

Meeting of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	7 JULY 2023
Report Title:	NATIONAL FORUM FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRS
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	MONITORING OFFICER
Responsible Officer:	LAURA GRIFFITHS GROUP MANAGER LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules
Executive Summary:	To note the establishment of a National Forum for Standard Committee Chairs to encourage consistency of approach and the adoption of best practice across Wales.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members in respect of the National Forum for Standards Committee Chairs.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Penn Report commented on the variety of practice across Wales in how Standards Committees discharge their duties. Richard Penn, the report author, acknowledged the positive work of the forum for Chairs of Standards Committees in North and Mid Wales and recommended that an all-Wales Forum be established along the same lines to encourage consistency of approach and the adoption of best practice across Wales.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 All local authorities in Wales have agreed to create a National Forum to share practice. Draft terms of reference for the Forum have been prepared by the Wales Monitoring Officers Group for agreement as outlined at paragraph 3.2.
- 3.2 National Standards Committee Forum Terms of Reference

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 Welsh Local Government Association (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 (LLG)
- Agenda items will be suggested by Monitoring Officers based on discussions with their Standards Committees and the Forum will also have a forward work plan 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 and 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.

3.3 The Forum will give Chairs the chance to share and agree to co-ordinate best practice, act as a sounding board for ideas and create a support network for Chairs and Committees. Each Standards Committee will retain primacy so the Forum will not be able to make binding decisions on behalf of local authorities.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act 2010, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report. This report also assists in the achievement of the following well-being objective under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-

A county borough where people feel valued, heard and part of their community.

5.2 Standards are an implicit requirement in the successful implementation of the corporate well-being objectives.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding and corporate parent implications.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The secretariat support for the Forum is being provided by WLGA which will minimise impact on Council resources. Furthermore, the working arrangements for the Forum have been designed to fit into existing structures such as meetings of LLG so will need little extra resource.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the report and confirm that the Chair and Monitoring Officer (or their deputies) represent BCBC.

Background documents:

None