

SPECIAL HOUSE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: 8th July 2004

Time: 9.00am

Venue: Conference Room A, Assembly Building, Cardiff Bay

Members present:

Deputy Presiding Officer (Chair)
Janet Davies, AM Plaid Cymru
Michael German, AM Liberal Democrats
William Graham, AM Conservative
Janice Gregory, AM Labour
Karen Sinclair, AM Labour
Presiding Officer (in attendance)

Officials present:

Paul Silk, Clerk to the Assembly
Dianne Bevan, Deputy Clerk to the Assembly and Clerk to the House Committee
John Bowley, Director of Corporate Services Division
Gwen Parry, Director of Assembly Communications Services
Karin Phillips, Head of Members' Research and Committee Services
Gwyn Griffiths, Legal Division
Roger Beale, Deputy Head of Fees Office
Nerys Evans, Head of Facilities Management
Sara Lloyd, House Committee Secretariat
Catherine Morris, Private Secretary to the Deputy Presiding Officer

Apologies: Lorraine Barrett, AM Labour
Peter Black, AM Liberal Democrats
Wayne Cowley, Head of Fees Office

1 Assembly Parliamentary Service Budget (2005/6) HC(2)-05-04(p1)

In response to Members' requests at the last meeting further detailed information regarding the budget was presented including the separation of the estimated costs associated with the new building from the other budget proposals.

The Chair reported that discussions with the Finance Minister had indicated that she was content with the reduction in the indicative budget which was now within the agreed budget percentage increase. A re-examination of the initial budget proposals had enabled overall reductions of some £980,000, largely through transfer of some future one-off projects to EYF funding, but also by adjustments to estimates. It was recognised by the Finance Minister that a review might be necessary following the SSRB review report.

The Finance Minister had confirmed her support for the proposal that the necessary costs associated with the running of the new building would be met as additional responsibilities. Further examination of the costs associated with the new building indicated initial reductions, but advice was awaited from the building contractors and project managers on the bulk of the running costs. Members were advised that the amount of the budget proposal for the new building running costs was likely to reduce, but that operational experience would be needed before the estimated costs could be confirmed. These would be reported to the Committee in due course.

Members agreed a maximum contribution to the fit-out costs of the new building from accrued EYF, on the basis that should the actual costs fall short of the estimate, the House Committee contribution would reduce accordingly.

The Presiding Officer requested an assurance that the new building would be completed to a satisfactory standard before APS assume responsibility for management of the building. It was agreed that the motion to Plenary would contain a requirement for the House Committee formally to consent to the hand over after receiving a report on the satisfactory completion of the building.

Members requested ongoing updates on actual expenditure of the budget against forecasts as well as actual turn out expenditure in order to monitor the budget closely.

Action: Fees Office

Members approved the draft APS budget for 2005-06 and the indicative budgets for 2006-07 and 2007-08. William Graham asked for his dissent to be minuted. Officials were authorised to seek a suitable Plenary slot before 10th October 2004, to invite the Assembly's approval of the House Committee's taking responsibility for the management of the new building at a suitable point following its completion and expending resources on the building in the interim.

Action: Committee Clerk

2 Trial Verbatim Record of Committee Meetings HC(2)-05-04(p2)

Members welcomed the paper that outlined the possible variations to the production of the fully bilingual record and provided more detail on the options available to provide the necessary resource to provide verbatim records of committees.

Production of fully bilingual Record

Members agreed to proceed with an option in the paper, where translators would translate English contributions into Welsh directly from the sound

feed, rather than translating transcribed, edited versions of the Record.

The fully bilingual Record would therefore be published within 24 hours of Plenary proceedings, rather than within 5 days at present. Further standardisation and editing of the text would be done by an editor at a later stage. This would negate the need for the present 5-day Record and its associated external translation costs.

This option required the recruitment of additional translators to work on a part-time basis during term-time, providing a possible reduction of approximately £73,000 on the current cost of translating the 5-day Record. The work would be undertaken by a dedicated team of in-house translators who would work closely with the Record of Proceedings editors. Members noted that over time there might be some additional benefits resulting from this integrated approach, but that in view of the level of innovation involved, the risks would need to be closely monitored and a risk analysis produced.

It was agreed that the current contract with the external translators should be retained to mitigate the risks.

Action: Gwen Parry

Verbatim records of committees

Members supported the provision of verbatim records of committees and approved the option to increase the in-house capacity to carry out this work. This would fully meet the requirements of the Government of Wales Act and Standing Orders. Providing this service in-house would require additional staff, the increase in staff would also be of benefit in the production of the fully bilingual 24-hour Record of Plenary proceedings.

Action: Gwen Parry

Members were mindful of possible issues regarding the recruitment of sufficient quality staff for the posts proposed within the timeframe required. Members requested that the Human Resources recruitment process be expedited where possible.

Action: Gwen Parry / John Bowley

Members asked officials to investigate methods of co-operation with Universities to train and develop language students and courses suitable for the specialist work required. Gwen Parry would produce a paper on possible options.

Action: Gwen Parry

Members requested that any significant problems arising from the options agreed above be reported to the House Committee.

3 Timetable for Procurement and Installation of Furniture for the New Assembly Chamber Building HC(2)-05-04(p3)

Members noted the timetable for procurement and installation of loose furniture for the new Assembly building. The House Committee and others would be consulted regarding options, including the provision of sample items, in the Autumn term. Members were asked to e-mail Dianne Bevan with any suggestions for the procurement of furniture. A paper would be tabled at the November House Committee meeting. It was noted that an additional meeting might be required in the Autumn term to consider the options in detail.

Action: Dianne Bevan

4 Any Other Business

It was agreed that when a distinguished visitor was addressing the Assembly before 2pm, staff would warn Members about to enter the Chamber who might otherwise inadvertently disturb proceedings.

Action: John Bowley

**Date of next meeting: 7th October 2004 – Public Meeting
House Committee Secretariat**