



Venue: **Hybrid - Digital**

Date: **Monday, 6 November 2023**

Time: **10.30 - 13.10**

Minutes: SC(6)2023(10)

Commission
Members:

Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS (Chair)
Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Adam Price MS
Ken Skates MS
Joyce Watson MS

Officials present:

Manon Antoniazzi, Chief Executive and Clerk
Siwan Davies, Deputy Chief Executive and Clerk and Director of Senedd Business
Arwyn Jones, Director of Communications and Engagement
Ed Williams, Director of Senedd Resources
Matthew Richards, Head of the Legal Service
Kate Innes, Chief Finance Officer
Leanne Baker, Acting Chief People Officer
Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation
Tanwen Summers
Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission and Member Support
Gwion Evans, Head of the Llywydd's Private Office
Elin Roberts, Clerk to Executive Board

Others in
attendance:

1 Introduction

1.a Introduction and apologies

There were no apologies.

1.b Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.c Minutes of the previous meeting

Commissioners agreed the Minutes of the meeting on 25 September.

2 Senedd Commission 2024-25 Budget

Commissioners were updated on the scrutiny of the 2024-25 Senedd Commission draft Budget by the Finance Committee on 5 October. Commissioners agreed their response to the recommendations raised in the Finance Committee Report, and approved the Final Budget for 2024-25.

The Budget narrative had been amended on the Commission pension costs on page 9 as requested by the Finance Committee and Commissioners noted the recommendation to address the additional Commission Pension cost through Supplementary budget request. The Final Budget document for 2024-25 would be laid on 8 November 2023 with the Budget Motion to be debated in plenary on 15 November 2023.

3 Medium Term Resourcing Framework

The Commission approved the Medium-Term Resourcing Framework (MTRF) for the period 2024-25 to 2026-27, with adjustments made since their consideration of a draft on 25 September.

Commissioners welcomed the inclusion of the workforce plan and noted that a piece of work was planned to be undertaken by the Commission's Independent Advisers to examine the Commission's staffing structure, including benchmarking with other parliaments, and that Ken Skates would be the lead Commissioner for the work.

4 Strategic approach to budgets and savings

The Commission considered the approach Officials will take to finding the savings required to bridge the funding gap in the draft 2024-25 Budget, and information provided to begin considerations of longer-term sustainable savings from 2025-26 onwards.

Commissioners agreed that officials would bring proposals for meeting the 2024-25 budget gap to the January Commission meeting; noting that these proposals would primarily focus on variable cost management and the Project Fund.

They also agreed to progress proposals for longer-term sustainable savings as part of the 2025-26 budget development process next year, following the completion of the autumn / winter planning round.

5 Senedd Reform

5.a Commission provided services and the work of the Remuneration Board

The Commission had agreed, in principle, earlier in the year to a request from the Independent Remuneration Board (“the IRB”) for a structured dialogue to establish a shared understanding of how Members’ needs will be supported in future through Commission services and the Board’s Determination, looking to the Seventh Senedd and beyond.

Commissioners considered their next steps to progress this dialogue and enable strategic considerations of how Members would be supported in the Seventh Senedd.

Commissioners discussed the complex interdependence of decisions taken by both the IRB and Commission and the desire from Members for clarity about the provisions made for them and for an understanding of reasons for decisions. They considered that there may be opportunities to make changes which would make it clearer where responsibilities lie ahead of, or in readiness for, the Seventh Senedd. However, Commissioners reflected that value for money and independence of decisions are essential, as is having Member led review processes, though it would not be desirable to return to a system of Members deciding their own pay.

Commissioners discussed that some aspects of Senedd Reform and future need driven change would be led by other parts of the Parliament, e.g. Business Committee, and that the proposals being considered were the start of a conversation which would be informed through Member engagement.

Commissioners agreed the approach outlined: the main areas of discussion - the balance of Resources and the intersection between Commission services and Determination resources; simplification of Members’ access to Determination resources; and opportunities to improve Governance and relations between the IRB and Commission. They agreed to discuss further at their meeting in January, potentially to also undertake some less formal exploration of the issues, and for preparatory discussions to be held with each Commissioner in the short term.

5.b Committee Sessions Update

Commissioners were provided with a brief oral update on initial Committee sessions relating to the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill, and were informed that the Bill relating to gender quotas was expected in December.

6 Catering Contract

Commissioners considered options for the future provision of catering services, noting the Executive Board’s reasons for being unable to recommend bringing the catering service in house, following their detailed review and analysis of that option.

Commissioners discussed contracted services more widely than the current catering contract requirements. They all agreed a preference in principle for direct provision of services, and that a piece of work should be undertaken with the ambition of ‘insourcing’ all externally contracted services over the longer term, taking account of Senedd Reform, changes to the estate and justifiable use of public resources.

Commissioners discussed the need for engagement with Members and unions about this approach.

They agreed that the current contract with ESS be extended for one year to allow for future service requirements for the Seventh Senedd to become clearer.

It was also agreed that, in the short term, a note be provided for Commissioners to inform them of the enhanced package provided to the catering contract staff on the Senedd estate

and confirmation that the technical consultant engaged to assist with the catering contract options had reviewed the internal staffing costs set out in the paper.

7 Use of the Estate Policy Review

Following consideration of the issues raised in the Use of the Estate Review consultation in September, Commissioners discussed a number of proposals which would be used to update the policy for the use of the Senedd estate. They agreed to extend the booking window for events from six to 11 months, and that allocations should be curated by the Events Team (rather than being first come first served), with criteria to be presented to a future Commission meeting. They also agreed that upcoming events on the estate be published three months in advance where possible.

Commissioners agreed that capacity and flexibility should be built into the system to protect key dates (details of which would be agreed by the Commission at a future meeting) and to accommodate topical/relevant last minute requests for event space.

In response to information about Member appetite for events and changing usage patterns post-covid, Commissioners agreed to move towards utilising one premium event slot a month (Tuesday or Wednesday lunchtime) to pilot 'marketplaces' in the Senedd from Easter for the remainder of 2024, replacing the routine use of Dining Rooms for 'drop-ins'. They also agreed to receive an evaluation of this approach early in 2025 to agree a permanent position. However, they recognised that for some organisations a less public location is more appropriate, and so access to private Dining Room space should not cease entirely.

Commissioners also noted the continuation of the current policy of 10 event slots a week and work to review the categories and process for events including the approach being undertaken to improve the approval process for Welsh Government activity on the estate; work being undertaken to strengthen links between events and Senedd Business; and the suggested approach to longer lead in times for Commission led engagement events.

Changes agreed would form part of an updated, and published, policy for activity on the estate.

8 Members Pension Scheme

Commissioners considered a letter from the Members Pension Scheme Actuary which set out the results of the most recent routine valuation and their recommendation as to the level of contributions that the Commission should pay into the Scheme over the next three years.

Commissioners agreed their response to the Actuary's letter.

9 GB News

Commissioners were updated about the recent suspension of GB News from the Senedd's internal television system. The action had been taken by Officials at the request of the Llywydd after a recent broadcast by the channel that was deliberately offensive and demeaning to public debate and following the issue being raised during Commission Questions in plenary.

Commissioners had been apprised of correspondence and discussed the position taken. The conclusion was that the GB News suspension would continue whilst the Commission seeks

independent input to development of a protocol that will provide a framework for clarity and consistency on broadcasting content across the Senedd estate in the future.

10 Papers to note:

10.a Transmissible illnesses / Winter resilience measures on the Senedd Estate

Commissioners noted the commitment to risk control measures to support general wellbeing, hygiene and reduction of transmissible diseases; that the Commission will operate under the general risk control measures identified rather than Covid-19 specific measures; and that during Autumn term, a watching brief will be kept on Covid community rates and staff absence related to Covid to assess if it becomes necessary to reintroduce the Low, Medium or High measures from the Covid-19 framework.

10.b Executive Board update (RAD decisions)

Commissioners noted the routine summary of recruitment decisions provided to each Commission meeting, including a summary of vacancies where the recruitment process had been paused.

10.c Letters to Finance Committee

Commissioners noted the letters to Finance Committee on the Cost of Living payment, and with further information following the scrutiny session, as circulated out of meeting (on 3 October 2023 and 10 October 2023 respectively).

11 Any other business

Correspondence - Commissioners noted that two items of correspondence had been received, and agreed to receive information which would be circulated out of meeting:

Letter from Standards Committee The Standards Committee had written related to dignity and respect asking for information on communicating with third party building users and process for raising complaints.

Report of the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee which directed one recommendation to the Commission.

Dignity and respect – A Commissioner raised a matter further to the Commission’s deliberations in the summer about ensuring proper protections are in place for those on the estate, to enable people to have a secure and accessible workplace. The Commission agreed to ask the Standards Committee for clarity about the work it is taking forward, following consideration of the Commission’s review and thus identify any remaining areas which require additional action by the Commission.