

Advisory Panel - Terms of Reference

Status of the Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel is a non-statutory forum whose main role is to provide support and advice to the Ombudsman on the leadership and strategic direction of the office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Advisory Panel also brings an external perspective to assist in the development of policy and practice.

The Advisory Panel provides specific advice and support to the Ombudsman on:

- vision, values and purpose;
- strategic direction and planning.

The Advisory Panel is an advisory-only body to the Ombudsman and does not make decisions in its own right.

Membership

Membership will comprise:

- A minimum of four and a maximum of eight independent external members (who offer specific skills and experience sought by the Ombudsman and may include someone from another ombudsman office)
- Up to two co-opted members.

The Chief Legal Adviser and Director of Investigations will act as Secretary to the Panel. Other Management Team members, as decided by the Ombudsman, will attend the Panel's meetings.

The term of office for Independent members will be three years. The Ombudsman has the option to extend this term for three further years.

The meetings will be Chaired by one of the independent external members. A Vice Chair will also be appointed. The Ombudsman will appoint independent members of the Panel to the positions of Chair and Vice Chair on the recommendation of the Advisory Panel. Should the Ombudsman decide not to follow the recommendation of the Advisory Panel the Ombudsman's decision will be recorded in the minutes of the Advisory Panel's meeting.

In order to promote independence, at least one independent member of the Advisory Panel must not also sit on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Role and responsibilities of the Panel

To assist the Ombudsman in establishing:

- the PSOW's strategic direction, aims and objectives and targets;
- key business policies;
- key employment strategies and policies.

To scrutinise and assure:

- the Three Year Strategic Plan and the Annual Operational Plan;
- high level budget allocation;
- the budget estimates submission to the Finance Committee of the Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament.

To monitor and review:

- operational performance; and delivery;
- effectiveness of employment strategies and policies;
- diversity and equal opportunities, particularly in relation to the Equality Act 2010
- external communications strategies and stakeholder relations.

Rights

The Ombudsman and Advisory Panel may:

- co-opt additional members for a period not exceeding two years to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience and help the Panel to be representative of the communities the Ombudsman serves.
- seek specialist ad-hoc advice subject to being within budget.

Meetings

Meetings will be held four times a year. A quorum shall be a minimum of three independent members.

Each meeting will also be attended by the Ombudsman (or, exceptionally, a deputy nominated by the Ombudsman).

In the event of the Chair of the Advisory Panel being unable to attend a meeting, the Vice Chair will take the chair or if they are also unable to attend the meeting another independent member will take the chair.

Following approval at the next Panel meeting, minutes of meetings will be published as decided by the Ombudsman.

Declaration of Members Interests Members are required to declare any personal interests in accordance with the PSOW's Policy on [Declaration of Interests](#) by Advisory Panel and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee members.

Sub-committees

It is open to the Advisory Panel to form a Remuneration Committee, or other sub committees, on an ad hoc basis (i.e. when the need arises).

Information Requirements

For each meeting the Advisory Panel will be provided with a report on progress against Strategic/Operational Plan aims and objectives.

As and when appropriate the Panel will also be provided with:

- an annual work programme
- reviews on progress against the Communications & Outreach Strategy
- proposals for any new 'in-year' objectives not originally foreseen when the Strategic/Operational Plans were developed
- draft annual Estimates submission to the Finance Committee of the Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament
- drafts of proposals for new or revised key business/employment policies
- updates on working relationships with the Senedd Cymru Welsh Parliament
- proposals for any organisational developments
- PSOW's Annual Report
- a periodic review of the Advisory Panel's own effectiveness.

Reporting

- Each Panel meeting shall be recorded in minutes that will be approved at the next meeting.
- The Panel will provide the Ombudsman with an Annual Report on the work it has done during the year, timed to support finalisation of the Ombudsman's Annual Report and Annual Governance Statement.

Note: For the avoidance of any doubt and in accordance with these Terms of Reference the Advisory Panel's role and remit is advisory only. Neither the Panel nor any individual members have any role or remit in relation to operational matters or casework decisions made by the PSOW.

Approved by Management Team on 10 July 2023
Ratified by Advisory Panel on 18 July 2023
Next Review: July 2024