

Concise Minutes - Remuneration Board

Meeting Venue: Hybrid – Digital/Conference
Room A

Meeting date: Thursday 12 October 2023

Meeting time: 9.00 – 14.40

IRB(06-23)

Attendance

Category	Names
Board members:	Dr Elizabeth Haywood (Chair) Sir David Hanson Michael Redhouse Dame Jane Roberts Hugh Widdis
Secretariat:	Daniel Hurford, Clerk Huw Gapper, Second Clerk Martha Da Gama Howells, Second Clerk Natasha Davies, Senior Researcher Beth Hales, Deputy Clerk Ruth Hatton, Deputy Clerk Megan Jones, Support to the Board
Officials Present:	Anna Daniel, Senior Adviser to the Board, Head of Strategic Transformation Service Matthew Richards, Head of the Legal Service Kate Rabaiotti, Legal Adviser to the Board Craig Griffiths, Head of Member Support and Engagement Martin Jennings, Research Team Leader, Financial Scrutiny Unit Lisa Bowkett, Acting Head of Finance Donna Davies, Head of Pensions
Other Invitees:	Memet Pekacar, Members Pension Scheme Actuary, Government Actuary's Department

1 Chair's Introduction (9.00 - 9.10)

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Hugh Widdis and Mike Redhouse joined virtually.
- The Chair reflected on meetings held with the Chiefs of Staff and Senedd Members on 11 October and the positive feedback from those who attended.
- Anna Daniel (Senior Advisor to the Board) provided an update on the Senedd Reform Bill.
- Daniel Hurford (Clerk to the Board) provided an update on the inaugural meeting of the Cross-UK Network which was held in September. The Cross-UK Network is made up of a group of officials from The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), The Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (NIAC), The Senedd Commission and The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB).
- The minutes of the meeting on 6 July were agreed.

Action:

- Publish the minutes of 6 July meeting.

2 GAD's re-evaluation of contributions to the Members' Pension Scheme (9.10 - 9.30)

- The Board welcomed Memet Pekacar (the Members Pension Scheme Actuary from GAD) to discuss the recent valuation of the Members' Pension Scheme and the options for consideration by the Board on contributions to the Scheme.
- The Chair agreed to write to the Finance Committee on the likely impact of an additional 36 new Senedd Members on the Pension Scheme, having discussed this with the Scheme's Actuary.

Action:

- The Board were content with GAD's proposal that the Commission's contribution rate to the Scheme should be reduced from 19.9% to 18% and agreed that GAD could inform the Commission and Trustees of the Board's view when they are consulted as part of GAD's next steps.
- The Board agreed to write to the Finance Committee on the likely impact of an additional 36 new Members on the Members' Pension Scheme, following the matter being raised with the Chair at the Reform Bill Committee evidence session on 11 October.

3 Strategic Work Programme Thematic Review Updates (9.30 - 10.00)

- The Board members presented updates of the thematic reviews being undertaken as part of the Board's Strategic Work Programme.
- Sir David Hanson (the Board lead for Ways of Working) noted that the first phase of this thematic review is drawing to a close. Part of the work for this first phase was to review the allowances provided to Members and support staff in relation to home and hybrid working, and an update on this will be issued shortly.

Action:

- The Board to issue a note to Members and Support Staff to raise awareness of the provisions in place to support home and hybrid working.

4 Simplification Thematic Review Update (10.00 - 10.30)

- The Board considered a paper on the Simplification thematic review work to date and the decisions the Board need to take regarding this.

- The Board discussed the extent of explanatory text which is appropriate for inclusion in the Determination.
- The Board agreed that work would continue with a view to drafting options for a more streamlined Determination for the Seventh Senedd. The Board requested that further exploratory dialogue continue with the Commission on this matter.

5 Economic Update (10.45 - 12.00)

- The Board received an update from Martin Jennings (the Research Team's Head of Financial Scrutiny) on the current economic climate and forecasts including public sector pay awards in Wales. The Board considered the potential implications for the Determination.
- The Board agreed to consider the ongoing high inflation and interest rates as part of its consideration of financial support for Support Staff, including salary adjustments for 2024-25.

Action:

- The Board to consider options for supporting Support Staff through the continued cost of living crisis, at its November meeting.

6 Initial Consideration of Annual Review of the Determination for 2024/25 (12.00 - 13.15)

- The Board reviewed the proposed scope for the annual review consultation.
- The Board discussed several key questions relating to the issues for inclusion in the consultation and agreed that further information should be provided before it can make a decision in the November meeting.

- The Board also noted that any decisions would need to be set in the context of the wider budgetary constraints facing the Commission and Welsh Consolidated Fund.

Action:

- The Board agreed with the scope and approach of the annual review consultation.
- The Board agreed the timetable for consultation on the Annual Review, with consultation between 15 December-26 January, with a discussion on the responses at the Board meeting on 22 February, with any changes to the Determination being agreed on 14 March 2024.
- The Board's Secretariat will arrange a meeting with Chiefs of Staff and Union Representatives following the Board's meeting on 30 November, to provide a clear steer on the changes to the Determination to be proposed as part of the consultation.

7 Remuneration of Chairs - Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee & Reform Bill Committee (14.00 - 14.25)

- The Board considered the decision it is required to make on the additional salary to be paid to the Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee Co-chairs and to the Reform Bill Committee Chair.
- The Board noted information about the Committees' work programme and co-chairs' responsibilities and noted that these were co-chair roles rather than 'job share' roles. The Board also noted that the Covid Committee work will be complex, unprecedented and of significant public interest.
- The Board noted that the payment of Committee Chair salaries would apply from the date of their election as Chair.
- The Board noted that one of the Covid Committee co-chairs, and the Reform Bill Committee Chair, are already in receipt of an additional salary.

- The Board noted the exceptional circumstances which led to the Senedd Commission appointing co-chairs for the Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee. The Board also deliberated on the resulting cost of this decision to the public purse against the backdrop of a high proportion of Members holding additional offices within the Senedd.

Action:

- The Board agreed the higher salary level for each Co-Chair of the Wales Covid-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee and for the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee.
- The Board agreed that payment of the additional office holder salaries, where applicable, will take effect from the date at which the Chairs were elected.
- The Board to write to the Llywydd to advise of its decision.

8 Update Paper (14.25 - 14.40)

- The Board noted updates on various matters relevant to its work and also its forward work programme.
- The Board noted an update on the McCloud Remedy for the Members Pension Scheme and the recruitment of a new Chair of the Pension Board.
- The Board received an update from the Members' Business Support Team and will receive an update in due course regarding the return of equipment and assets.
- The Board received an update from Sir David Hanson on the constituency office visits that he undertook in September, visiting both Members and support staff.
- The Chair welcomed Natasha Davies (Senior Researcher) to the team and noted the new team structure for the Board's Secretariat.
- The Board noted correspondence received from the Chief Executive and Clerk relating to budget planning for 2024-25.

- The Board discussed the October 2023 budget report update with Lisa Bowkett (Acting Head of Finance) and Craig Griffiths (Head of Member Support and Engagement).

9 Paper to Note: Annual Update from Senedd Security Team

- The Board noted the annual update paper from the Senedd Security Team.

Any Other Business

- The Chair informed the Board of upcoming meetings in October with the Llywydd and the Chair of IPSA.
- The Chair noted that the next Board meeting will be held on 30 November, with Representative Group meetings and a drop-in session to be held on 29 November.