

CYNGOR SIR YNYS MON / ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE:	Standards Committee
DATE:	14 December 2022
REPORT TITLE:	National Forum for Independent Members of Standards Committees
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	To advise on the terms of reference for the newly created National Forum for Independent Members of Standards Committees
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A North Wales Standards Committee Forum was set up some years ago, to provide a support network and an opportunity for exchanging good practice between the independent members of the Standards Committees in North Wales. More recently, the North Wales Standards Committee Forum was extended to include representatives from Powys and Ceredigion's principal councils.

1.2 One of the recommendations made as part of the recent Penn Review of the Ethical Regime in Wales was that the current Forum should be extended to cover the whole of Wales, thereby creating a National Standards Committee Forum.

1.3 Following the publication of the Penn report, the Monitoring Officers for all principal councils, national park authorities and fire and rescue authorities in Wales reported that there was support from their respective authorities for the creation of this National Standards Committee Forum.

2. WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (WLGA) SUPPORT

2.1 Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has confirmed its interest in the proposal and its willingness to assist the Forum with practical, administrative support. This includes the WLGA's involvement in sending out agendas, preparing minutes of formal meetings and preparing reports for analysing different practices across Wales.

3. THE NATIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE FORUM'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 A copy of the proposed Terms of Reference document, is included as **ENCLOSURE 1**. These Terms of Reference will be adopted by the Forum at its first meeting. These may be amended as practice evolves.

3.2 The main principles included are as follows:

- The purpose of the Forum is to share good practice and provide a setting for problem solving in relation to the work of the Standards Committees for the relevant councils/authorities in Wales.
- Membership of the Forum will be limited to the Chair of each Standards Committee from the 22 principal councils, 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities. Substitutes will be allowed, and will usually be the Vice Chair of the relevant Standards Committee.
- Members of the Forum will elect a Chair and Vice Chair from amongst its members for a term of two years.
- The Forum will make decisions about administrative matters relating to its own practices but other decisions are to be made by the individual Standards Committees. Decisions will be made by consensus but where a formal decision is required, each authority will have one vote and the Chair of the Forum has a casting vote.
- Agenda items will be suggested by Monitoring Officers attending the Monitoring Officers Group of Lawyers in Local Government (MOG) meetings, following discussion with their respective Standards Committees. The Forum will also have a forward work programme to which members will be able to contribute.
- There will be two formal Forum meetings per year - naturally following one month or so after a MOG meeting so that the agenda can be agreed and circulated.
- Each region will send a Monitoring Officer representative. This Council is part of the North Wales region of 6 local authorities.

3.3 The first meeting of the National Standards Committee Forum is on 8 December, 2022. The Agenda at that first meeting will consider the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair; the role of the Forum and its Terms of Reference (**Enclosure 1**). It will also consider an update on the Penn Report; a discussion on the implementation of the new duty on group leaders and how this will be reported as part of the Standards Committee's annual report. A Guest Speaker from the Ombudsman's office will be making a presentation.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 For the Committee to note the contents of this report and the terms of reference included in **Enclosure 1**.

4.2 For a verbal update to be provided by the Chair of the Standards Committee following his attendance at the National Standards Committee Forum's first meeting on 8 December 2022.

National Standards Committee Forum
Terms of Reference (2022)

The purpose of the Forum is to share best practice and provide a forum for problem solving across the

- 1) 22 principal councils
- 2) 3 fire and rescue authorities
- 3) 3 national park authorities

in relation to the work of Standards Committees.

The role of the forum is to share information and so any decisions will have to be made by the individual Standards Committees. There will be times when the Forum would need to make a decision about administrative matters relating to its own practices and administration of meetings.

- Membership – Chair, with the Vice-Chair to attend in the absence of the Chair
- Decision making will typically be by consensus but where a formal decision is required then there will be one vote per authority with the Chair of the Forum having the casting vote
- Election of Chair and Vice Chair – every two years to provide consistency
- Secretariat Support – the WLGA will send out agendas, prepare minutes and can prepare basic reports analysing practice across Wales. Officer support to prepare more extensive reports is dependent upon a monitoring officer from a council volunteering/agreeing to undertake the work
- Frequency of Meetings – 2 meetings per year following a meeting of the Monitoring Officers Group of Lawyers in Local Government
- Agendas items will be suggested by Monitoring Officers based on discussions with their Standards Committees and the Forum will also have a forward work pan to which members could contribute
- Each region will be asked to send 1 monitoring officer to represent the local authorities in that area, with 1 additional monitoring officer each for fire & rescue authorities and national park authorities (making 6 monitoring officers in total)

*Each meeting could have a small agenda followed by a Training Session
Speakers from the Ombudsman's Office, Adjudication Panel for Wales and Welsh Government could address the Forum on their work*