

Public Service Ombudsman Wales

12 May 2014

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



Request for Information

Thank you for your request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, received on 11 April in which you asked:

- 1. The Audit scrutiny committee used to oversee the work & budget of the Welsh Ombudsman. Public Service Ombudsman Wales (PSOW)? Had this role been transferred to the Public Accounts Committee please?*
- 2. What is the annual budget of the PSOW? (It used to be approximately 3million.)*
- 3. Does PAC scrutinise all Welsh Government expenditure and how can I find out what is being scrutinised please?*
- 4. Is the PSOW able to go over the annual Budget of the Ombudsman's work? Who scrutinises ANY overspend and the general running of his office?*
- 5. If you don't scrutinise the work of PSOW, which committee does please?*
- 6. What the PSOW has spent since March 09 on his investigation into Cllr Patrick Heesom of FCC? Must include all costs including legal fees, Adjudication Panel fees expenses, travel costs, panel remuneration, cost of transcribing all evidence and payment for accommodation for Welsh Government staff members & hire of rooms for the public hearings?*

- 1. The Audit scrutiny committee used to oversee the work & budget of the Welsh Ombudsman. Public Service Ombudsman Wales (PSOW)? Had this role been transferred to the Public Accounts Committee please?*

The work of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) is scrutinised by the Communities, Equality and Local Government [Committee](#). The Committee holds an annual evidence session with the Ombudsman to consider the contents of his annual report and the activities of his office during the year.

Bae Caerdydd
Caerdydd
CF99 1NA
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Ffôn/Tel: 029 20 89 8635
E-bost/Email: Buddug.Saer@wales.gov.uk

The budget of the PSOW is scrutinised by the Finance Committee and must submit the estimate of income and expenses required no later than 1 November each year, as stated in Standing Order 20.23. The [Standing Orders](#) are the rules that govern Assembly business.

The Committee also reports on the Ombudsman's draft budget and published their report on the [PSOW estimate](#) for 2014-15 in October 2013. Further information can be found under Standing Order 20.24.

- 2. What is the annual budget of the PSOW? (It used to be approximately £3 million.)*

The PSOW's budget is set by the Welsh Government and approved by the Assembly during the autumn of each year. Details of the annual budget for the PSOW can be found in the [annual budget motion](#) for 2014-15 which was laid by the Welsh Government on 3rd December 2013. The relevant pages relating to the PSOW are 3, 6, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 28.

- 3. Does Public Accounts Committee scrutinise all Welsh Government expenditure and how can I find out what is being scrutinised please?*

The role of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is to ensure that proper and thorough scrutiny is given to Welsh Government expenditure. The specific functions of the Committee are set out in Standing Order 18. The Committee will consider reports prepared by the Auditor General for Wales on the accounts of the Welsh Government and other public bodies, and on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources were employed in the discharge of public functions.

Information on the work PAC is undertaking can be found on the Committee's webpages at:

<http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=230>
or by contacting the Clerking Team PublicAccounts.comm@wales.gov.uk

Most Committees scrutinise the policies of the Welsh Government and hold Ministers to account for what they do and the money they spend in the devolved areas.

- 4. Is the PSOW able to go over the annual Budget of the Ombudsman's work? Who scrutinises ANY overspend and the general running of his office?*

Should there be a variation to the budget for the Ombudsman, the Welsh Government would have to table a supplementary budget motion before the Assembly. Further information can be found under Standing Order 20.36 and Standing Order 20.38-40.

5. If you don't scrutinise the work of PSOW, which committee does please?

The work of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales falls within the remit of the Communities, Equality and Local Government [Committee](#). The Committee holds an annual evidence session with the Ombudsman to consider the contents of his annual report and the activities of his office during the year.

6. What the PSOW has spent since March 2009 on his investigation into Cllr Patrick Heesom of FCC? Must include all costs including legal fees, Adjudication Panel fees expenses. Travel costs, panel remuneration, cost of transcribing all evidence and payment for accommodation for Welsh Government staff members & hire of rooms for the public hearings?

The Assembly does not hold any information in relation to the investigation of Cllr P Heesom.

The PSOW are listed as a public authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 as are legally obliged to respond to requests. Their contact details are: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Your request has been considered according to the principles set out in the Code of Practice on Public Access to Information. The code is published on our website at http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about_us-commission_assembly_administration/abt-foi/abt-foi-cop-pub.htm

If you have any questions regarding this response please contact me. If you feel you have cause for complaint, please follow the guidance at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Buddug Saer
Programme Officer
National Assembly for Wales

Cause for concern or complaint with your FOI response?

If you believe that I have not applied the Code correctly or have not followed the relevant laws, you may make a formal complaint to the Chief Executive and Clerk at the National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay. Details of the Assembly's complaints principles are set out in the Code of Practice on Complaints available on the Internet at <http://www.assemblywales.org/conhome/con-complaint.htm>. Please advise me if you wish to receive a printed copy.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF