

Advisory Panel Review of the Year 2022-2023

1. Background

- 1.1 This paper reviews the effectiveness and work of the Advisory Panel (the Panel) during 2022-2023. As with the annual reviews of previous years, it takes account of the views expressed by Panel Members in the self-assessment appraisal forms completed during March 2023.

2. The Role of the Advisory 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 (PSOW). The Panel members' varied experience provides the Ombudsman (who is corporation sole) with objective external perspective and advice on the development of policy and practice, strategic direction and scrutiny of the PSOW's performance.
- 2.2 The Terms of Reference for the Advisory Panel were reviewed by the Ombudsman and agreed by the Panel in July 2022 and are set out in Appendix A. The changes which were implemented were made to provide the PSOW with resilience and access to a broad range of expertise to support its work; reduce the churn of expertise and provide the Ombudsman with continuity during her first year in office; provide Panel members with more training and opportunities to familiarise themselves with the work of teams within the office and to ensure continuity and strengthened future resilience through the appointment of a Vice Chair of the Panel (with the intention that the Vice Chair steps into the role of Chair when the Chair's term of office ends).

3. Membership

- 3.1 Membership comprises the Ombudsman and a minimum of four and maximum of eight independent external members (who offer specific skills and experience sought by the Ombudsman and may include someone from another ombudsman office). In addition, up to two co-opted members may be included in the membership.
- 3.2 The Ombudsman attends the meetings of the Panel, and the Chief Legal Adviser & Director of Investigations acts as Secretary to the Panel.
- 3.3 A recruitment exercise was undertaken in November 2022 to appoint additional members to the Panel to take account of some members' terms of office concluding in 2021 and 2022. The membership of the Panel during the year has therefore been as follows:
- Dr Jane Martin CBE (Chair)
 - Mr Trevor Coxon (until April 2022)

- Mr Ian Williams
- Mr Mike Usher
- Ms Carys Evans (Vice Chair from October 2022)
- Mrs Sue Phelps (from January 2023)
- Mrs Nia Roberts (from January 2023)
- Mrs Bernie Davies (from January 2023)

3.4 Jane Martin held the position of Chair throughout the year and Carys Evans was appointed Vice-Chair from October 2022. Further information about the members can be found [here](#).

4. Meetings

4.1 Panel members have continued to demonstrate their commitment to the role with all members having an excellent attendance record in respect of the meetings held over the past year. Full attendance for the year was four meetings and attendance by Panel members was as follows:

Panel Member	No. of attendances	Total Possible
Trevor Coxon	1	1
Ian Williams	4	4
Jane Martin	3	4
Mike Usher	4	4
Carys Evans	4	4
Sue Phelps	1	1
Nia Roberts	1	1
Bernie Davies	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; and a quarterly Performance Monitoring Report. The 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 Work Programmes are set out at Appendices B and C respectively.

4.3 The Panel has continued to work effectively throughout the period of review and has provided the PSOW with helpful scrutiny and challenge.

4.4 Key topics considered by the Panel in 2022-2023 were:

- Advising the PSOW on its approach on shaping its priorities in its new Strategic Plan formed a significant part of the Panel's work during the year. At an early stage of the process, members carefully considered feedback which the PSOW had received from its customer satisfaction surveys; staff survey results and engagement sessions with staff. Members also subsequently considered the extensive responses which the PSOW received following its public consultation on the draft Strategic Plan before advising the PSOW further on the final Strategic Plan.

- Scrutinising the PSOW's draft Annual Report on its performance during 2021-2022.
- Advising the Ombudsman on the PSOW's draft financial estimates prior to submission to the Senedd (for approval in October); providing detailed feedback and contributions on PSOW's response to the Senedd Finance Committee's correspondence and generally assisting the Ombudsman on this key relationship between the Senedd and the office.
- Providing feedback to the PSOW on its approach to reporting on its delivery of the proactive powers under the PSOW Act 2019.
- Advising the PSOW on possible topics for its Own Initiative investigation including on the topic of carers' needs assessments which the PSOW consulted upon as a possible matter for investigation.

- 4.5 In April 2022 members received in-house training on Code of Conduct and Housing complaints.
- 4.6 In October 2022, a training session was delivered to members of the Advisory Panel and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee on Cyber Security. The session included presentations from the Welsh Language Commissioner's office and Audit Wales, it was well received by the members and provided helpful feedback for the PSOW.
- 4.7 In January 2023, new Panel members attended an induction day at the office to provide them with an overview of the work of the office.
- 4.8 In February 2023, all Panel members attended a Staff Awareness Session where key members of the Ombudsman's staff presented on their area of work to provide members with a broad understanding of all areas of the Ombudsman's work from a staff perspective.

5. Annual Review

- 5.1 As part of this annual review, Panel members have assessed their individual performance and that of the Panel as a whole and have considered whether they maintain a clear awareness and understanding of the jurisdiction and operations of the PSOW to provide effective advice and support to the Ombudsman and to assist the Ombudsman on governance arrangements, strategic aims, objectives and targets. The review also assessed whether they felt they had been equipped to provide appropriate scrutiny and challenge to the Ombudsman and to her staff and assessed the working relationships between Panel members, the Ombudsman's office and other stakeholders, including identifying any difficulties which exist.
- 5.2 One to one annual discussions between the Ombudsman and Chair of the Panel, and between the Chair and individual members of the Panel were undertaken and provided a useful opportunity for feedback on the performance of individual members and the effectiveness of the Panel as a whole.

- 5.3 Members considered that they had worked well over the year to support the Ombudsman in her role as corporation sole, and that they had provided appropriate scrutiny and challenge to the office during the year. They welcomed the recent review of the Panel's terms of reference and the greater opportunities for training and staff engagement this provided.
- 5.4 The new members who joined the Panel this year considered that their induction to the role was informative and helpful. Members wish to ensure that as a new group working together, they build relationships as a team, ensure that the established members share their knowledge of the role and the office with the new members and that they foster good, working relationships amongst themselves and with the Ombudsman and her staff.
- 5.5 They would welcome further opportunities to engage with staff to gain a greater understanding of the different roles undertaken in the office and the challenges faced by staff. They also look forward to supporting the office with its work under the Ombudsman's new Strategic Plan and bringing their skills and expertise to share knowledge of the Ombudsman's service through their work and networks.

6. Future Considerations

- 6.1 In terms of future needs, in light of the members feedback, the PSOW will:
- Provide the members with opportunities to share their knowledge and skills and build relationships as a new team.
 - Continue to provide opportunities for the members to engage with staff and understand the challenges they face in their respective roles.
 - Provide training for the members on topics which will assist them in their roles.

7. Overall Assessment by the Advisory Panel Chair

- 7.1 The changes in the Panel's terms of reference have been introduced effectively this year and the new members have integrated well with other members. Members have constructively challenged the office's performance and have good open working relationships with the Ombudsman and her staff. The shared expertise and challenge are welcomed by the Ombudsman and executive team.

Information sessions on casework matters and the impact delivered by staff have been beneficial and have helped members put their work in their advisory role into context. Members will continue to provide a sounding board to support the Ombudsman in her role and provide constructive challenge for the delivery of the PSOW's Strategic Plan and new strategic aims.

I wish to thank Trevor Coxon, whose term of office ended in April 2023, for his positive contribution as a member of the Advisory Panel over the last 4 years.

Appendix A - Terms of Reference of the Advisory Panel Appendix B - Work Programme 2022-2023 Appendix C - Work Programme 2023-2024

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 20 July 2022
Ratified by Advisory Panel on 12 July 2022
Next Review: July 2023

**Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Advisory Panel Work Programme 2022-2023**

April 2022

Operational Plan – Progress Report
Complaints Monitoring Report
Advisory Panel Review of the Year 2021-2022
Corporate Plan
2022-2023 Draft Operational Plan
Discussion Item

July 2022

Annual Report 2021-2022
Communications & Outreach Work Plan 2022-2023
Operational Plan – Progress Report
Complaints Monitoring Report
Initial Matters for Consideration for the 2023-2024 Estimates Submission
Register of Interests
Advisory Panel Members' Training & Development Requirements
Discussion Item

October 2022

Estimates Submission to Senedd Cymru
Operational Plan – Progress Report
Complaints Monitoring Report
Discussion Item

January 2023

Update on Estimates Submission to Senedd Cymru (verbal)
Operational Plan – Progress Report
Complaints Monitoring Report
Communications & Outreach Report
Review of Advisory Panel Terms of Reference
Review of Advisory Panel Work Programme 2023-2024
Discussion Item

**Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
Advisory Panel Work Programme 2023-2024**

April 2023

Business Plan
Performance Monitoring Report
Proactive Powers update
Advisory Panel Review of the Year 2022-2023
Discussion Item on Strategic Aim

July 2023

Annual Report 2022-2023
Strategic Planning 2023 -2024 inc. Digital & IT, Outreach, Equality & People Plans
Business Plan Update
Performance Monitoring Report
Initial Matters for Consideration for the 2024-2025 Estimates Submission
Register of Interests
Advisory Panel Members' Training & Development Requirements
Review of Advisory Panel Terms of Reference
Discussion Item on Strategic Aim

October 2023

Estimates Submission to Senedd Cymru
Business Plan Update
Performance Monitoring Report
Update on Own Initiative Investigation
Discussion Item on Strategic Aim

January 2024

Update on Estimates Submission to Senedd Cymru (verbal)
Business Plan Update
Performance Monitoring Report
Communications & Outreach Update
Review of Advisory Panel Work Programme 2024-2025
Discussion Item on Strategic Aim