



**Comisiwn y Cynulliad
Assembly Commission**

**MINUTES OF 8 MAY 2008, 9.00-11.00,
CONFERENCE ROOM 4B**

Present:

Presiding Officer
Lorraine Barrett AM (Labour)
Peter Black AM (Liberal Democrats)
Chris Franks AM (Plaid Cymru)
William Graham AM (Conservatives)

Officials present:

Claire Clancy (Chief Executive and Clerk)
Dianne Bevan (Chief Operating Officer)
Keith Bush (Director of Legal Services)
Adrian Crompton (Director of Assembly Business)
Aled Eirug (Constitutional Consultant)
Craig Stephenson (Head of Corporate Unit)
Cerys Gage (Secretariat)

Independent advisers:

None

Observers:

Kathryn Jenkins (Clerk, Enterprise and Learning Committee)



Minutes of last meeting:

It was noted that the minutes of the last meeting were agreed out of committee.

Matters arising:

There were no matters arising.

Declarations of Interest

There were no individual declarations of interest. Where the Commission was considering matters affecting Assembly Members, the outcomes clearly apply to Commissioners as Assembly Members.

Item 1 – Matters affecting Assembly Members

Paper 1A - Employment of Family Members

William Graham introduced the paper which recommended the introduction of a Register of Employed Family Members and a capped bonus level for AM support staff. The Commission welcomed the paper and agreed that maintaining a record of all family members demonstrated best practice and was a good example of the Assembly operating with openness and transparency.

The Commission endorsed the paper and agreed that consultation with the Committee on Standards of Conduct would be appropriate in the first instance. Population of the Register of Employed Family members, which was unlikely to be onerous, should commence as soon as the consultation had taken place and after Standing Orders were amended. Adrian Crompton said that this would be arranged. This would enable Commissioners to consult with their political groups in the meantime.

Action: Draft motion and amendment to Standing Orders to be prepared, and consultation with the Committee on Standards of Conduct. Commissioners to discuss with their groups.

Paper 1B - Independent review panel into future support for AMs

William Graham introduced the second report of the Independent Panel on Financial Support for members and recommended that an independent panel should be established which would review the whole range of pay and support to Assembly Member, would not limited by particular questions or the existing



system here or elsewhere in the UK and would conclude its work and report to the Commission by the end of 2008/09.

The Commission emphasised their support for the review and were pleased that individuals such as the Auditor General for Wales, the Standards Commissioner and our Corporate Governance Adviser had agreed to assist the panel, as this would help maintain good standards of governance. The Commission agreed that the Review Panel should be completely independent and comprised of members with different expertise. The Commission noted that the Chief Executive was taking personal responsibility for overseeing the review and would appoint full time support to manage the process.

Action: Chief Executive to arrange publication of advertisements as soon as possible.

Paper 1C - Use of Assembly Resources by AMs

William Graham presented the paper on the Use of Assembly Resources by AMs. Commissioners discussed the draft guidance on use of copying and postal resources and agreed that it provided greater clarity, following suggestions from the Standards Commissioner. The proposed new guidance on the content of Members' websites supported by office costs allowances had been produced in response to requests from Members and was based on that in place at the House of Commons. It was noted that both sets of guidance would be an interim measure until the Independent Review Panel (Paper 1B) was in a position to report on the use of resources and it had been developed to ensure appropriate use of public funds, a consistent approach, value for money and to ensure that our services could cope with demand. Monitoring the use of resources would need to be done consistently in the meantime and it was agreed, by majority that revised guidance, clearly explaining the boundaries should be circulated. Chris Franks disagreed with the proposals.

Action: Revised guidance to be circulated.

Item 2 – Corporate Governance Issues

Paper 2A - Budget planning 2009/10

William Graham introduced the paper which asked the Commission to endorse the budget strategy and consider the emerging proposals, which aligned with the strategic goals. The Commission's priority of obtaining value for money was noted. Resource issues would be considered at the next joint meeting of the Assembly Commission and Business Committee on 10 June where Assembly business needs, the Government's legislative programme and patterns of work would inform whether additional resources might be



required. The Assembly Commission discussed the proposals for improved delivery and emphasised that the tenth Anniversary of the National Assembly for Wales would provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the Assembly. It was confirmed that the focus of any events and communications would be to improve public knowledge and participation. The Commission agreed the recommendations.

Paper 2B - Risk and Benefit Management update

Claire Clancy presented the paper to update the Commission on the Risk and Benefit Management framework which had been developed. She explained that the approach and the registers had been considered at the Corporate Governance Committee, which included internal and external audit, and all parties were satisfied with the progress that had been made. The Commission commended the clarity of the risk registers and the expertise and advice given at the Corporate Governance Committee and agreed the proposed monitoring and reporting arrangements detailed in the paper.

Paper 2C - Annual Report 2007/8

Craig Stephenson introduced the paper which sought the Commission's agreement to the approach for our first Annual Report which would cover the period 2007/08. It was noted that it was an important and significant year for the Assembly. In line with our sustainability agenda, a hard copy of the full report would not be published. A near-final version of the on-line report would be available for the Commission meeting on 8 July although this would not include our statement of accounts 2007-8 as these would need to be finalised through the Corporate Governance Committee and Wales Audit Office. The Assembly Commission welcomed the proposed sustainable approach and agreed that some of the proposed areas would provide an opportunity to provide a forward look covering issues such as preparations for Siambr Hywel and the Pierhead project. Commissioners stressed the importance of our relationships and engagement with international institutions and the need to ensure that they were included.

Action: Craig Stephenson to ensure report includes the points made by Commissioners.

Paper 2D - Wales Legislation On-line

Keith Bush presented a paper which proposed increased financial support for Wales Legislation On-line. He explained that concerns had been raised regarding the future of the site in the absence of the certainty of resources and staffing which were required if the future of the site was to be safeguarded and planning for future development to be possible. The importance of the site was noted as it provided a systematic database and



explanation of the powers of the Assembly and of the Welsh Ministers and provided a means of enabling the public to understand the enhanced legislative powers of the Assembly. Increased funding to £50,000 per annum and establishing a longer term commitment of 5 years should ensure the future of the site, thereby supporting the Assembly Commission's objective of promoting and widening engagement in devolution. Funding would be conditional on the achievement of the specific improvements listed in the paper, something which would only be possible through also securing funding from WAG and other institutions. The Commission agreed the recommendations and welcomed the proposal that approaches should be made to other institutions to share the cost of developing the full potential of the service.

Action: Keith Bush to continue discussions with WAG and Cardiff University.

Item 3 – Assembly Commission policies

Paper 3A - Equalities

Lorraine Barrett AM introduced the paper which asked the Commission to note the results of the staff survey, the proposals for consulting on the Single Equalities Scheme and to note the proposed response to an externally commissioned report which reviewed recruitment practices and their potential impact on BME representation in our workforce. It was noted that a 74% response rate had been received for the staff equalities survey and the Commission noted the main results.

Adele Baumgardt Consulting had stated in her report that good, if not excellent practices were in place to positively impact on the perception of BME groups of the Assembly Commission as a place of work and their ability to access the application and appointment processes. She had, however, made five recommendations on: data collection and acting on the findings; training; outreach; advertising; and equality impact assessing our policies. The Commission agreed a positive response to each of these recommendations and noted that arrangements to review the recruitment process were under way and that a programme for further equality and diversity training was being developed, which would include mandatory training in some areas. Commissioners agreed that training should also be available to AMs and endorsed the arrangement for consultation on the single equalities scheme.

Action: Arrange review of recruitment procedures.
Equalities Team to develop a programme of equality and diversity training for staff and AMs.



Paper 3B - NAFW Welsh Language Scheme Compliance Report

Craig Stephenson presented the first annual Welsh Language Scheme compliance report. It was explained that eleven service areas had co-ordinated the scheme's action plan and had completed compliance returns for their areas. The results of these returns had been provided in a composite form for the Commission's consideration and demonstrated a good level of compliance across the organisation. The Presiding Officer welcomed the report and explained that the presentation to the North Wales bilingual forum on working in a bilingual institution and our Welsh Language Scheme had been well received, and emphasised that the Assembly should continue its good practice in this area.

Item 4 – Management Board Report to the Assembly Commission

Claire Clancy introduced the report, and explained that the Executive Board had been changed to a new Management Board which included all service heads, directors and the Chief Executive. The report demonstrated the pace with which initiatives were being taken forward and the breadth of work across the strategic goals. The Commission welcomed the report and noted that the NAFW was working closely with WAG to consider the potential for a living wage in Wales. Lorraine Barrett reported that her recent visit to Kew Palace had been useful and that ideas and possibilities for the Pierhead development had been received. Peter Black said that he had received positive feedback on Senedd TV. Dianne Bevan drew Commissioners' attention to the forthcoming move of the Pierhead shop to the Senedd and the pilot to widen the use of basement car parking spaces which would take place during May Recess.

Item 5 – Matters to note

The Commission noted the exchanges of correspondence that had taken place since the last meeting – papers 5A and B.

Feedback from the Remuneration Committee had been circulated to Commissioners and they had agreed the recommendation made by Email.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on the 10 June, and this would be a joint meeting between the Assembly Commission and Business Committee.

Secretariat
Date

