

# House Committee

## Minutes

**Date: 15 March 2007**

**Time: 9.00am**

**Venue: Committee Room 2, Senedd, Cardiff Bay**

### **Members present:**

William Graham, AM Conservative (Chair)

Lorraine Barrett, AM Labour

Peter Black, AM Liberal Democrat

Janice Gregory, AM Labour

John Marek, AM Forward Wales

Owen John Thomas, AM Plaid Cymru

### **Officials present:**

Dianne Bevan, Deputy Clerk to the Assembly

Gwen Parry, Director of Assembly Communications

Adrian Crompton, Acting Head of Members' Research and Committee Service

Gwyn Griffiths, Legal Adviser

Steven O'Donoghue, APS Finance Manager

Wayne Cowley, Head of Fees Office

Nerys Evans, Facilities Management

### **Secretariat :**

John Grimes, Clerk to the House Committee

### **Apologies :**

Jane Hutt, AM Labour

Presiding Officer

Claire Clancy, Clerk and Chief Executive

### **Observing :**

Louise Hull, Executive Assistant to the DPO

Jodie Franklin, Fees Office

## Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed Members to the last scheduled meeting of the House Committee.

## 1 Minutes of previous meeting and actions arising

1.1 Members noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2007 were published on 28 February 2007.

1.2 Actions arising from previous meetings HC(2)-02-07(p1)

Road Barriers to Pierhead Street and Harbour Drive

Dianne Bevan reported that the contract for the scheme had now been let. It was anticipated that it would be completed by the end of the financial year and the cost would be less than the original quotation.

## 2 Items for Decision

2.1 Employment of Interns by Assembly Members HC(2)-03-07(p2)

Members considered a paper on the employment of interns and the payment of their travel and subsistence costs in the light of advice received from HM Revenue & Customs.

The Committee agreed to :

- Note the National Minimum Wage implications of employing interns;
- that copies of identity documents provided as part of the security screening process should be copied to Fees Office;
- that the draft guidance note accompanying the paper should be issued to all Assembly Members.
- that the paper should be copied to Andrew Davies, AM as he was involved in setting up the intern scheme.

Action : Wayne Cowley

2.2 Members Allowances : Submission of Receipts by Members HC(2)-03-07(p3)

The Committee considered a paper on the submission of receipts by Assembly Members following questions raised at the last House Committee meeting.

Members briefly discussed the rationale behind the relaxation from the normal requirement in respect of the Additional Costs Allowance.

Members agreed to the recommendation in the paper and that there should no further relaxation in the requirement for receipts to support claims.

The Chair asked Wayne Cowley to circulate appropriate advice to all Members.

Action : Wayne Cowley

2.3 Freedom of Information Requests Concerning Assembly Members Allowances HC(2)-03-07(p4)

The Committee considered a paper on the level of detail routinely provided in response to Freedom Of Information (FOI) requests about Assembly Members' Allowances.

Members agreed to note the recommendation contained in the paper and to note the level of detail routinely made available in response to FOI requests.

2.4 Tax Treatment of ICT Equipment Provided to Assembly Members HC(2)-03-07(p5)

Members considered a paper on the way in which ICT equipment provided to Assembly Members under the £3,000 amount in 2005-2006 was dealt with following questions raised at the last Committee meeting.

The Committee agreed to:

·1 note the tax treatment of IT equipment obtained for or on behalf of Assembly Members under the £3,000 allowance in 2005-2006;

·2 permit retiring/defeated Members to purchase any IT equipment obtained under this allowance at the current market value but less the cost of depreciation.

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| 2.5 | <p>AMSS Revised Entitlement to Maternity Leave HC(2)-03-07(p6)</p> <p>The Committee considered a paper on the new entitlements to Maternity Leave etc for AMSS as a consequence of the changes introduced by the Work and Families Act 2006 which take effect from 1 April 2007.</p> <p>Members noted the revised entitlement of maternity leave for AMSS and agreed that a guidance note should be issued to Assembly Members as drafted.</p>   |
| 2.6 | <p>Assembly Members Salaries 2007 - 08 HC(2)-03-07(p7)</p> <p>The Committee considered a paper on the effect of the Chancellor's announcement of 1 March 2007 on Assembly Member salaries for 2007-2008.</p> <p>Members agreed to note the changes to AM salaries for 2007 – 2008 and that the Commission should be urged to send a submission to the SSRB after the announcement on Westminster salaries anticipated in June but to allow sufficient time for the SSRB to report before the end of the financial year so that any award may be backdated within 2007/8.</p> |
| 2.7 | <p>Guidelines for the Use of the Senedd by the Media (Request from ITV Wales) HC(2)-03-07(p8)</p> <p>The House Committee was asked to consider whether to allow a request from ITV Wales to film a group of school children in the Siambr as part of its election coverage.</p> <p>Members noted that the request did not comply with the House Committee protocol on access to the Siambr.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the request should be declined.</p>   |
| 2.8 | <p>Consultation with Assembly : Staff Transfer Order HC(2)-03-07(p9)</p> <p>The House Committee considered the Secretary of State for Wales' proposal to make an Order, transferring staff to the Assembly Commission in accordance with schedule 11 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.</p> <p>The Committee noted the Secretary of State's proposals and agreed to delegate any further consultation on the detailed drafting of the Order and its appended list of names to the Chief Executive and Clerk.</p>   |

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| 2.9  | <p>Review of Car Parking Policy in the Bay HC(2)-03-07(p10)</p> <p>Members considered progress in dealing with the future closure of Queensgate car park.</p> <p>Dianne Bevan said that the Queensgate car park would close in the autumn of 2007 when the new multi-storey car park opposite the Wales Millennium Centre opened. A survey on travel to and from work would be conducted with those who work at the Assembly estate in the Bay.</p> <p>Members discussed possible solutions to the car parking issue, including the provision of sustainable incentives to encourage use of other means to travel to work, improving the public transport links to Cardiff Bay and the use of some overspill parking provision. The DPO said that in his view the Assembly should not pay for car parking spaces.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to survey those who might be affected by the closure of the current parking provision, which would inform an exercise to encourage more sustainable travel, and to acquire an overspill provision in the alternative car park, for an interim period.</p> |
| 2.10 | <p>Implementing Provision of Childcare Facilities for Cardiff Bay Estate HC(2)-03-07(p11)</p> <p>Members considered progress with childcare facilities in Cardiff Bay and to agree the next steps to move the project forward.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to the issue of an invitation for expressions of interest for a service provider and to explore further joint provision with neighbouring organisations.</p>   |
| 2.11 | <p>Diversity Champions Network HC(2)-03-07(p12)</p> <p>Members were asked to agree to the renewal of annual membership to the Stonewall Cymru Diversity Champions Network.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that the APS should renew its membership of the Diversity Champions Network.</p>   |
| 2.12 | <p>Election 2007 : ICT Provision and Services HC(2)-03-07(p13)</p> <p>Members considered an update on the ICT costs associated with the election 2007 project.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that Merlin should take responsibility for the collection of ICT equipment, as recommended in the paper.</p>   |

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| 2.13 | <p>House Committee Annual Report 2006 07 HC(2)-03-07(p14)</p> <p>The Committee considered options for preparation of its 2006-7 Annual Report.</p> <p>Members agreed option C allowing officials to prepare and report in the normal format and invite the Assembly Commission to agree and publish it at about the usual time in the autumn, following approval by the Assembly Commission.</p> <p>Janice Gregory reminded the meeting of the Committee's previous decision not to include percentage figures for attendance at meetings.</p>  |
| 2.14 | <p>Freedom of Information/Data Protection Act</p>   |
|      | <p>i) Release of Information Held by Contractors HC(2)-03-07(p15)</p> <p>Members considered the potential for information held by contractors to be released in compliance with current legislation.</p> <p>The DPO said he was of the view that information not held by the Assembly should not be sought as a result of FoI in order for it to be released. The person making the FoI request should be informed that the information is not held by the Assembly but by a contractor - and that the name and address of the contractor be provided. Where information was clearly held on behalf of the Assembly then in accordance with the Act it should be released.</p> <p>The Committee noted, on advice from the Deputy Clerk, that whilst the application of exemptions would be considered on each occasion that an access to information request was received, information held by contractors in relation to services provided for the National Assembly may be released in compliance with legislation.</p> |
|      | <p>ii) Private Session of an Audit Committee Meeting in 2002 HC(2)-03-07(p16)</p> <p>Members were advised of a recent 'Access to Information request from a member of the public which included a request for information regarding a private session of an Audit Committee meeting in 2002.</p> <p>Adrian Crompton explained the procedures that now exist to ensure that private committee sessions are not recorded.</p> <p>The Committee noted the release of appropriate information in compliance with the terms of the Data Protection Act, should a request be made.</p>  |
| 2.15 | <p>Budget Virement 2006 – 07 HC(2)-03-07(p17)</p>   |

The Committee considered the Clerk's proposals for virements on the 2006/7 budget.  
Members agreed the virement proposals.

2.16 Items Referred from the Shadow Commission

i) Education Suite in the Assembly Office HC(2)-03-07(p27)

The House Committee's views were sought on a Shadow Commission proposal to relocate the education facilities from Pierhead to the Assembly Office. The paper had previously been considered by the Shadow Commission, which had given guidance to officials on the preferred use of the space adjacent to the Siambr Fach and flexible use of the Milling Area.

Members agreed that the proposals should be progressed by officials until the Assembly Commission was in place.

Dr Marek asked whether more education officers could be provided, with a greater emphasis on services in North Wales. Gwen Parry explained the position with regard to the employment and use of education officers by APS.

**3 Items for noting**

3.1 APS Budget Report HC(2)-03-07(p18)

Members noted the report.

3.2 ICT Sub Group HC(2)-03-07(p19)

Members noted the minutes of the ICT Sub Group meeting held on 13 February 2007.

3.3 Buildings Sub Group

i) Minutes of the Meeting of 15 February 2007 HC(2)-03-07(p20)

Members noted the minutes of the Buildings Sub Group meeting held on 15 February 2007

ii) Request to Exhibit Artwork within the Assembly Estate HC(2)-03-07(p21)

The Committee considered a request to exhibit artwork from the Buildings Sub-Group.

Members agreed to the request to exhibit the artwork 'Hen Siroedd Cymru'.

iii) Event Management : Recharging Policy and Rates HC(2)-03-07(p22)

The Committee considered a proposal to recharge some of the cost of events held in the Senedd and the Assembly office to event organisers.

Members agreed to the recharge policy outlined in the paper.

3.4

Monthly HR report HC(2)-03-07(p23)

Members noted the report.

3.5

Indicators Against Targets HC(2)-03-07(p24)

Members noted the report.

3.6

Lorraine Barrett said she was impressed by the work of the Public Information Service who had recently given a presentation at a meeting she had attended in Merthyr Tydfil.

Access to Information HC(2)-03-07(p25)

3.7

Members noted the report

Overseas and External Relations Activities HC(2)-03-07(p26)

4

Members noted the report.

4.1

### **Any Other Business**

Use of ICT in the Election Period

Dr Marek said that in his view recent guidance issued to Members, prohibiting the use of PCs for party political and election purposes, was in conflict with previous guidance issued where private use of a PC in Members and AMSS's own time was allowed provided no Assembly resources were consumed.

4.2

Dianne Bevan said that she would look into the matter and clarify the position.

Action : Dianne Bevan

Assembly Office Sub Lease

Dr Marek referred to the e-mail circulated to Committee Members about the sub-lease for



parts of the Assembly Office used by the Government.

4.3

Members discussed the use of the car park and other issues associated with use of the building by the Government. Dr Marek said it was important to consider how the issue might be handled, if in the future more space was required to accommodate additional Members. The Chair reported that this would be a matter for agreement with the Government at the time and the sub lease would allow room for negotiation.

ICT Sub Group

4.4

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the final meeting of the sub group should be ratified out of committee.

Members agreed.

Action : John Grimes

4.5

Closure of the Senedd during Recess

The Chair said that the Senedd would be closed to the public on two separate afternoons during the Easter recess, to accommodate setting up and recording of BBC broadcasts connected with the Assembly Election coverage. General visiting during these periods would not therefore be possible. Passholders would be able to gain access, but subject to any health and safety concerns and the recording of the programmes.

The Committee agreed that Members should be advised of the restricted access.

Closure of House Committee

This was the last scheduled meeting of the House Committee.

William Graham thanked Members, past and present, for all their hard work and valuable contributions during the life of the House Committee.

He thanked Dr Marek for his previous tenure as Chair of the Committee. He also thanked officials for the smooth running of meetings and all the hard work they had put in to support and advise the Committee.

House Committee Secretariat

March 2007