



Comisiwn y Cynulliad Assembly Commission

MINUTES OF 4 DECEMBER MEETING 1.30-3.00PM, CONFERENCE ROOM 4B

Present:

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

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)
Aled Eirug (Constitutional Consultant)
Karl Straw, External Adviser (item 5)
Brian Davidge, Head of ICT (item 5)

Independent advisers: Mair Barnes, Tim Knighton

Observers: none present

1. Introduction:

Welcome

The Presiding Officer welcomed Mair Barnes and Tim Knighton, the Assembly's Independent Advisers.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes of meeting – 16 October 2008

The minutes were formally agreed.

2. Assembly Member Mentoring Scheme Proposals

Paper 2 on a new proposal for an all-Wales Assembly Member and Councillor mentoring scheme, covering all the equality strands, to promote greater democratic and civic engagement by under-represented groups was



discussed. The Equality Team had been working in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government to develop proposals for a jointly funded scheme and the proposal for a locally based co-ordinator, reporting to the Assembly's Equality Manager would provide greater control and support for mentors and participants. It was noted that Assembly Members had praised the ambitions set out in the shadowing scheme provided by Operation Black Vote but had asked for greater direction and guidance in their role as mentors in any new scheme. The Commission agreed the proposal and it was anticipated that the project would be developed so that mentoring could commence in September 2009.

Action: Craig Stephenson to ensure that future guidance was robust; consider overall objectives of scheme, political affiliation and enabling the development of trusting relationship between Members and participants.

3. Development of Legal Services

Keith Bush introduced paper 3 which provided the Commission with an update on how the Assembly's legal service had developed. Two new lawyers had been employed to commence work before the Christmas recess and this would ease the burden on the existing team and help meet demand for forthcoming legislation. Commissioners noted that other legislatures were already seeking advice from the Assembly's legal service and he hoped to establish it as a centre of excellence in the future with secondments to and from the service to facilitate the skills development of the team and to provide placements from Welsh universities. The Assembly Commission agreed the recommendations and approved the on-going steps being taken to implement the strategy.

4. Salaries for Chairs of Permanent Legislation Committees

The Commission considered paper 4 which noted that the Business Committee had agreed to establish up to five permanent legislation committees each with non-voting chairs to reflect the volume of legislative business passing through the Assembly. Given the specialised nature of the work required for the new Legislation Committee Chairs, the volume of work and its high profile, the Commission agreed that a salary commensurate with the Chairs of the four main scrutiny committees, Audit Committee and Finance Committee should be paid once the Chairs were appointed.

Action: Head of Members' Business Support to implement.

5. I-Change

Peter Black introduced paper 5 following agreement by the Assembly Commission to seek an independent review of all the technology used to



conduct its business and of the services provided to Assembly Members, staff and the public. The review's purpose is to provide the Assembly Commission with proposals for taking forward its technology to both enhance and widen engagement and to improve the way in which Members can be supported in their roles. The review had been undertaken by Karl Straw who had consulted with 36 Assembly Members, over 30 of their support staff, more than 160 APS staff, an external reference group, Merlin (Cap Gemini / Siemens) and the Welsh Assembly Government. Over 900 comments, suggestions and requests had been received about the current and future service. These had been considered and the results were presented to the Assembly Commission by Karl Straw. The main themes emerging were:-

- The need for a business improvement programme to deliver changes
- Connecting and engaging with the people of Wales
- Better managed information
- Smarter working

To support these main themes, the presentation also covered the ways of providing ICT services through existing contractual arrangements and how provision could be developed in the future. In particular, the infrastructure would need to address the needs of the Assembly, and the possibility of a single unified network for Assembly Members and Assembly staff would be need to be fully explored. Proposed projects emerging from the business change programme could be agreed and prioritised by showing how they would improve services to the public.

The Assembly Commission agreed: the recommendations in the paper and noted the proposed early improvements to ICT facilities for Members and staff; to establish a business improvement programme; on the priorities for project themes; and to review the approach to the current contract. The importance of maintaining the pace generated by this project was noted. The Commission agreed that the next phase of the project should identify what the various parts of this work would cost, when they could be delivered and how the costs could be met.

Action: Dianne Bevan to arrange for the agreed action to be taken forward including assessing the resource implications.

6. Management Board Report to the Assembly Commission

Claire Clancy introduced the report noting the work on-going across the organisation. It was noted that the Leadership Development Programme, with some 70 participants had commenced and was looking at emotional intelligence, improving standards and corporate behaviour across the organisation as well as skill enhancement for leading, coaching and



developing staff. In terms of financial management, Claire also advised that efficiencies would continue to be sought and that an exercise was underway to identify whether any projects, currently planned for the next financial year, could be brought forward into this financial year. Commissioners noted that the Independent Review Panel on Financial Support for Assembly Members would be taking evidence in North Wales on 5 December and that Sir Roger Jones would be discussing their work on Dragon's Eye.

Dianne Bevan drew attention to progress on the Pierhead project and estimates of cost in the current and next financial year. Existing contractors would undertake building works to ensure that the Pierhead was ready for its new role and restored properly. Some specialist supply and installation work would be the subject of European procurement which would commence early in 2009. While the costs would be spread over the two financial years, it was noted that there was no money specifically allocated in the budget for the Pierhead in 2009/10, but the team was examining a number of ways to release the necessary funding from other areas of the budget. Commissioners were advised that a supplementary budget might be required given the tighter overall budget for 2009/10. Commissioners noted the benefits that the new facilities would bring and asked that the project should be carefully managed. They expressed a strong preference for avoiding a separate supplementary budget in 2009/10 if possible. A further progress report would be made in the spring.

7. Matters to note

Commissioners noted the correspondence in papers 7A – 7E and in particular the letter from All Wales Convention to the Chief Executive and Clerk inviting the Commission to give evidence. It was agreed that Keith Bush and Adrian Crompton would take this opportunity to discuss the work and development of the organisation since implementation of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

Secretariat