

Y Pwyllgor Safonau Ymddygiad
Standards of Conduct Committee



Cynulliad National
Cenedlaethol Assembly for
Cymru Wales

Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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21 January 2013

Dear Presiding Officer

Lobbying

I write further to your proposal that the Standards of Conduct Committee undertake a review of the Assembly's arrangements in relation to lobbying activity. Thank you for our very constructive meeting on 7 November 2012 to discuss the progress of this review, which as you know is one of the priorities of the ongoing review of all the Assembly's Standards Procedures.

I am pleased that we have been able to move swiftly to consider this important issue, with a view to ensuring we have arrangements in place that are appropriate to the National Assembly for Wales.

The first stage of the Standards of Conduct Committee's inquiry was to seek the views of the Commissioner for Standards on the adequacy of the Assembly's current arrangements. Having undertaken research and consulted with all Assembly Members, his counterparts in other UK legislatures, and other interested parties, the Commissioner has made an initial report to us.

The Commissioner is firmly of the view that the arrangements currently in place for regulating lobbying, as it relates to Members of the National Assembly, are essentially sufficiently robust and fit for purpose.

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There is Committee consensus on the Commissioner's assessment. It was the unanimous view of all those consulted who operate in Wales and/or in the National Assembly that lobbying practices are essentially transparent and adequately policed and regulated. The Commissioner also noted that he was not aware of any complaint against a Member relating to lobbying being made since the setting up of the National Assembly for Wales.

In reaching his conclusion, the Commissioner recognised the need to maintain the 'open' culture of the Assembly and availability of its Members, so as not to fetter the democratic process; the need to maintain transparency to the public, decision makers and other interested parties in ascertaining what influences are brought to bear on their elected representatives; and the need for proportionality, both in terms of the use of resources, and the burden placed upon Members and lobbyists in meeting any perceived problem in this area.

The Committee and the Commissioner also note the need to guard against complacency, and ensure that the rules in place will remain sufficiently robust going forward - in particular in light of increased legislative powers and the outcome of the Silk Commission, including the possibility of future financial borrowing and/or tax-raising powers.

With these considerations in mind the Committee wishes to undertake some additional work aimed at reinforcing the existing arrangements. This includes seeking to strengthen the rules on the operation of Cross Party Groups in the Assembly, and having further dialogue with the public affairs industry, including Public Affairs Cymru as a key representative of the industry in Wales.

Following this further work, the Committee will aim to provide a report of its detailed recommendations on regulating lobbying and rules for Cross Party Groups, by the end of February 2013. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this in advance of publication if you think that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mick Antoniw', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Mick Antoniw AC / AM

Cadeirydd / Chair

CC: Gerard Elias QC, National Assembly for Wales' Commissioner for Standards