

Matter considered urgent by the Chair in order to apprise Committee of the progress relating to the establishment of the National Standards Forum with the first meeting to be held on 8th December 2022

Meeting of:	Standards Committee
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 24 November 2022
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	No Relevant Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Update on National Forum
Purpose of Report:	To provide the Committee with an update on progress regarding the establishment of a National Forum for Independent Standards Committee Members and the date of the first National forum meeting to be held on 8 th December 2022
Report Owner:	Debbie Marles, 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
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To apprise Committee on progress being made in respect of establishing a National Forum for Independent Standards Committee Members. • It being noted that the first meeting of the National Standards Committee Forum has been arranged for 8th December 2022. 	

Recommendation

1. That the report be noted and the terms of reference of the Forum as outlined in paragraph 2.10 of this report.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To apprise Committee

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 25th 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 All Wales Monitoring Officer's group have therefore been discussing the establishment of a National Forum for Wales with the Welsh Local Government Association who have kindly agreed to provide the secretariat support for the body. The Forum will be a body for the sharing of good practice and the co-ordination of activity. The Forum is not a formal decision making body and will 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** Committee was advised at its last meeting on 6th October that the Monitoring Officer had received a further report on the role, purpose etc of the Forum which was to be presented to the Monitoring Officer's group for consideration as follows -
- 2.4** Membership - in order to keep the size of meetings manageable, it is suggested that membership will be Chairs with the Vice-Chairs as substitutes.
- 2.5** One representative from each Local Authority attending.
- 2.6** WLGA to send out the agendas, prepare minutes and prepare basic reports analysing practice across Wales.
- 2.7** The agenda for the meetings to be prepared by the Monitoring Officer Group (MOG) with Members of the Forum being able to suggest items of future business.
- 2.8** Meetings to be held once or twice per year – commencing 1 month or so after meetings of the MOG in order that agendas can be agreed.
- 2.9** Following the meeting of the Monitoring Officer group in October 2022 a meeting of the National Standards Forum has now been arranged to take place on Thursday 8th December 2022 via the software platform ZOOM.
- 2.10** The Terms of reference to be considered at the meeting on 8th December include the above paragraphs 2.4 to 2.8 (except for paragraph 2.5) and the following additions :-
- Decision making to be by consensus but where a formal decision is required one vote per Authority with the Chair of the forum having the casting vote
 - The Forum to have a forward work plan to which members can contribute
 - Agenda items to be suggested by Monitoring officers based on discussions with their Standards Committees
 - Each region to be asked to send 1 monitoring officer to represent the local authorities in that area, with 1 additional monitoring officer each for fire and rescue authorities and national park authorities (making 6 monitoring officers in total)
 - Officer support to prepare more extensive reports for the forum to be dependent upon a monitoring officer from a Council volunteering / agreeing to undertake the work.
- 2.11** Committee is asked to note this report and the terms of reference outlined in Paragraph 2.10 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 10 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 10 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