



**Comisiwn y Cynulliad
Assembly Commission**

**MINUTES OF 8 JULY MEETING, 5.30-7.00,
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)
Craig Stephenson (Head of Corporate Unit)
Cerys Gage (Secretariat)
Steve O'Donoghue (Head of Financial Services) Item 2 - Strategic Priorities
and Budget 2009/10
Non Gwilym (Head of External Communications) Item 3 - Improving Public
Understanding through Assembly Branding

Independent advisers:

Mair Barnes
Robert Pickard

Apologies:

Aled Eirug (Constitutional Consultant)

Observers:

None



Minutes of last meeting:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May had been 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

Independent Panel to review Assembly Members support

Claire Clancy provided an oral update on the panel to review future support for Assembly Members. She explained that out of the nine candidates that had recently been interviewed three were recommended to be part of the independent panel:

- Deep Sagar who has held a variety of chairing roles and was Chair of the NHS 24 Board;
- Nigel Rudd, Chief Executive of East Midlands Local Authority and
- Dafydd Wigley, former AM and MP.

It was noted that two further candidates would be invited for interview within the next fortnight but this would not delay the establishment of the panel as additional time had been built into the appointment process. The Chair had not been appointed as yet.

Members' pay, allowances and addresses

Dianne Bevan provided an oral update on Members' pay, in response to the House of Commons debate on the 3 July when MPs had decided on a 2.25% pay increase. She advised the Commission that as AM salaries were automatically linked to MPs' pay at 82% pro rata, the National Assembly would apply the 2.25% increase to Members' pay with effect 1 April 2008 and this would be reflected in their August pay. A note would be sent to all Members advising them of this.



Keith Bush provided an oral update on the disclosure of Members' second home addresses following the recent High Court ruling and the House of Commons debate on 3 July. He informed the Commission that the UK Government was drafting an Order to prevent disclosure and he had written to the Ministry of Justice to ensure that Assembly Members were treated equally and included in the Statutory Instrument. Updates would be provided to keep Assembly Members informed.

Item 2 – Corporate Governance Issues

Paper 1A - Strategic Priorities and Budget 2009/10

William Graham introduced the paper which asked Commissioners to agree the proposed priorities and determine the extent to which the budget should be increased.

A number of the priorities were considered including the I-Change project which was still being scoped. It was agreed that it was important that this project received an appropriate budget to ensure that the benefit of ICT changes for Assembly Members could be realised. The Commission noted that it was important to record efficiency gains and savings that the project might bring and that it would also need to ensure that any new system did not constrain Assembly Members in their work.

Commissioners suggested that i-Change should not be included as part of the main budget proposals until it had been fully scoped and costed. Once this work had been completed, it was agreed that a supplementary budget proposal could be made if necessary, taking into account any savings that could be made to help fund the programme.

Prior to the draft budget being laid on 24 September, more work would be undertaken to ensure the paper identified current and proposed performance management measures, efficiencies and savings. A further paper would be circulated to Commissioners in advance. It was also agreed that the Finance Committee should be involved at an early stage.

It was noted that future funding of the Operation Black Vote (OBV) scheme would be dependent on the evaluation of the scheme which ran between October 2007 and April 2008. Discussions were taking place between the Assembly's Equalities team, Welsh Assembly Government, Welsh Local Government Association and OBV with a view to developing a new scheme to run at national and local level. It was likely that a pilot authority widening the programme to cover other equality strands would be considered. Once proposals had been worked up a paper would be presented at an autumn meeting of the Commission.



Action: The Equalities Team to prepare a paper on a future OBV programme. The draft budget paper to be circulated to the Commissioners for further comment prior to 24 September and a separate meeting would be arranged if required.

Annual Report 2007/08

Craig Stephenson presented the near-final draft of the Assembly Commission's first annual report and explained that the report reflected the importance of achievements during the first year following establishment of the Assembly Commission. He clarified that the report would be fully bi-lingual and available on-line rather than in paper format. An audio version would also be available. Craig explained that the annual report was framed around our strategic goals and the significance of our achievements in our first year. It consisted of six sections with live links to other parts of our internet site in order to provide readers with more detailed information where required.

In conjunction with the annual report a leaflet would be published summarising its key points, and this would be available for the public at all external events, at Assembly reception desks and available to Members should they require them at their surgeries or in constituency offices.

Work on the report was still in progress and it would be launched once the statement of accounts had been laid by the Auditor General Wales which was planned for 16 July. The Commission welcomed the online approach and commended the report.

Action: Craig Stephenson to ensure completion of report before summer recess.

Paper 1B - Commissioner Portfolios

The Commissioners reviewed their current portfolios in light of the first year of operation. Commissioners were content with the work associated with their portfolio responsibilities and Peter Black expressed an interest in legal matters and agreed to lead on this in addition to Freedom of Information issues. The Presiding Officer agreed to lead on responsibilities for the independent review panel on support for Assembly Members. The Commissioners agreed that their portfolios worked well and emphasised the benefits of having regular briefings with officials to share ideas and communicate opinions.

Item 3 – Communication Issues



Paper 2A - Improving Public Understanding through Better Communication

Non Gwilym introduced a proposal to develop a 'Brand Manifesto' to improve internal and external communication. The importance of reviewing the language, terminology and communication channels used was stressed in order to improve the Assembly brand. It was explained that a series of stakeholder workshops would be held to develop brand values, key messages and a design brief.

The Commission endorsed the proposal and noted the importance of obtaining commitment from Members and staff to ensure successful implementation, in addition to testing the marketplace early in the process.

Item 4 – Estates

Paper 3A - Asset Management Strategy

The Commission considered the paper on the purpose and content of the asset management strategy which would initially focus on the Commission's land, buildings and their contents and managing them in a sustainable way.

The Commission welcomed the paper and agreed that the sustainable use of energy should be encouraged throughout our estate, and that remote working and home working should be supported by increasing our use of technology. It was also agreed that the promotion of health and well being should be considered during the design stage of office construction.

The Commission questioned the current tenure of the Pierhead and it was agreed that further clarification on this matter would be sought.

The Commission agreed that Dianne Bevan should consider how the use of Siambr Hywel as a conference facility might be extended when it was not being used for educational purposes.

Action: Dianne Bevan to clarify the Pierhead's tenure and to consider the wider use of Siambr Hywel.

Item 5 – Management Board Report to the Assembly Commission

Claire Clancy introduced the report, and explained that further work would be done during summer recess on how we communicate with Assembly Members about the work of the Assembly Commission. Consideration would be given to producing concise Commission papers that would include a headline summary which could be shared with Assembly Members.



The Commission discussed the relocation of the shop from the Pierhead to its new location in the Senedd. It was agreed that this would be reviewed in due course but that it would proceed as planned, with clear signage to help mitigate any problems.

The Commission considered Eisteddfod yr Urdd's intention to hold the event in Cardiff Bay in 2009 and its effect on visitor access to our buildings. It was agreed that we should maintain the principle of free access to anyone wishing to visit the Senedd and there should be no physical or financial barriers preventing access.

Action: Claire Clancy to circulate a note to Assembly Members explaining the role of the Assembly Commission.

Non Gwilym and Lorraine Barrett to liaise with the Urdd on the Assembly Commission's position.

Item 6 – Matters to note

The Commission noted the paper on Pension Scheme Trustees (paper 5A) and the paper on release of information (paper 5C) which had been circulated out of Committee.

Secretariat

Date