

## HOUSE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date:** 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2005

**Time:** 9.00am

**Venue:** Committee Room 1, Assembly Building, Cardiff Bay

**Members present:**

Deputy Presiding Officer (Chair)

Lorraine Barrett, AM Labour

Peter Black, AM Liberal Democrats

William Graham, AM Conservative

Janice Gregory, AM Labour

Jane Hutt, AM Labour

Owen John Thomas, AM Plaid Cymru

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

Gwen Parry, Director of Assembly Communications Services

Karin Phillips, Head of Members' Research and Committee Services

Joanest Jackson, Assistant Legal Adviser

Wayne Cowley, Head of Fees Office

Nerys Evans, Head of Office and Facilities Management

Sara Lloyd Mackay, House Committee Secretariat

Mike Snook, Head of Human Resources Branch (part meeting)

Adrian Green, Private Secretary to the Presiding Officer

Gareth Brydon, House Committee Secretariat

**Apologies:** John Bowley, Director of Corporate Services Division

The Chair welcomed Jane Hutt, Business Minister to the meeting as a new member of the House Committee.

## **1 Minutes of previous meeting and actions arising**

Members noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> December were published on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005. The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January will be published by 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005.

### **1.1 Actions arising from previous meetings HC(2)-01-05(p1)**

## Retention of Assembly Members' Administrative Records

It was noted that officials had sent a letter to the National Audit Office and a reply was awaited. Members had until 4<sup>th</sup> February to decide their preference for record keeping. The Chair reminded Members that they must inform Fees Office unless they would like their records to be returned.

## **2 Recommendations from Sub Group Meetings**

### **2.1 Assembly Members and Support Staff Code for the Use of Assembly ICT Facilities HC(2)-02-05(p2)**

Members were asked whether they were content with the draft Code for the use of ICT facilities. The Chair outlined the purpose of the Code, which was to protect the security and integrity of ICT equipment used by Members and their staff.

Members agreed to the Code, subject to minor amendment and finalisation at the next House Committee meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

In response to queries from Members, Gwen Parry undertook to inform them of the location of the virus checking facility on the Merlin system.

**Action: Gwen Parry**

### **3 Reports from Assembly Clerk**

#### **3.1 Recruitment Attachment Protocol HC(2)-02-05(p3)**

Members endorsed the recruitment attachment protocol, drawn up to facilitate the merger of ELWa, WDA and WTB with the Assembly.

The Chair thanked Michael Snook for attending.

#### **3.2 SSRB Review HC(2)-02-05(p4)**

Members received the report of the Senior Salary Review Board (SSRB). The paper set out the main recommendations and highlighted those areas requiring further work. Wayne Cowley confirmed that he had discussed the main recommendations in respect of Assembly Member Support Staff salaries with support staff and Trade Unions.

Members broadly discussed the report. A number of issues were raised, including :

- An implementation timetable;
- The introduction of pay scales and progression;
- Mandatory versus optional pay scales;
- The employment of new staff and SSRB recommendations;
- Staff salaries allowance;
- Cash limits, flexibility and the virement of funds;
- Involvement of the EFLG and Trade Unions.

#### **Recommendations**

The Chair asked House Committee to consider the motions outlined in the report that they might wish to put to plenary to implement the recommendations. The following was agreed :

*Recommendation 28 (i).* That Assembly Members salaries should be increased to £44,000 from 1 April 2004.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (ii).* That no change be made to the salaries of existing office-holders.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (iii).* That the Chair of the Audit Committee should receive an additional salary of £5,507 with effect from 1 April 2004.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (iv).* That the National Assembly for Wales Members' Pension Scheme be amended to increase the accrual rate to 1/40ths with effect from 1 April 2004 with a Member contribution rate of 10 per cent for those Members who wish to opt-in to this arrangement from that date.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (v).* That all Members would automatically move to the 1/40ths accrual rate with a Member contribution rate of 10 per cent with effect from 1 April 2005 and would have 3 months in which to opt out.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (vi).* New Members at subsequent elections would join the scheme with an accrual rate of 1/40ths with a Member contribution rate of 10 per cent but would have a period of 3 months from the date of the election to opt for the 1/50ths accrual rate with a Member contribution rate of 6 per cent.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (vii).* Standard job descriptions for support staff should be reviewed in consultation with the Equipment and Facilities Liaison Group and representatives of the support staff trade unions.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (viii).* That the Staff Salaries Allowance should be increased on 1 April each year (commencing 1 April 2005) in line with movements in the Average Earnings Index for public and private sectors combined.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (ix).* That, subject to the views of House Committee, discussions should take place with the Equipment and Facilities Liaison Group and representatives of support staff trade unions on salaries and related issues.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (x).* That Office Costs Allowance should be increased to £13,000 with effect from 1 April 2005, plus annual uprating applicable from that date.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xi).* That an additional amount should be made available centrally to fund any reasonable expenditure over £2,000 that AMs need to incur in any financial year to ensure that their constituency offices meet with disability access and health and safety requirements.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xii).* That there be no change to the Additional Costs Allowance other than the normal annual uprating.

**Agreed. Members further decided that the limit over which individual items would need prior approval before purchase be raised from £1,000 to £2,000.**

*Recommendation 28 (xiii).* That the car mileage rate should be brought into line with the approved Inland Revenue rate of 40 pence per mile for the first 10,000 miles, and 25 pence per mile thereafter

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xiv).* That the motorcycle mileage rate should be brought into line with the approved Inland Revenue rate of 24 pence per mile.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xv).* That the bicycle mileage rate should be brought into line with the approved Inland Revenue rate of 20 pence per mile.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xvi).* That the car, motorbike and bicycle rates should in future be maintained in line with the approved Inland Revenue rates.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xvii).* That Members should be able to claim reimbursement for up to 18 return journeys between Cardiff and their constituency by their support staff.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xviii).* That the Resettlement Grant be reviewed at the same time as the parallel Westminster arrangements are reviewed.

**House Committee decided that no action be taken in respect of the Resettlement Grant.**

*Recommendation 28 (xix).* That there be no change to the Winding Up Allowance.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 28 (xx).* That the definition of "main home" should be revised.

**House Committee decided that the definition should be revised to :**

*"The home which a Member has registered with the Fees Office. This should be the normal home occupied by the Member for most of the time on which the Member would normally pay full Council Tax."*

*Recommendation 28 (xxi).* Revaluation of allowances other than those that have another revaluation mechanism should be based on the Retail Prices Index for the 12 months ending in the preceding December and, if it is agreed to revalue the Staff Salaries Allowance and salary scale in line with the Average Earnings Index, that this too should be based on the 12 months ending in December.

**Agreed.**

*Recommendation 29.* House Committee is asked to agree that the Business Committee be requested to schedule a debate on the motions before 12 March 2005 (the change to Standing Orders will need to be proposed by a member of the Business Committee).

**Agreed.**

The House Committee also decided :

*Recommendation 30(i).* To determine which option it wishes to follow in respect of Deputy Ministers.

**Members agreed to establish a working group on possible remuneration for Deputy Ministers.**

*Recommendation 30(ii).* To determine whether Opposition Leaders (other than the Leader of the Largest Party not represented in the Assembly Cabinet) should receive an additional salary.

**Members agreed to establish a working group.**

*Recommendation 30(iii).* To determine whether the SSRB recommendation in respect of the Staff Salaries Allowance should be accepted or varied.



**Members asked Wayne Cowley to give further consideration to the precise form of operation of Staff Salaries and report further.**

*Recommendation 30(iv).* To determine whether there would be an automatic progression through the spine for support staff or whether progression would be determined by the employing Assembly Members.

**Members asked Wayne Cowley to give further consideration to the precise form of operation of Staff Salaries.**

*Recommendation 30(v).* A policy guide for Assembly Members on pay and other human resources issues.

**Members asked Wayne Cowley to prepare a policy guide for Assembly Members on pay and other human resources issues.**

*Recommendation 30(vi).* To determine whether the cost of directly employed cleaners should be charged to the Office Costs Allowance rather than the Staff Salaries.

**Members agreed that the cost of directly employed cleaners should be charged to the Office Costs Allowance rather than Staff Salaries.**

*Recommendation 30(vii).* To determine how virement might work if the Staff Salaries Allowance were restructured.

**Members asked Wayne Cowley to give further consideration to the precise form of operation and report further.**

*Recommendation 30 (viii).* To determine the evidence that will be required to support a request from Members for central funding for necessary work to ensure that their offices meet disability access and health and safety requirements.

**Members agreed that three written quotations for the work recommended should be obtained in advance of the works being carried out and that these should be submitted to the Fees Office for approval.**

*Recommendation 30 (ix).* To determine whether Members will need to find the first £2,000 for both a security claim and a disability access/health and safety claim in any one financial year or whether they need to make one contribution of £2,000 covering both claims.

**Members agreed that where office improvements were made for security, disability access and health and safety, only the first £2,000 of the combined expenditure would need to be borne out of office cost allowances.**

*Recommendation 30 (xi).* To determine how the Party Leader's Allowance could be restructured to reflect the changes suggested for the Staff Salaries Allowance.

**Members asked Wayne Cowley to give further consideration to the restructuring of the Party Leader's Allowance and report further to House Committee.**

*Recommendation 30 (xii).* Changes that could be made to the rules governing the Temporary Staffing Allowance to allow phased return to work from sickness absence.

**Members asked Wayne Cowley to give further consideration to a scheme for a phased return to work by staff after a period of sickness.**

**Action: Wayne Cowley**

### 3.3 Separation Issues - HC(2)-02-05(p5)

Members confirmed that they would consult on the proposals regarding formal separation between the Executive and the legislative branches of the Assembly with their party groups.

### 3.4 Review of Security Incidents at the National Assembly, Cardiff Bay, 28 November and 2 December 2004 - HC(2)-02-05(p6)

Members agreed to the additional low-cost security measures required to prevent individuals from scaling the atrium structure. The House Committee asked for its thanks to be passed to security staff for their prompt action during the recent security incident. Paul Silk said that officials were drafting a protocol regarding filming in the Assembly building. In the light of the security incident the Chair asked for a letter to be sent to S4C television about compliance with broadcasting standards.

**Action: Paul Silk/Dianne Bevan**

## 4 Members' Facilities

### 4.1 Separate Internet and Intranet Sites – HC(2)-02-05(p7)

Members welcomed the proposed project to create a National Assembly for Wales website separate from the Government. Members asked officials to identify the financial resources required and report back to the Committee. Members requested that officials purchase potential URLs that might be chosen for the web site address. A list would be circulated to Members.

**Action: Gwen Parry**

### 4.2 Book Launches and the Sale of Books in the Neuadd HC(2)-02-05(p8)

Members endorsed the guidance on the sale of books at book launches held in the Assembly Hall.

## 5 Buildings

## 5.1 Minor New Works HC(2)-02-05(p9)

Members noted the tenders received for the Pierhead roof and external works project and confirmed that the cost above estimate was acceptable. Nerys Evans confirmed that the tenders were received from local companies.

## 5.2 Options for Residual Space in the Assembly Building HC(2)-02-05(p10)

The Chair invited Members to consider options for the use of residual space in the Assembly Building when the existing facilities transfer to the New Building. The Chair asked Members to pass their suggestions on to Dianne Bevan. Members discussed the possibility of establishing crèche facilities in the building. Jane Hutt said that she would be pleased to assist in developing options for this proposal.

## 6 Items for Noting

### 6.1 ICT Sub Group Meeting, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2004 - HC(2)-02-05(p11)

Members endorsed the minutes of the meeting.

The Chair reported that he had received a request from the Chair of the ICT Sub Group to address the House Committee about the performance of the Merlin contract. The Chair reported that he had suggested that a special meeting be called with the Chair of the Sub Group and representative(s) from Merlin to discuss the issues. Members also raised other ICT matters, including connections for digital cameras, the availability of double sided printing and the prevention of waste in printing.

**Action : Dianne Bevan**

### 6.2 Catering Sub Group Meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2005 – HC(2)-02-05(p12)

Members endorsed the minutes of the meeting.

Members reported that they had received a number of late invoices for payment from the caterers. Nerys Evans said she would arrange for the Chair of the Catering Sub group and Janice Gregory, who had sat on the catering contract tender board, to meet with Avenance regional managers to discuss the current catering issues.

**Action : Nerys Evans**

6.3 Paper on Performance Against Targets – HC(2)-02-05(p13)

Members noted the paper.

6.4 Finance Report – HC(2)-02-05(p14)

Members noted the finance report.

6.5 Overseas and External Relations Activities – HC(2)-02-05(p15)

Members noted the update.

6.6 Report on the North Wales Office – HC(2)-02-05(p16)

Members noted that the scheme to offer a subsidy to schools and colleges visiting from outside of a 10-mile radius from the visitor centre was in place. Members noted the visitor numbers to the centre and the number of visits and events undertaken by the Education Officer.

**7 Matters referred including Assembly Questions**

7.1 Record of Proceedings 26 January 2005 – HC(2)-02-05(p17)

Members noted the debate on the Annual Report of the House Committee, extracted from the Record of Proceedings.

WAQ40878, WAQ40877, WAQ40879, WAQ40880, WAQ40890 and WAQ40854

7.2 Members noted that answers to the Written Assembly questions had been circulated to them.

OAQ0001(HC)

Members noted that the answer tabled on 2 February would be circulated to them.

**Any Other Business**

Rules on Procurement – HC(2)-02-05(p18.1)

7.3 The Chair sought House Committee's agreement to changes to procurement practices to reflect those introduced by the Government. Members agreed to establish APS procurement guidance in line with the recent amendments introduced by the Government.

**Action : Wayne Cowley**

Dealing with Information Requests - (HC(2)-02-05(p19)

8

8.1

Paul Silk invited views on establishing appropriate consultation mechanisms with the House Committee before releasing information. Members agreed that they would meet where practicable to discuss requests. If not, consultation with the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer would take place before a formal response was made. Members asked for a summary to be made available at meetings showing the requests received.

**Action : Joanest Jackson**

Cleaning Staff

The Chair asked Dianne Bevan to investigate the wage levels and pension arrangements for cleaning staff in the Assembly Building and report back to him.

**Action : Dianne Bevan**

Police Van

8.2 The Chair asked the Clerk/Deputy Clerk to resolve the position in respect of the request for replacement of the police van.

**Action : Dianne Bevan**

8.3

8.4

**Date of next meeting:** 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2005

**House Committee Secretariat**