Ethical Standards Framework in Wales (Published 14th October 2021)

Freestanding Matter

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