



Y Pwyllgor Cyllid

Ystyried pŵerau Ombwdsmon Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus Cymru

PSOW 02 - Cyngor Tref Cei Connah

# Connah's Quay Town Council



Ian D Jones

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IDJ/OMB1

11 February 2015

Committee Clerk  
Finance Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Dear Sir/Madam

## Consultation on an Inquiry into the Consideration of Powers of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Town Council would like to make the following comments in relation to the questionnaire:-

- 1 Ability to utilise the Ombudsman facility/service for help and advice especially if other means fail to address a situation.
- 2 This would help where person/persons did not feel compelled or comfortable to complain, however the mere fact that the Ombudsman initiates an investigation begs the question how would the Ombudsman know about a potential situation worthy of investigation and the initial facts about the case.
- 3 Yes there are some concerns (see 2 above) ie in what circumstances would this be initiated. There could be an overlap eg with local internal investigations or Monitoring Officer etc. This could be managed through effective and confidential communications as necessary.
- 4 Costs could be prohibitive especially if the Ombudsman could instigate many own-initiative powers.
- 5 In writing would be the best way however oral complaints should be considered initially to see if there was merit or justification for taking things forward.
- 6 Any modern or traditional forms of communication.
- 7 Costs could be prohibitive, however in some cases the benefits of a successful and effective intervention/result of investigation may be worth the cost, which is a matter of judgement.
- 8 A model complaints policy would be useful to some organisations but a one-size fits-all approach may not be feasible, therefore policy guidance and a model code should be mandatory to be adopted only where possible to implement. This should also lead to some consistency in approach no matter the size and composition of the public body.
- 9 There should be little cost in drawing up a model code and the benefits would be seen countrywide where public bodies do not have the resource, expertise or inclination to draw up their own code.

- 10 Current jurisdiction seems about right.
- 11 Agree with this proposal to take up the individual's complaint whether self-funded or commissioned.
- 12 Means tested - levy charge as appropriate (eg free for low income OAP's).
- 13 Case by case if a fee was charged it would deter vexious or unfounded cases. Fees should cover all investigations and help support the free investigations.
- 14 Statutory Bar should be removed to allow the Ombudsman to advise the complainant on the best course of action
- 15 Yes as a last resort, to gain a determination on the legal status and for the avoidance of doubt.
- 16 Consideration should be given to a charging structure to be fair and income-related.
- 17 None locally.
- 18 All bodies that are public representative.
- 19 Within 12 months.
- 20 This legislation could lead to a huge rise in the number of complaints both orally (new) and in writing. The office of the Ombudsman could be overcome with workload thus being ineffective to deal with the serious complaints adequately, effectively and within a reasonable timespan. Checks and balances must be put in place to effectively filter unfounded, vexious and malicious complaints out of the system if the Ombudsman is to be effective and maintain reputation.
- 21 Financial and effectiveness of provision.
- 22 Jurisdiction seems fine at present. Recommendations should take into account the body's ability to respond. Ombudsman title should be protected for the avoidance of doubt in the public eye. Council's do vary on practices and procedure but most will have Codes in place and should abide by them which effective guidance from Officers. Any changes/re-organisations should coincide with a release (and reminder) of information from the Ombudsman. No further views on the Act and reform.

Yours faithfully



IAN JONES  
Clerk & Financial Officer

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