

# House Committee

## Minutes

**Date: 7 December 2006**

**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

Jane Hutt, AM Labour

John Marek, AM Forward Wales

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

Brian Davidge, Head of ICT Branch

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

Gwyn Griffiths, Legal Adviser

Steven O'Donoghue, APS Finance Manager

Nerys Evans, Facilities Management

Gareth Brydon, House Committee Secretariat

### **In Attendance :**

David Melding, AM (AoB – Catering Sub Group)

Frances Osborne (Agenda item 2.3)

Gordon Brown (Agenda item 3.2)

### **Observing :**

Aled Eirug, Presiding Officer's Constitutional Consultant

## Opening Remarks

The Chair conveyed the thanks and best wishes of the Committee to Paul Silk, Clerk to the Assembly, who was leaving on 18 December 2006.

Dr John Marek said that following his resignation as Chair at the last Committee meeting he had immediately returned to his office where he found a message to telephone the BBC about his resignation. As this was a private meeting and in his view either the Presiding Officer or Mr Eirug must have advised the BBC, he asked the Committee to consider excluding Mr Eirug from the meeting.

Members agreed that they should note Dr Marek's remarks but take no further action.

## 1 Minutes of previous meeting and actions arising

1.1 Members noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2006 will be published by 21 December 2006.

1.2 Actions arising from previous meetings HC(2)-12-06(p1)

### Road Barriers to Pierhead Street and Harbour Drive

Nerys Evans reported that officials were putting the scheme out to tender and that options for both fixed cable and remote operation would be investigated.

### Lightweight Laptops

Gwen Parry reported that most Members had expressed a preference for lightweight laptops. She said that additional funding of £20,000 would be required to provide the laptops. She asked whether the Committee would consider approving the additional expenditure. Steve O'Donoghue added that the additional expenditure could be managed within the existing budget.

Members agreed to the additional expenditure.

Gwen Parry said that the existing laptops would be re-used and she would explore whether Members could be allowed to purchase them for their own use.

Action : Gwen Parry

Future of Exhibition Kit in the Pierhead Building

Gwen Parry reported that a paper would be presented at the next Committee meeting in January.

**2** **Items for decision**

**2.1** **Senedd Issues**

**i) Guidance for Visitors Access to Restricted Areas of the Senedd HC(2)-12-06(p2)**

The Committee considered a paper on proposed guidance for visitors' access to the restricted areas of the Senedd and to the Siambr on business days.

Members considered a number of issues concerning visitor access to the restricted areas. Some Members were concerned about the large number of visitors accessing the Siambr at any one time and visitors sitting in Members' seats in the Siambr and using the computers.

The Committee considered advice from the Assembly police suggesting that access to these areas should be further restricted on business days to reduce the risk of a breach in security. Paul Silk advised that some provision should be made for visiting parliamentarians and foreign dignitaries to view the Siambr during these times.

Members agreed the Protocol for visitors' access to the restricted areas of the Senedd as set out in the paper and that this should be widely circulated to Members and staff, and that exceptional cases should be agreed only by the Presiding Officer or Chair of House Committee.

Action : Gwen Parry

**ii) Guidance on Events in the Senedd HC(2)-12-06(p3)**

Members considered proposed guidance on the issue of charging for events in the Senedd.

The Committee agreed the further development of a recharge policy and process. Gwen Parry undertook to report again to the Committee.

Action : Gwen Parry

iii) Funding of Senedd ICT, AV and Broadcasting HC(2)-12-06(p4)

The House Committee considered an update on the current financial position in relation to the funding of Senedd ICT, AV and Broadcasting and a request from the Government about the level of contribution to the Senedd ICT related costs.

Dr Marek referred to the minutes of the ICT Sub Group meeting of 21 November 2006 and he noted that the Group had expressed its disquiet at the way in which the change to the agreed ICT Separation project had been made. He suggested that it might be imprudent for the Committee to meet the requested costs. Gwen Parry said that Dr Marek's comments were in respect the ICT infrastructure, a separate issue to the cost of Senedd ICT.

Dr Marek expressed the view that the Committee should retain its EYF and thereby reduce the need for a supplementary budget.

After further discussion Members agreed the recommendations contained in the paper that :

§ the Committee should meet the Senedd ICT capital cost of £3.9m plus the gearing cost of £89,000 from accrued EYF/unallocated reserves,

§ officials should continue to liaise in relation to the outstanding costs and report back when outstanding matters had been agreed.

2.2 ICT Infrastructure Update HC(2)-12-06(p5)

The House Committee was provided with an update on developments associated with the implementation of the Government of Wales Act 2006 and Information and Communications Technology Infrastructure (ICT) and software issues.

Members noted that the Shadow Commission, drawing on advice received from Merlin and WAG and a paper which presented an alternative proposal, had recommended postponing the decision on the ICT infrastructure to a later date. This would enable the Assembly to participate in WAG's discussions on the future ICT infrastructure strategy and to join a shared approach to securing a data centre facility which would serve more than one public sector body. There were, however, some issues which needed to be addressed in the short to medium term and Gwen Parry briefly outlined these together with some of the options for dealing with them.

Dr Marek asked whether the ICT Sub Group had considered the options. Gwen Parry confirmed that the Sub Group was content.

The Committee agreed the recommendations contained in the paper.

### 2.3 Childcare Facilities Feasibility Study Final Report HC(2)-12-06(p6)

The Chair welcomed Frances Osborne, author of the Daycare Trust feasibility report, to the meeting.

The Committee considered the outcome of the childcare facilities feasibility study and Members agreed in principle to support the provision of childcare facilities for the Cardiff Bay estate.

Ms Osborne said that in preparing the feasibility report the Daycare Trust found that :

- 1 There was limited supply of day care provision in the Cardiff Bay area.
- 2 There was little or no demand for a visitors' crèche.
- 3 Demand from building occupants alone would not be sufficient to sustain a dedicated workplace nursery.
- 4 There was predicted demand for daycare from other employers and from expansion of businesses in the area.
- 5 It would be feasible to develop a small childcare facility for a combined daycare and visitors' crèche in vacant Assembly Office space or erect a purpose designed demountable in Estate grounds (current rear car park) earmarked for future office development.

Ms Osborne added that the former Chamber would not be suitable for use as a crèche as it did not have natural daylight. She said that play space would be an important issue for users, and that this could be provided or substituted through organised outdoor play opportunities.

The Committee briefly discussed funding issues.

Members decided in principle that they would like to proceed with dedicated daycare facilities for the Assembly. Nerys Evans was asked to return to the Committee with fully costed proposals during the next term.

Action : Nerys Evans

2.4 Employee Assistance Programme HC(2)-12-06(p7)

The House Committee considered an update on the progress being made to introduce an Employee Assistance Programme, which would be available during the early part of the New Year.

Members noted the choice of provider and the range of services available.

2.5 Budget Virement 2006/07 HC(2)-12-06(p8)

Members considered a paper on the cost of the Clerk's proposals for a virement on the 2006/7 APS budget.

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

**3 Items for noting**

3.1 Rateable Value of Assembly Office, Senedd and Pierhead Buildings HC(2)-12-06(p9)

The Committee was presented with a re-assessment of the combined business rates for the Assembly Office, Pierhead and the Senedd.

Dianne Bevan reported that she had been advised that the budget set aside for the increase in rates would be more than adequate.

Members endorsed the recommendation of the assessment. .

Senedd Heating and Cooling HC(2)-12-06(p10)

Members considered a paper on the Senedd heating and cooling systems.

The Chair welcomed Gordon Brown, who had been contracted to advise on and ensure best use was made of the innovative systems in the Senedd.

Mr Brown briefed the Committee on the nature and features of the heating and cooling

system in the Senedd.

3.2 Mr Brown said that the building must provide a comfortable working environment and he hoped to enable all users to be able to understand its workings. He offered Members individual tours around the building and also asked for volunteers to act as advocates and provide feedback. Jane Hutt and Janice Gregory expressed interest in the tour.

Members asked whether a DVD on the technical design of the building could be made available. Mr Brown said that it should be possible to prepare one.

The Committee noted the content of the paper and the progress made.

Monthly HR report HC(2)-12-06(p11)

Members noted the report.

Buildings Sub Group Meeting

i) Minutes of the meeting 24 October 2006 HC(2)-12-06(p12)

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2006.

Members endorsed the minutes of the meeting.

ii) Minutes of the meeting 16 November 2006 HC(2)-12-06(p13)

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2006.

Members endorsed the minutes of the meeting.

ICT Sub Group Meeting

i) ICT Sub-Group

Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 2006 HC(2)-12-06(p14)

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2006.

Members endorsed the minutes of the meeting.

ii) Senedd Interim Service HC(2)-12-06(p15)

The Committee considered ICT Sub Group paper on the current monthly costs of the interim arrangement for the maintenance of the Senedd ICT kit by Merlin.

Members agreed to pay the outstanding sums and to make provision in the budget for the on-going commitment.

APS Budget Report HC(2)-12-06(p16)

3.3

Members noted the report.

Access to Information HC(2)-12-06(p17)

Members noted the report.

3.4

Overseas and External Relations Activities HC(2)-12-06(p18)

3.5

Members noted the report.

3.6

Matters referred including Assembly Questions

3.7

Members noted that WAQ48585 tabled for answer on 16 November 2006 was previously circulated.

3.8

4

4.1

**5**

## **Any Other Business**

5.1

Catering Sub Group Meeting 30 November 2006

The Chair welcomed David Melding AM, Chair of the Catering Sub Group, to the meeting.

Members considered a circulated copy of the minutes of the Catering Sub Group meeting of 30 November 2006.

The Committee considered proposals for a general refit of the catering facilities. Members agreed that they should not approve the proposals as presented. Nerys Evans was asked to prepare a more detailed business case with further options and report to the Committee in January.

Action : Nerys Evans

The Committee also considered arrangements for group visits using the restaurant. Members agreed that a maximum of six visitors per Member should be permitted to use either the staff restaurant or the Members' Tea Room at lunchtime.

#### Parking Facilities in Cardiff Bay

The Committee considered a circulated paper on car parking facilities in Cardiff Bay.

Members noted that the Queensgate car park may close or provide reduced spaces sooner than anticipated and permanent alternatives were not yet in place.

Dianne Bevan said that since drafting the paper she had been advised that part of Queensgate would probably remain open although the situation was not yet certain. She asked the Committee to allow her to address the issue within the possible solutions outlined for temporary provision, and for consideration to be given to allowing more flexible use of reserved spaces at the on-site car park, particularly during Recess.

The Committee agreed that Dianne Bevan should resolve any temporary requirements and report back on action taken.

Action : Dianne Bevan

5.2

#### Opening Arrangements for the Senedd

5.3

Gwen Parry asked the Committee to consider closing the Senedd on Wednesday, 27 December as this was a privilege holiday for staff. The Senedd was already closed on Christmas day and Boxing day.

Members agreed to close the Senedd to visitors on the 27<sup>th</sup> December 2006.

Date of next scheduled meeting: 18<sup>th</sup> January 2007

House Committee Secretariat