

PSOW 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 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.

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.

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

Role of the Panel

To assist 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.

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 National Assembly for Wales;

To monitor and review:

- 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.

Membership

Membership will comprise:

- Ombudsman
- Up to six independent external members (who offer specific skills and experience sought by the Ombudsman and one of whom may be from another ombudsman office).

The Director of Policy, Legal & Governance will act as Secretary to the Panel; other Management Team members as determined by the Ombudsman may be in attendance at the Panel's meetings but are not formally members of the PSOW Advisory Panel.

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

The meetings will be Chaired by one of the independent external members. The Ombudsman will appoint an independent member of the Panel to the position of 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.

Meetings

Meetings will be held four times a year. A quorum shall be a minimum of three independent members, in addition to the Ombudsman.

In the event of the Chair of the Advisory Panel being unable to attend a 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.

Sub-committee

It is open to the Advisory Panel to form a Remuneration Committee 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 National Assembly for Wales
- drafts of proposals for new or revised key business/employment policies
- updates on working relationships with the National Assembly for Wales
- proposals for any organisational developments.
- an annual report on the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee's review of its own effectiveness
- a periodic review of the Advisory Panel own effectiveness.
