



Comisiwn y Cynulliad Assembly Commission

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Commissioner Portfolios

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Purpose and summary of issues

1. To review the current Commissioner Portfolios and decide whether any changes are needed.

Recommendations (including priority deadlines)

2. That the Commission consider their portfolios in the light of the first year of operation, retaining their cross-cutting nature but determine specific allocations to spread workload more evenly.

Discussion

3. On 20 June 2007, the Commission adopted the following portfolio allocations:-



- **Presiding Officer** - Special responsibility for promoting democratic engagement, excellent leadership, developing the Assembly's future legislative powers and external relations.
 - Initially Elin Jones AM and then Chris Franks AM,
 - **Commissioner for the Improving Assembly** - Improvement of services to Members and citizens; strategic planning; value for money; involving stakeholders.
 - William Graham AM, **Commissioner for Assembly Resources** - Management of Assembly assets; Assembly people (including employees, contractors, services provided to support AMSS); budget; Members' salaries and allowances; efficiency and good governance.
 - Peter Black AM, **Commissioner for the Assembly and the Citizen** - Quality of scrutiny and the legislative process; external communication; ICT; citizenship education; lawfulness.
 - Lorraine Barrett AM, **Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly** - Equality; language; environment and carbon neutrality; sustainable procurement and estate management.
4. During the year, Commissioners have built working relationships with those who deliver services in their portfolio areas. Apart from regular briefings, a useful pattern of ideas sharing and progression, consultation and soundings has developed. This has included helpful and constructive challenge of quality and delivery, and provided a line through which wider Member views can be communicated, although we are working on making this rather more systematic in some key areas. Commissioners take turns to answer Assembly questions, and answers are cleared with the responsible Commissioner.
5. It might be helpful to describe some examples of the way individual Portfolio Commissioners have developed their work. This is by no means an exhaustive list.
- Lorraine takes a strong personal interest in the operation of the Senedd and gives support and advice to staff on some difficult handling issues. She has shown personal support for sustainability initiatives and has participated in staff events in this area, and has given evidence to the Equalities Committee as well as providing advice and comments on equality issues.
 - William involves himself closely in the year-long task of financial management and governance, and will assist in sensitive issues around Members' financial support. He is a member of the Corporate Governance Committee.
 - Peter drives delivery on ICT initiatives and has helped to set the scope of the i-change programme and the Communications



Strategy. He led the launch of the Assembly's e-democracy initiatives and was consulted about extra resources to support scrutiny and legislation

- Chris joined the Commission later, but has assisted in the development of the Member survey to improve services and regularly raises points for improvement. His help in developing our new risk and improvement framework and key performance indicators will be sought.
6. The portfolio areas are cross-cutting and strategic in approach, but it has usually been possible to identify how services and issues link to particular portfolios. The nature of the portfolios allows Commissioners to work across a range of services, rather than being confined to particular areas. We find that the cross-cutting nature helps to reduce the rigidity of service boundaries and would be sorry to lose this important line of sight. However, it is probably the case that day to day workloads are not evenly spread.
7. A year after adoption of these portfolio areas, consideration of whether they are working well and have balance in terms of responsibility would be appropriate:-
- It is apparent that the breadth of some portfolios is greater than that of others. In particular, the role of the Commissioner for Assembly Resources carries broad responsibility, which is focussed at particular times of the year during the height of the budget cycle. The Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly role often calls for day to day involvement and can be very demanding in terms of time and detailed knowledge.
 - There are some ongoing issues and areas of future work where a lead Commissioner would be helpful (for example on freedom of information and connected issues, a single reference point for legal services, a Commissioner to link with the new review on support for Members, the enhancement of the bilingual Assembly).
 - Communication runs through every portfolio to some degree, and work in enhancing our communication should be spread throughout. We can continue to involve Commissioners as spokespersons and ambassadors when opportunities arise and build this into planning.
 - Consultation with Members has come under some criticism recently and this might be a good time to check that the new things we are doing in this area are appropriate.
 - The work of the review panel on support for Members has long-term and strategic significance and will be of direct interest to all



Assembly Members and the people of Wales. One option would be to add responsibility for linking with the review panel to the Presiding Officer's portfolio.

8. Commissioners are asked to review the content of portfolios and to consider whether changes are necessary.

Governance Matters

Financial implications

9. None arising from this paper.

Risk Assessment

10. Lack of clarity in portfolio areas might result in a failure to consult properly. Too much weight in any portfolio area may mean that an individual Commissioner is placed under significant pressure. These risks are reduced by regular contact and briefings, to identify where gaps may exist, and by a review of the portfolios on a regular basis to ensure that there is a more even spread of responsibility.

Compliance

11. The 2006 Act makes the Commission responsible for securing services to deliver support for the Assembly's functions.