

Written Statement

Title: Update on the implementation of recommendations from the Standards of Conduct Committee's report into Lobbying

Date: 27 November 2019

By: Elin Jones AM, Llywydd, as Chair of the Assembly Commission

In January 2018, the National Assembly for Wales's Standards Committee published its report into Lobbying.

Work has been undertaken in the interim to respond to these four recommendations and the Assembly Commission now wishes to update Members on the progress of implementation.

On the issue of security passes being deactivated on National Assembly staff's last day of employment, this practice was already in place when the Committee made its recommendation, therefore no further action was necessary.

In addition to routine security considerations, this practice was designed to preserve the integrity of the estate and to ensure that no lobbyist possesses a National Assembly pass, therefore upholding the principle that the institution allows fair and equal access to all.

The Committee also recommended that the Assembly Commission work with a group of Assembly Members to develop a pilot scheme whereby AM's would voluntarily disclose meetings with lobbyist and interest groups with an evaluation to be undertaken in 2020. Officials have undertaken preparatory work about the form a pilot by members of the Standards Committee could take.



With regards to the Committee's recommendation on publishing information about all AM sponsored events held on the Assembly Estate with a view to improving transparency, the Assembly Calendar, published on the website, already holds details of Plenary, committee meetings, and other official Assembly business. It also has information about events being held in the Senedd or the Pierhead, and Assembly events being held around Wales.

Following Easter recess in 2018, Commission staff began publishing on the Assembly Calendar all new bookings made for Member sponsored activity involving external guests in other bookable locations on the estate. However, staff encountered reluctance from Members who were unhappy about the additional information being released.

Examples were given where private, informal meeting between AMs and stakeholders were being included on the Assembly Calendar. As a result, Commission officials were asked to remove the bookings from the Calendar.

Officials are working with Members' Support Staff on an alternative approach which will be more acceptable to Members.

The Standards Committee's final recommendation relates to mapping out routes of influence to build an informed evidence base and consider alternative, and potentially more effective ways to increase transparency other than a statutory register.

Each committee is free to seek the information it feels is necessary to undertake its inquiries. It would be for the Committee to do this. The Commission provides budget to enable committees to receive the support they need, from Commission staff and to access external expertise if necessary.

The Commission will continue to work with the Standards Committee and all Members to create a culture which strikes an effective balance between access and accountability.

