

## **Chair's Statement: Preferred approach to appointment of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**

The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee is responsible for advising the Senedd on the appointment of a Public Services Ombudsman for Wales ('PSOW'); as well as determining the terms that apply to such an appointment.

The current postholder's term of office ends on 31 July 2021. As a Committee we recently considered the options for recruiting a new PSOW. We did so in the context of the forthcoming 2021 Senedd elections and ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

After careful consideration of our options, we have provisionally agreed, subject to final discussion and agreement in early 2021, to recommend to the Senedd that Nick Bennett, the current PSOW, is appointed as an Acting PSOW from 1 August 2021 to 31 March 2022. This is for a period of 8 months only. Such an Acting appointment will enable our successor Committee following the Senedd election in May 2021 to conduct a full and open competition to appoint the next substantive PSOW.

We believe this option will ensure that there will be sufficient time for the recruitment process to be run in a way that will maximise the quality and number of the candidates who are able to apply for the post. It will also, hopefully, move us out of a period where all public bodies, including the PSOW office are dealing with the immediate issues surrounding the global pandemic.

If we were to embark on the recruitment process now, there is a significant risk, that due to the limited time and the constraints resulting from the pandemic, the recruitment may not be completed in time for the Senedd to make a final decision to recommend a candidate before it dissolves on 7 April 2021.

The Committee unanimously believes this is the most sensible and pragmatic approach. The Senedd will have the opportunity to debate and vote on the proposed Acting appointment in early 2021. If this approach is agreed by the Senedd, the recommendation will be made to HM the Queen to appoint Nick Bennett as an Acting PSOW for the period outlined.



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