

House Committee

Minutes

Date: 18 January 2007

Time: 2.00pm

Venue: Committee Room 3, Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Members present:

William Graham, AM Conservative (Chair)

Lorraine Barrett, AM Labour

Peter Black, AM Liberal Democrat

Janice Gregory, AM Labour

Owen John Thomas, AM Plaid Cymru

Presiding Officer (in attendance)

Officials present:

Jon Shortridge, Permanent Secretary

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

Nerys Evans, Facilities Management

Secretariat:

John Grimes, Clerk to the House Committee

Gareth Brydon, House Committee Secretariat

Apologies :

John Marek, AM Forward Wales

Jane Hutt, AM Labour

In Attendance :

David Melding, AM (Item 2.1)

Observing :

	Opening Remarks
	The Chair welcomed David Melding, Chair of the Catering Sub Group to the meeting together with Jon Shortridge who was attending as Accounting Officer .
1	Minutes of previous meeting and actions arising
1.1	Members noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2006 were published on 16 January 2007.
1.2	Actions arising from previous meetings HC(2)-01-07(p1)
	<p>Car Parking</p> <p>Peter Black asked for an update on the provision of car parking facilities.</p> <p>Dianne Bevan said that the Queensgate car park would remain open to all pass holders, including Members Support Staff. However, the courtesy bus had been withdrawn. She said a note had been circulated to all users and she would check that this had included Members' Support Staff.</p> <p>Action : Dianne Bevan</p> <p>Committee Rooms</p> <p>Dianne Bevan reported that the main conference rooms in Cathays Park would be closed for a month from 19 February so that refurbishment work could commence. She had agreed with the Permanent Secretary that the meeting rooms in the Assembly Offices could be used by WAG staff with the proviso that Assembly Members would have first call on the rooms if required.</p>

2	Items for decision
2.1	Business Case for Catering Service Adaptations HC(2)-01-07(p2)
	<p>The Committee considered a paper on proposed refurbishments and adaptations to the staff restaurant and Members' Tea Room.</p> <p>David Melding, AM was in attendance for this item. He outlined the proposals contained in the paper. Members were advised that some of the work, such as refurbishment of the main restaurant and servery areas was essential and budget provision for this existed in the current financial year. Other proposals, including work on the Members' Tea Room and the utilisation of Conference Rooms A and B, was desirable but not all of it could be started until after the end of March.</p> <p>Members discussed the proposals and agreed that the essential work to the restaurant should be carried out in the current financial year. They also agreed that officials should explore the best phasing of the works in relation to the funding set aside in the budget. Members also agreed that use of the private dining rooms would be discontinued if Conference rooms A and B were utilised.</p> <p>David Melding said that the Catering Sub Group would identify what could be taken forward in the current year and direct the project work. He added that they might conclude it was not possible to commence any of the non-essential work this financial year.</p> <p>The Chair asked Nerys Evans to prepare a paper on the possible alternative use of the private dining rooms.</p> <p>Action : Nerys Evans</p>
2.2	<p>Assembly Commission : Welsh Language Scheme HC(2)-01-07(p3)</p> <p>The House Committee considered a paper on a Welsh Language Scheme prepared for the Third Assembly. The draft Scheme was also considered by the Shadow Commission at its meeting on 16 January.</p> <p>The Committee agreed the recommendation in the paper and endorsed the steps being taken to produce a Welsh Language Scheme.</p>

2.3 Asset Management – Priority Areas HC(2)-01-07(p4)

The Committee considered a paper on the asset management issues agreed by the Shadow Commission as priorities for May 2007.

The paper asked Members to consider options for the future provision of visitor and educational facilities in Cardiff Bay and alternative uses for all or part of the Pierhead, to promote it as a destination in its own right and for other complementary public uses. It also sought direction about the Colwyn Bay Centre so that further discussions could take place with the Government.

Members discussed the Shadow Commission's recommendations that the education and visitor centre should be relocated to the Senedd and Assembly Office, along with the Assembly shop. Gwen Parry said that she was developing proposals to use the former Chamber and part of the old milling area

Members agreed that a further paper should be brought to the Committee on proposals for the visitor and education centre, the use of the Pierhead building and the Colwyn Bay Centre.

Action : Gwen Parry

2.4 Delegation of the Government of Wales Act 2006 Functions to House Committee HC(2)-01-07(p5)

The House Committee was asked to consider approval 'in principle' to the delegation of two functions to it :

a) Schedule 2, paragraphs 5 & 6, of the Government of Wales Act 2006 empowers the Assembly to promote awareness of the election system and devolved government, including by making grants and/or providing financial assistance to the Electoral Commission. Under paragraph 18 of Schedule 11, this function is exercisable until the end of the initial period by the Assembly as constituted by GoWA 1998.

b) Schedule 11, paragraph 43(10) requires the Secretary of State to consult the Assembly before the Order transferring staff to the Assembly Commission is made

Members agreed in principle that the two functions be delegated to it and to the change in Standing Order 18.

2.5 Budget Virement 2006/07 HC(2)-01-07(p6)

Members considered a paper setting out proposals for virements on the 2006/7 APS budget.

The Committee agreed the virement proposals as set out in the paper.

3 Items for noting

3.1 Monthly HR report HC(2)-01-07(p7)

Members noted the report.

3.2 Indicators Against Targets HC(2)-01-07(p8)

Dianne Bevan said that the level of detail contained in the Indicator reports was being reviewed for the purposes of future reporting to the Assembly Commission, and sought any suggestions from Members as to the indicators they would find the most useful.

3.3 Members noted the report.

3.4 APS Budget Report HC(2)-01-07(p9)

Members noted the report.

3.5 Access to Information HC(2)-01-07(p10)

Members noted the report.

4 Overseas and External Relations Activities HC(2)-01-07(p11)

Members noted the report.

Any Other Business

Media Room

Lorraine Barrett sought clarification on booking of the media room. Gwen Parry said that guidance on this was needed and she undertook to prepare a paper for the next Committee

meeting.

Action : Gwen Parry/Nerys Evans

Access to the Siambr

Janice Gregory referred to a recent incident when a Member had taken a group of children into the Siambr contrary to the recent guidance on visitors' access to the restricted areas of the Senedd.

Members agreed that the Chair should write to the Member reminding them of the guidance, and warning of the possible consequences of future breaches.

Action : Clerk to the Committee

Access to Members in the Cwrt

Members asked whether a journalist could be advised of the correct protocol to follow when accessing the Cwrt.

Action : Clerk to the Committee

Industrial Action

Dianne Bevan tabled a paper on possible industrial action by members of the PCS Union on Wednesday, 31 January. She said that whilst the Union did not have a dispute with the Assembly in Cardiff Bay the proposed strike was part of national action. It was likely that key staff may be involved in industrial action, should it go ahead, and that could lead to the loss of business on that day in the Assembly.

Members discussed the proposed industrial action and possible contingency measures that could be taken to avoid the loss of business that week. The Presiding Officer said that he did not wish to see democratic debate lost in this way and he asked Dianne Bevan to contact Jeff Evans, PCS Wales to establish whether an exemption could be made in the case of the Assembly.

Action : Dianne Bevan

After further discussion Members agreed that, should strike action go ahead on the 31 January and pending the outcome of discussions with Jeff Evans, in their view there could be no facilities for Committee meetings or Plenary that day. Instead, the Committee agreed that it could provide facilities for shorter Committee meetings be held on the morning of Thursday, 1 February (commencing at 9.00am) followed by a shortened Plenary session.

March House Committee Meeting

The Chair asked Members to consider changing the date of the scheduled meeting on 1 March to 15 March as that day was St David's Day, and Members were likely to have other engagements. The 1 March would be retained for urgent business only.

Members agreed to convene the meeting on 15 March.

Date of next scheduled meeting: 8th February 2007

House Committee Secretariat