



Comisiwn y Cynulliad Assembly Commission

MINUTES OF 23 MARCH 2009 MEETING 13:30-14:30, CONFERENCE ROOM 4B

Present:

Presiding Officer, Chair
Lorraine Barrett AM (Labour) (items 1, 2, 3 & 4)
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
Helen Finlayson, Secretariat
Non Gwilym, Head of External Communications (items 2 & 3)
Natalie Drury, Outreach and International Relations Manager (item 2)
Sulafa Halstead, Head of Assembly Committees (item 4)
Kathryn Potter, Head of Members' Research Service (item 4)
Mair Parry-Jones, Head of Parliamentary Translation and Reporting Service (item 4)

Independent advisers: Mair Barnes

Observers: None

Others: None

Apologies: Aled Eirug, Constitutional Consultant

1. Introduction

Welcome

The Presiding Officer welcomed Mair Barnes to the meeting.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.



Minutes of meeting – 2 February 2009

The minutes were formally agreed.

Matter arising from the meeting on 2 February 2009

There were no matters arising.

2. Marking Ten Years of Devolution in Wales

Non Gwilym introduced paper two outlining the programme of activities to mark ten years of devolution in Wales, noting the consideration given to the current economic climate, collaboration with partners and measuring the success of activities to ensure that learning feeds into future work. The Commission discussed the need to ensure that all events taking place through the year linked into the themes of the anniversary and the need to strike the correct tone and the heralding of achievements.

The Commission agreed the principles and proposals outlined in the paper.

3. Framework for Annual Report 2008/09

Non Gwilym introduced paper three outlining the approach to be taken for the Annual Report 2008/09. It was noted that the report would be similar in format to the 2007/08 report, but that there would be increased monitoring and reporting of the uptake and use of the report. A cross-service project team has been set up which would engage with Commissioners to ensure their input. The Commission discussed the importance of ensuring strong and focused linkages with the ten year anniversary activities and agreed to the proposals for the 2008/09 Annual Report and Statement of Accounts.

4. Development of APS Services to support legislative and scrutiny functions

Adrian Crompton introduced paper four and the Heads of Service from the Assembly Business Directorate. Each Head of Service outlined the services they delivered, the increased demand since May 2007 and upcoming challenges within current resource allocations.

The Commission expressed its appreciation and gratitude for the level of service and support for Members, and recognised the achievements that had been made. The Commission also recognised the pressures faced by the Assembly Business Directorate, and the need for decisions to be made regarding resource allocation, service standards, prioritisation and delivery. It was agreed that these issues should be discussed further in the priorities for the Commission's draft budget which would be considered in June.



Action: Adrian Crompton to develop proposals on options for discussion as part of the draft budget strategy, prior to the final budget proposals.

5. Members and Officers Salaries and Allowances Determination 2009

Dianne Bevan introduced paper five, noting that this was a routine technical review reflecting index-linked changes, and that a more comprehensive review would be undertaken once the Independent Review Panel had reported later in the year. The Commission discussed and agreed the 2009 Determination as recommended.

6. Management Board Report to the Commission

The Commission considered the Management Board Report (paper six) and discussed the following issues:

Review of guidance: Dianne Bevan noted that there had been few responses to date from Assembly Members to the consultations on draft guidance on websites, the use of Assembly resources and the draft Standing Order on disclosure of employment of family members. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, the revised guidance was likely to be issued before the end of Easter Recess. The draft Standing Order would be tabled for debate at Plenary early in the summer term.

Action: Dianne Bevan to provide clarification regarding the publication of the salaries of employed family members.

Publication of Salaries and Allowances: Dianne Bevan sought the Commission's views regarding the timescales for publication of Members' allowances. The report recommended a rolling monthly programme of publication of allowances three months in arrears. The Commission agreed this approach, but noted that the tight timescales for checking figures for publication should be made clear to Members.

Action: Dianne Bevan to ensure that guidance was issued to Members regarding the timescales for checking figures for publication.

All Wales Convention: Adrian Crompton and Keith Bush had provided written and oral evidence to the All Wales Convention in February. A follow up letter had been received seeking further information regarding the Assembly's work to promote awareness of devolution, the roles of regional and constituency Members and the capacity to undertake scrutiny of legislation and the actions of the Welsh Government. The Commission discussed the issues raised in the correspondence.

Action: Claire Clancy to respond to letter from All Wales Convention.



Planning for the 2011 Election and the Fourth Assembly: The Commission discussed how the implications of dissolution would be communicated to Members, particularly with regard to the use of Assembly facilities and resources. Dianne Bevan noted that a paper on planning for the Fourth Assembly will be brought to the next Commission meeting.

7. Matters to note

Papers 7A-7C: The Commission noted the correspondence in papers 7A-7C.

Paper 7D: The Commission noted the draft protocol. No comments were made.

Secretariat

March 2009