

SUBJECT:	Chair's Update: National Forum for Chairs of Standards Committees
MEETING:	Standards Committee
DATE:	16th September 2024
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	All

1. PURPOSE

For the Chair to update Standards Committee members following his attendance at the National Forum for Chairs of Standards Committees on 24th June 2024.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Chair attended the National Forum for Chairs of Standards Committees on 24th June 2024. The major points of discussion are set out below.

Adjudication Panel for Wales

- 3.2 Judge Claire Sharp, the outgoing APW President, spoke about the nature and conduct of hearings by Standards Committees, and appeals against the findings of those hearings. She stressed that the record of the hearing should be comprehensive, and that the reasoning behind a committee's decisions must be clear and detailed. In relation to appeals against the findings of a Standards Committee, Judge Sharp noted that this was a paper process only and was driven by the question: "does the appeal or part of it have a reasonable prospect of success?" It was also emphasized that, in applying sanctions following a hearing, a Standards Committee should use the APW guidance to ensure a level of consistency. She noted that amongst the most common deficiencies in the findings of hearings held by Standards Committees was the lack of a clear record of the reasoning behind a decision or indication of the weight placed on particular evidence.

One Voice Wales

- 3.3 Paul Egan, the OVW Deputy Chief Executive gave a presentation which covered the support offered by OVW to Town and Community Councils; and the training, support and information provided by OVW in relation to standards of behaviour and code of conduct matters.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

- 3.4 The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Michelle Morris, discussed the PSOW's increasing case load and its impact on the time available to investigate

complaints. She also covered the independent review set up, after a complaint about a PSOW Team Leader, to check for any political bias in the work of the PSOW. The final report of the review is due in the autumn.

Issues raised by Chairs of Standards Committees

- 3.5 There was a brief discussion on the duties of Group Leaders in relation to standards and how these duties were being carried out.

Any Other Business

- 3.6 There was a discussion of the basis for the Forum's meetings and whether the matters covered were on or off the record. It was agreed that notes of the meetings could be shared with Standards Committees but not be placed in the public domain. It was suggested that a two-part format to meetings could be adopted with the second part containing confidential business.

4. REPORT AUTHOR

Peter Easy, Chair, on behalf of the Standards Committee