

National Standards Committee Chairs Forum - Wales

Monday 27 January 2025, 14.00 – 16.00 (Online)

NOTES

Pamela Lucas – Local Government Policy Development

Response to report.

Legal say immediate action can be taken on

Removing the restriction on ex employees becoming members of the SC. Some discussions on any grace period, and if working in a restricted posting to 2-5 years

Removing restrictions on former councilors joining SCs. Period of grace between the two still to be discussed.

Some concern expressed that the balance of the committee should be in favour of the Independents.

Legal says more work is needed in these areas.

More work is needed on APW reforms.

Investigations where a Councillor may be going under

Safeguards around suspension for complainant and councillor

Permissions to appeal to APW

Sanctioning powers

APW/SC to summon witnesses

Express power to maintain the anonymity of witnesses

Considering is being given as to whether the range of sanctions should be changed. WG have been working with UK gov. A consultation on this finished yesterday. Some consideration is being given to withholding access to services and withholding allowances.

Implementation of anything will be at least 8 months away.

Michelle Morris – PSOW

Independent Review –

High level of Code of Conduct work continues. Trying to keep to a minimum those that go over 12 months. There are 12 left over from the previous year. Currently it looks to be the same.

Currently there are some 100 cases, 20 of these from two councils. She has written to chair of SC to advise them and see what action can be taken.

More cases referred to APW or SC, the most in recent times. About 20 referrals this year.

Some appeals this year. If reasons are not made clear then it is very difficult for the judge to refuse an appeal.

Gave evidence to government committee. Training needed for all councillors, especially Town & Community Councillors. In particular in relation to their clerks.

Dr McCullough asked the PSOW to give further consideration as to when the those investigated should be notified. Currently this is only done if there is an investigation. Only 15% investigated. Around the UK there is no consistency on this point. There was some discussion on this point.

Monitoring Officer Group

Any T&C group that has not signed up to the civility and respect programme should be written to, to sign up.

Justine's report on cases was useful and should continue.

Consideration is being given to a National Standards Conference in S Wales. However, there is no finance to support an in person meeting.

The Local Government Democratic Conference is due on the 5th March. Only small part will be devoted to standards so unlikely to be worth SC attending.