

A Draft Forward Work Programme for the Committee on Standards of Conduct

Issue:

The Committee is not required by standing orders to put in place and publish a forward work programme. However, now that the Committee has dealt with its immediate inherited issues there would appear to be advantages in giving some thought to the priorities for the next 12 months.

Action:

The list below has been compiled from various sources. It comprises mainly issues that have been deferred during the course of the year or where the Committee has given an undertaking to consider further. The Committee is invited to review the list, to indicate whether there are any other issues it should like to consider and to agree its priorities. If desired, the Secretariat will then format the programme and publish it on the Committee's website.

Work in-hand:

There are a handful of outstanding issues for the Committee which are being pursued by the Secretariat, most of which will be resolved by the end of January.

- Revised Guidance on Members' Financial and Other Interests – has been signed off by the Committee and will be brought forward for plenary approval in XX
- Change to Standing Order 4, Annex - Business Committee has agreed to the Standards Committee request that the value requirement be deleted from standing orders. Secretariat negotiating slot for plenary.
- Power to provide for a temporary chair other than in his/her "unavoidable absence" - Lawyers have confirmed that will require a change to Standing Order 16. Secretariat is awaiting draft.

Content of a draft Programme:

Area	Issue	Comment
Indirect Interests - Requirements in the Assembly's resolution and Guidance	Is there a need to retain these provisions? If so, how should they be clarified and applied.	The Committee is committed to reviewing the current provisions, following its consultation exercise on Members' Interests generally.
The Complaints process –	Is there any room for discretion at the earlier stages? What, if anything, can those involved in the process do to prevent "trivial" cases from being referred into the process.	The Committee gave an undertaking during the debate on its annual report that it would be looking at this issue.
Standing Order 16	Is it meeting the requirements? Are there things that the Committee should like to see changed	E.g. there may be changes necessary as a result of proposals to change the complaints process.
The role of the Independent Adviser	Is it working? Are Members happy with the relationship? Should we recommend a move towards establishing an independent commissioner as has been done by the other Assemblies/ Parliaments?	This has been raised by the Presiding Officer previously and on a number of occasions in Committee. The adviser will have been in post 1 year on 14 th March, it would make sense to review around that time.
Raising Awareness	There is much guidance available to Members but levels of awareness and understanding need to be raised.	Again, a theme of the annual report debate – closely linked with the declaration issue.

Declaration of Interests	The Assembly is a hybrid between Parliament and local government and so are the rules on declaration. The guidance has been clarified but there is a need to promote greater understanding.	The Committee has indicated that it will keep the guidance and Members' practices under review. It would make sense for the Committee to look formally at the issue before the end of the next term, by which time the revised guidance would have been in operation for a reasonable period.
Jurisdiction of the Committee & relationships	The need to clarify precisely the remit of the Committee and to ensure that other committees/ bodies are aware of the impact of new or changed guidance on the Committee	An example of this is the Guidance on stationery, which has been referred to the House Committee.
Working with other committees and fact finding	Developing understanding of best practice and working arrangements in other Assemblies/ Parliaments.	
Freemasonry	The Presiding Officer has been approached about this matter. It is likely that it will be referred to the Committee for review.	
Protocol with Police forces	Arrangements for the transfer of serious cases to the Police	The Committee has established links with the South Wales force and will work to mirror such links with other forces in Wales

Standards Committee Secretariat

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