

European and External Affairs Committee

Minutes (EUR(3)-04-07)

Meeting date: 27 November 2007

Meeting time: 9.30am - 11.30am

Meeting venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales

Assembly Members in Attendance

Sandy Mewies (Chair), Delyn

Nicholas Bourne, Mid & West Wales

Christine Chapman, Cynon Valley

Jeff Cuthbert, Caerphilly

Nerys Evans, Mid and West Wales

Gareth Jones, Arberconwy

Mike German AM, South Wales East

William Graham, South Wales East

Janice Gregory, Ogmore (substitute for Val Lloyd AM)

Presenters in Attendance

"European Investment Bank (Item 2)""":

Mr Laurent de Mautort, Director of Western Europe Department,

Ms Cheryl Fisher, Head of Division,

Mr Robert Schofield, Head of Division covering UK lending,

Mr Adam McDonough, Head of EIB London office

"Welsh European Funding Office (Item3)""":

Cathy Presland, Head of Policy Branch, WEFO

Nick Moon, Director of Strategy and Communications, Finance Wales

Rebecca Johnson, representing the Funding Solutions Team of the Department of Economy and Transport.

Officials in Attendance

Anna Daniel, Head of National Assembly for Wales European Union Office

Peter Kellam, Head of European and International Team, National Assembly for Wales (Item 4)

Andy Klom, Head of European Commission Office in Wales

Sara Piller, European Commission representative

Committee Service

Chris Reading, Clerk

Olga Lewis, Deputy Clerk

Item 1: Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

1.1 Val Lloyd AM sent her apologies - Janice Gregory AM substituted.

1.2 Jonathan Evans MEP, Jill Evans MEP, Glenys Kinnock MEP and Eluned Morgan MEP sent their apologies.

1.3 Jeff Cuthbert AM has been appointed as Chair of the All-Wales Programme Monitoring Committee of EU structural funds for 2007-13 and could not participate directly in scrutiny of the European Union structural funds. Although he was present for Items 2 and 3 he did not take part in discussion.

1.4 The Leader of the Opposition had raised a number of points concerning the Minutes of the September and October 2008 meetings. The Clerk had discussed these points with the Leader of the Opposition and agreed detailed amendments to be incorporated in the Minutes of the relevant meetings. Committee Internet site will be updated accordingly.

1.5 A verbatim record of the meeting is available.

Item 2: European Investment Bank Inquiry: European Investment Bank

2.1 The Committee welcomed senior representatives from the European Investment Bank: Mr Laurent de Mautort, Ms Cheryl Fisher, Mr Robert Schofield, and Mr Adam McDonough. During discussion the Members raised a number of issues, including the following:

The low proportion of the EIB funding in Wales in relation to its population;

One of the factors was relatively small number of Public Private Partnership ("PPP") projects in Wales;

The potential for EIB funding for Welsh Universities, support for Welsh language and infrastructure in Wales (including the new M4 relief road around Newport);

Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of Government borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board. The Legal Adviser clarified this with a reference to the Government of Wales Act 2006: Welsh Ministers can borrow, but this will be subject to the approval by the Treasury;

The EIB undertook to provide information to the Committee on the breakdown of the PPP projects split between health, education and transport. **Action: EIB**

Working Break

2.3 The Committee heard the presentation of the European Commission representative Sara Piller, who briefed the Members about the "Single Market Review" adopted this week and answered the Members' questions.

2.4 Ms Piller undertook to provide in the New Year the information on productivity rates in Europe and in the USA. **Action: Ms Piller**

2.5 Leader of the Opposition reminded the Chair that the First Minister had agreed to provide information regarding productivity rates on Europe, the USA, Brazil, Russia, India and China. The Chair asked the Clerk to pursue this matter with the First Minister's Office.

Action: Clerk

Item 3: European Investment Bank Inquiry: Welsh European Funding Office

3.1 The Committee heard the evidence from the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO), which expanded on the information supplied in the First Minister's recent report to Committee on the JESSICA and JEREMIE programmes. Cathy Presland, assisted by Nick Moon and Rebecca Johnson - all representing the WEFO - made a presentation, followed by discussion and questions from Members.

3.2 WEFO undertook to provide information to the Committee on historic data on European funding spent within the Newport area under the Objective 2 Programme. **Action: WEFO.**

Item 4: National Assembly for Wales European and International Relations Strategy

4.1 The Members were informed that the Assembly Parliamentary Service's European and International Team is developing the National Assembly for Wales European and International Relations Strategy; and is seeking the Committee's comments before the strategy is submitted to the Assembly Commission. At the last meeting, the Members had an opportunity to read the paper presented by the Assembly Parliamentary Service's European and International Team and at the present meeting they had a discussion with Peter Kellam, representing the Assembly Parliamentary Service's European and International Team.

4.2 The Committee agreed to re-visit this subject in the new term.