

Elin Jones AC, Llywydd

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru

Elin Jones AM, Presiding Officer

National Assembly for Wales

Jayne Bryant AM
Chair
Standards of Conduct Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Your ref:
Our ref: PO528/EJ/CS

27 September 2018

Dear Jayne,

Creating the Right Culture

Thank you for your letter of 11 September 2018 with an embargoed copy of your report, *Creating the Right Culture*. The Assembly Commission considered the report at its meeting on 24 September.

The Commission notes the detailed work undertaken by the Committee and thanks it for its approach in building on the improvements that have already been put in place during the last few months. We share the view that the report and its recommendations will lead to an improved culture of dignity and respect and will help create our vision of an inclusive Assembly, free from harassment. Commissioners also noted that this is an important and ongoing area of work and wish to underline our commitment to working with the Committee to ensure that we improve accessibility to a range of complaint processes, continue to raise awareness, provide support, monitor incidents, create the right structures and support cultural change. We agree that the report sets out a clear direction of travel to facilitate the improvements required.

In all but one case, the Assembly Commission accepts the recommendations that relate to its responsibilities and our Dignity and Respect working group has commenced its work to deliver these by the timescales set out in your report.

We would like a little more time to consider recommendation 14 and its implications for the Assembly before we respond formally. While we can see the potential benefits outlined by the Committee, we would like time to consider further whether those benefits can be realised in our setting when we have established complaints systems in place already and a new system which provides anonymity via our Contact Officers.

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

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The Committee will be aware that our newly established Contact Officers have a role to report, anonymously, cases to the Head of HR who monitors, records and reports patterns of behaviour. This new initiative was introduced in May and, we hope, has additional benefits over anonymous reporting such as the provision of support for complainants and information about their options. We feel that this needs time to bed down and want to ensure that any proposal for anonymous reporting does not create confusion or duplication in the process.

The Committee will be aware that we already have different complaint systems for different groups of people who work here because of their elected or employment status. Within those complaint routes, there are also choices for the user e.g. if they would prefer a political party to investigate rather than the Standards Commissioner. Throughout the development of proposals to improve the way we present information about our complaint processes, we have been mindful to improve accessibility and clarity to our processes in response to news reports last year where potential complainants stated that they were unclear. The Commission will therefore need to consider carefully, and potentially with user input, whether introducing another way of reporting, anonymously, which cannot be formally investigated because of that anonymity, will be of real benefit or create confusion about the various routes for a complainant.

On that basis, we would like to await the outcome of the Standards Commissioner's work on political party complaint processes; consider, as recommended, an exercise to assess whether we have improved accessibility sufficiently through a test of the complaints systems and seek views on how an anonymous reporting system might bring benefits to the complaints processes and culture.

We are very happy to keep in touch with the Committee as this work develops and we will keep you informed of progress as we implement the recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

Elin Jones AM
Llywydd