

National Assembly Commissioner for Standards

Report to the Committee on Standards of Conduct: 24 November 2005

1. In my second report, I would like to update the Committee on my activities over recent months. Although recess has taken much of the time since my last report, it has been a busy period.
2. As I reported to the Committee at the last meeting, I have been working on a programme of meetings to engage with Assembly Members. The general purpose of this has been to take forward a message about the role of the Commissioner generally, and in particular, my plans for further developing the Standards Culture.

Engaging with Assembly Members

3. I have now met the leaders of the four main Parties represented in the Assembly, the Chair of the Committee and the Presiding Officer; as well as the Permanent Secretary and Clerk to the Assembly. I have also written to all Assembly Members (24 August) in this respect. Some of the main points that have emerged are:

- There is little cause for concern currently amongst political groups in relation to Standards of Conduct.
- There is an understanding of the importance of maintaining high ethical standards within the Assembly, and an acceptance that all parties have a part to play in developing a robust standards culture.
- There is a willingness to co-operate in developing practices to streamline standards processes.

4. That said, there is no room for complacency, and I will continue to take this agenda forward.

Commissioner's Web-site

5. After some initial difficulties, the web-site for the office of the Commissioner for Standards is now live. The site provides core information on both my role as Commissioner and how the office can be accessed. A particular advantage of the site is that it contains relevant information in one location, including information on the complaint process.

6. The site also provides a dedicated E-mail address for the Commissioner, which enables the public to contact me direct. I have already received

correspondence through the new e-mail facility, which I have found has helped speed up the process, enabling me to provide a quicker response to queries raised.

Future plans

7. As indicated above, I will continue to take forward an agenda to build a standards culture. In doing so I will be seeking meetings with Peter Law and John Marek, as well as with the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales over the next few weeks.

8. I will be looking at ways to use the newly developed web-site to take forward key messages, and will be looking at how similar web-sites are being developed in other legislatures.

9. Finally, I hope to work with the Committee as it develops its future work programmes and will be happy to provide advice and assistance in this respect wherever possible.

Richard Penn
National Assembly Commissioner for Standards
November 2005