

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus a Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus

Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

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Children's Commissioner for Wales
Future Generations Commissioner for Wales
Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Welsh Language Commissioner

30 November 2022

Inquiry into the funding of Commissioners

The Senedd Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee is gathering information about the funding of Commissioners in Wales. This follows the publication of the Senedd Equality and Social Justice (ESJ) Committee's [Report](#) in April 2022 relating to its annual scrutiny of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

In its report, the ESJ Committee [recommended](#):

...the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee carry out a review of the resourcing arrangements of Wales' Commissioners. This review could include consideration of whether any economies of scale can be achieved by the sharing of some backroom functions and staff.

To assist with its inquiry, the Committee would welcome information on the following matters:

- Roles and responsibilities:
 - A summary of the roles and responsibilities of your office, together with information about how these may have changed over time, as [suggested](#) by the Senedd ESJ Committee in its Report. Whether there has been any financial impact of such changes and the details of those implications.

- How the actual cost of delivering your functions compares with any cost estimates that may have been made at the time your role was established (such as any estimates set out in the Explanatory Memorandum/Regulatory Impact Assessment to support the legislation), with reasons to explain any variances (where appropriate).
- Budget approval process:
 - Views on the budget process, including timescales and engagement with Welsh Ministers and officials, such as those in Partnership Teams (sponsors) within Welsh Government departments. Is any information provided by Welsh Government officials ahead of the submission of your estimate for the forthcoming year, such as the Welsh Government's best assessment of the level of funding available in future years and factors to take into account when preparing the estimate.
 - What process is in place to agree any modifications to the estimate. How are these communicated and agreed. How significant have they been and what impact have they had on the work of, and plans for, your office.
 - In December 2021, the Welsh Government published its Draft Budget 2022-23 and its first multi-year Welsh Budget since 2017. To what extent are you and the Welsh Government moving to a 'Term of Government' approach, while complying with the statutory requirement to submit an estimate to Welsh Ministers at least five months before the financial year to which it relates. What are the main benefits to doing this.
- Collaboration, including sharing functions and staff:
 - During its scrutiny of the 2013-14 Accounts, the Public Accounts Committee of the Fourth Assembly explored with the then Commissioners whether they could deliver savings through greater collaboration and possibly, sharing back-office functions. In its Report, Scrutiny of Accounts 2013-14 (March 2015), the Committee summarised the evidence and recommended:

...that efforts to achieve efficiencies and greater productivity through collaboration, including integration of back-office functions, continue between the Commissioners and the Ombudsman, and that this be reported on in their 2014-15 annual reports and accounts.

Responses to the Report are included on the Committee page for the scrutiny of accounts for 2013-14.

The Committee would welcome an update about how Commissioners collaborate and the benefits that arise from any joint working, as well as any sharing of backroom functions and staff. Any learning from these experiences: what worked well; how did you mitigate any risks with accountability; what savings did you make; and why you may not have continued with such arrangements.

- Details of any sharing of functions or staff with other public bodies/regulators in Wales.
- Current financial position and future challenges:
 - An assessment of the current financial position of the organisation and an assessment of future needs in the context of the pressures on public funds.
 - The impact of the designation of your office under the changes to the Government of Wales Act 2006 (Budget Motions and Designated Bodies) Order 2018 on your current and future financial position. What were the main challenges in moving to the new arrangements and what do you see at the most significant change(s) as a result of them.

The deadline for submissions is 13 January 2023. The Committee may also wish to take oral evidence from you.

Guidance on preparing written evidence can be found on the Senedd website.

Disclosure of Information

Before submitting information to the Committee, please ensure that you have considered the Senedd's policy on disclosure of information. Alternatively, a hard copy of this policy can be requested by contacting the Clerk, Fay Bowen (0300 200 6565) or SeneddPAPA@senedd.wales

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Mark Isherwood', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mark Isherwood MS, Committee Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.