

Janet Finch–Saunders AM
Chair, Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales

29 May 2019

Dear Janet

Petition P–05–818: Introducing a Register of Lobbyists in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 22 March.

The Standard of Conduct Committee reported in January 2018 on its inquiry into Lobbying. There have been a number of developments since the last time the Assembly looked at lobbying; Westminster began operating a register of professional lobbyists in 2015 and Scotland passed legislation establishing a lobbying register in 2016.

The Committee concluded that lobbying needs to be part of an ongoing dialogue in an engaged and open democracy. It was apparent from the evidence gathered that there is no easy answer to the questions of how to define or share information about lobbying. There is no doubt that there are groups seeking to influence politicians, and that it is in the public interest to establish the impact of this influence. However, the Committee has concluded that there is insufficient evidence at present regarding how best to share this information once it has been obtained.

The findings of this report are an interim position. The Committee feel it is crucial to learn from experience and gather further evidence of best practice. The Scottish legislation is in its infancy and we are closely monitoring what happens there and the review of its legislation in 2020. The Committee will also periodically review the situation and developments in Westminster. The



Committee is keen to take steps in this interim period to increase transparency and proposed that a select trial of publishing Assembly Members' diaries, specifically relating to lobbying, is undertaken. We are liaising with the Assembly Commission on how to pilot this with Members of the Committee. We also recommended an increase in the amount of information published about events held on the Commission estate which came into place last Easter.

The Committee also recommended that consideration should be given to commissioning research into how influence is sought and gained over politicians. More information regarding the impact this has would enhance our understanding of lobbyists' influence. Alongside these interim steps, the Committee has encouraged the lobbying industry to take the lead over the next two years. The industry can themselves demonstrate how a voluntary register would operate and how it could provide the necessary information about influence over elected Members.

It is our intention that a review of this work in 2020 would enable us to make clear and informed conclusions, and to set out a proposal for the sixth Assembly.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Jayne Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jayne Bryant
Chair

