

Pre appointment hearing: Older People's Commissioner for Wales

10 July 2024

1. Introduction

Pre appointment scrutiny

1. The Welsh Ministers make a range of public appointments across all aspects of public life. Senedd Committees can undertake pre-appointment scrutiny of some appointments with the aim of improving the scrutiny and transparency of the public appointments process. Further information about pre-appointment hearings is available on the [Senedd website](#)

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

2. The role of Older People's Commissioner for Wales was established by the Welsh Government in 2008 to protect and promote the rights of older people. The Commissioner's role can also act as an independent voice and champion for older people.

3. Full detail of the roles and responsibilities of the Commissioner are detailed in [Commissioner for Older People \(Wales\) Act 2006](#) and [accompanying Regulations](#).



4. The current post holder is Heléna Herklots whose tenure will end in August 2024.

2. The recruitment process

5. The post was advertised between 15 January and 9 February 2024, via the Welsh Government website and in paid advertisements. Full details of the recruitment process are available in this background paper.

6. 12 applications were received. All applications were considered and assessed against the criteria and were discussed at a sift meeting. 6 candidates were recommended for interview.

7. As part of the selection process a stakeholder session was held on 18 April 2024. The candidates were asked to introduce themselves giving a brief overview of why they applied for the role. This was followed by a 5 minute presentation on the qualities they would bring to the role. At interview the candidates also undertook a presentation of 7 minutes on how they would prioritise their time and resources to reach those of greatest need.

8. The Assessment Advisory Panel interviewed 6 candidates on 12 and 13 June 2024, and agreed 2 candidates to recommend to the First Minister as appointable.¹

Preferred candidate

9. The First Minister's preferred candidate for the role is Rhian Bowen-Davies.

10. Rhian Bowen-Davies currently runs an independent consultancy business which specialises in domestic abuse and sexual violence, in particular the Charing of Domestic Homicide reviews.

3. The pre appointment hearing

11. To inform the hearing, the Welsh Government provided us with a briefing on the recruitment process and a copy of the information pack for candidates².

¹**Please note that a member of this Committee was invited to sit on the Panel and the Chair, Jenny Rathbone MS was the Committee's agreed nominee. From this point onwards, the Chair played no further part in the Committee's pre-appointment scrutiny and recused herself entirely from the Committee's scrutiny process. On 1 July 2024 the Committee resolved to elect Julie Morgan MS to act as its Temporary Chair in order to chair and conclude proceedings.**

² [Welsh Government candidate pack](#)

The preferred candidate's CV and personal statement were also shared with the Committee.³

12. The hearing took place on 8 July 2024⁴.

13. We questioned the candidate on a number of areas including

- Knowledge and experience;
- Promoting interests and eliminating discrimination;
- Role in overseeing public bodies;
- Encouraging best practice and maintaining independence;
- Reviewing laws and policies; and
- Strategic direction and priorities.

14. The full transcript of the meeting is available on the Committee's webpage.⁵

³ [Pre Appointment Hearing – Older People's Commissioner](#)

⁴ Record of Proceedings, [8 July 2024](#) – in line with convention Jenny Rathbone MS sent apologies for all items relating to the pre-appointment hearing.

⁵ Record of Proceedings, [8 July 2024](#).

4. The Committee's view

15. We note the First Minister's preferred candidate for the role of Commissioner and welcome the opportunity for scrutiny as part of the pre-appointment process.

16. We see no reason not to endorse Welsh Government's preferred candidate, Rhian Bowen-Davies, for the role of Older People's Commissioner for Wales.,

17. During the session we noted the importance of data in informing policy choices. We would welcome it if the newly appointed Commissioner could explore opportunities to collaborate closely with the Welsh Government's Equality Data Unit to address the existing gaps in data collection and monitoring pertaining to older people, aged 60 or over. This should include addressing issues ranging from under-representation of this age group in surveys, to lack of granularity in data collected about their specific needs and circumstances to ensure that data can help to inform policies that address the unique challenges faced by older people.

18. The Committee look forward to hearing more about the Commissioner's priorities and strategies following her first three months in post.