

Annual Review of the Advisory Panel 2017/18

1. Background

- 1.1 This paper reviews the effectiveness and work of the Advisory Panel during 2017/18. This is the fifth such review since the Panel was established in 2012. As with the annual reviews of previous years, it takes account of the views expressed by Panel Members in the self-assessment appraisal forms that they completed during February 2018.

2. Role of the Panel

- 2.1 The Advisory Panel is a non-statutory forum whose main role is to provide support and advice to the Ombudsman in providing leadership and good governance 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.

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

- vision, values and purposes;
- strategic direction and planning;
- accountability to citizens for the public funds it receives;
- internal control and risk management arrangements.

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

- 2.4 The Panel also assists the Ombudsman in establishing:

- governance arrangements, including Terms of Reference of any sub-committees;
- the PSOW's strategic direction, aims and objectives and targets;
- key business policies;
- key employment strategies and policies

and scrutinising and assuring:

- the Three Year Strategic Plan and the Annual Business Plan;
- high level budget allocation;
- the budget estimates submission to the Finance Committee of the National Assembly for Wales;
- resource accounts (delegated to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee);
- capital investment/contracts (over £25k) (delegated to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee).

2.5 It also monitors and reviews:

- risk and internal control (delegated to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee);
- operational performance and delivery;
- financial performance;
- effectiveness of employment strategies and policies;
- diversity and equal opportunities, particularly in relation to the Equality Act 2010;
- external communications strategies and stakeholder relations;
- health and safety and business continuity.

3. Membership

- 3.1 Membership comprises the Ombudsman as Chair and up to six external members who offer specific skills and experience including experience of public service sectors and different jurisdictions in both territorial and sectoral senses.
- 3.2 The Director of Policy, Legal & Governance acts as Secretary to the Panel; other Management Team members as decided by the Ombudsman may be in attendance at the Panel's meetings but are not formally members of the PSOW Advisory Panel.
- 3.3 Panel Members are recruited via open recruitment exercises, with the latest of these being conducted in the first quarter of 2017/18 due to the terms of office of a number of independent members of both the Advisory Panel and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee concluding in 2017/18 or early 2018/19.

4. Meetings

- 4.1 Panel Members have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the role with the majority having excellent attendance records in respect of the meetings held over the past year.

Panel Member	No. of attendances	Total Possible
Jonathan Morgan	4	4
Margaret Griffiths	3	4
Anne Jones (from September)	3	3
Tom Frawley (from December)	2	2
Jim Martin (from December)	2	2
Bill Richardson (July - September)	2	2
Sharon Warnes (July – September)	2	2
Beverley Peatling (December only)	1	1
Jan Williams (July only)	1	1
John Williams (to July)	1	1

- 4.2 The Panel sets for itself an annual work programme and Panel Members have received a number of regular reports at each meeting, such as progress monitoring

against the targets contained in the Strategic and Operational Plans; the monthly Complaints Monitoring Report; and minutes of the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.

- 4.3 Panel Members also had the opportunity to consider the draft of the estimates paper for 2018/19 prior to submission to the Assembly Finance Committee in October.
- 4.4 Panel Members have continued to be fully engaged with the PSOW's work. During 2017/18 the Panel held Discussion Items at each meeting covering the following topics: PSOW Values; Welsh Language Complaints; Own Initiative Powers; and PSOW Governance Arrangements. These discussions were extremely helpful to the Ombudsman and provided him with an external and objective sounding on these issues.
- 4.5 Also discussed during the year was the Annual Report for 2016/17; the PSOW's staff survey and action plan 'one year on'; and developments to the PSOW website and intranet.
- 4.6 Panel Members receive embargoed copies of s16 reports when they have been issued enabling them to be briefed in advance of any potential media coverage.

5. Relationship with the Ombudsman's Office

- 5.1 Whilst there has not been a consistent Panel during 2017/18 due to changes in the membership, Panel Members have stated that relationships within the Panel are excellent and that they work well together. Panel Members are of the view that they have maintained an effective relationship with the Ombudsman and his management team.
- 5.2 Likewise, Members have stated that their relationship with staff at the Ombudsman's office continues to be very good. Staff are always helpful, supportive and courteous. The Panel all agreed that the PSOW team were easy to work with and that they treated the Panel's input respectfully and professionally.

6. Future Considerations

- 6.1 On considering the future plan for the Panel, Members welcomed the suggestion to have staff representation on the Panel. This will be discussed with staff for implementation in 2018/19.
- 6.2 Training will be provided to members of the Panel during 2018/19 to assist them further in their roles.

7. Overall Assessment

- 7.1 The self-assessment review has presented very positive feedback from all Panel Members in respect of their own roles and objectives in conjunction with the Ombudsman and his staff.
- 7.2 Members have felt that 2017/18 has been another good year for the Advisory Panel in supporting the Ombudsman. All Panel Members have felt they worked well together and that they have been able to contribute their knowledge and skills to discussions, and that given the range of professional backgrounds they combine to provide a very knowledgeable and experienced forum.
- 7.3 Members continue to provide the right level of challenge and support to the Ombudsman and senior managers as well as bringing insight from their respective backgrounds which is of great value. The forthcoming year will include challenges which the panel can greatly add value, as well as taking ownership of further developments in relation to governance and the cultural development of PSOW.
