

Audit Committee

Minutes

Date:	2 December 2004	
Time:	9.30am to 12.25pm	
Venue:	Committee Room 3 & 4, Cardiff Bay	
Members	Attendance	
Janet Davies (Chair)	South Wales West	
Leighton Andrews	Rhondda	
Mick Bates	Montgomeryshire	
Alun Cairns	South Wales West	
Jocelyn Davies	South Wales East	
Christine Gwyther	Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	
Denise Idris-Jones	Conwy	
Mark Isherwood	North Wales	
Carl Sargeant	Alyn and Deeside	
Val Lloyd	Swansea East	
Witnesses		
Professor Philip Gummett	Chief Executive, Higher Education Funding Council Wales (HEFCW)	
Richard Hirst	Director of Finance, HEFCW	

Paul Skellon	Head of the Welsh Procurement Initiative Team, Welsh Assembly Government
Officials	
Sir John Bourn	Auditor General for Wales
Gillian Body	National Audit Office
Janice Lawler	National Audit Office
Dave Powell	Assembly Compliance Officer
Secretariat	
Siwan Davies	Committee Clerk
Virginia Hawkins	Deputy Committee Clerk

Item 1: Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest.

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members, the Auditor General for Wales and officials to the meeting.

1.2 The following declarations of interest were made in respect of item 2:

- Leighton Andrews, whose wife is a Member of the Council of the University of Wales, Bangor;
- Alun Cairns as a Member of the Court of the University of Wales, Swansea;

- Denise Idris Jones as a Member of the Council of the University of Wales, Bangor;

- Val Lloyd as a Member of the Court of the University of Wales, Swansea.

Item 2: Procurement in the higher education sector in Wales

2.1 The Committee took evidence from Professor Philip Gummett and Richard Hirst, Chief Executive and Director of Finance, HEFCW and Paul Skellon, Head of the Welsh Procurement Initiative Team.

2.2 A verbatim transcript will be attached as Annex 1 to these minutes.

Action point:

Professor Gummett to provide the Committee with a note on the legal basis of HEFCW's relationship

with HE institutions.

Item 3: Update on the Welsh Assembly Government response to the Audit Committee report, 'Compensating Farmers for Bovine Tuberculosis in Wales'

3.1 The Auditor General reported that good progress was being made in implementing the Committee's recommendations, but the incidence of the disease remained high and the value of compensation payments was projected to rise.

3.2 The NAO would continue to monitor progress and report back to the Committee. In the meantime, Members requested information on the reported increase in the number of overdue TB tests.

Action point:

NAO to report back to the Committee on the reported increase in the number of overdue TB tests, after the new testing arrangements started in November have been established for a few months.

Item 4: Welsh Assembly Government response to the Audit Committee report, 'Collections Management at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales'

4.1 The Welsh Assembly Government had said that it had accepted all thirteen Committee recommendations. However, the Auditor General reported that detail on implementation of some recommendations was dependent on the development of a vision, to be implemented from April 2005.

4.2 Given the work still to be undertaken, the Committee agreed to request an update from the Museum, in a year's time.

Action point:

Secretariat to write to the Permanent Secretary requesting an update on implementation of the Committee's recommendation in twelve months.

Item 5: The audit implications of 'Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales'

5.1 The Auditor General drew attention to the savings proposals outlined in Making the Connections and pointed out the existing contribution of the Audit Committee to delivering savings of this kind. The Auditor General set out his commitment to helping the achievement of Making the Connections, while protecting the independence of the Committee.

5.2 The Auditor General's proposals for the value for money programme for the coming year had

already reflected the themes of Making the Connections. A finalised programme, reflecting the Committee's comments, would be circulated in the New Year.

Item 6: Minutes of the previous meetings

6.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the 4 November 2004 meeting.

Next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the Committee would be at 9.30am on Thursday 3 February 2005.