



Venue: **Conference Room 4B - Tŷ Hywel**

Date: **Monday, 23 September 2024**

Time: **10.35 - 12.30**

Minutes: SC(6)2024(6)

Commission  
Members:

**Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS (Chair)**  
**Hefin David MS**  
**Janet Finch-Saunders MS**  
**Adam Price MS**  
**Joyce Watson MS**

Officials present:

**Manon Antoniazzi, Chief Executive and Clerk**  
**Arwyn Jones, Director of Communications and Engagement**  
**Ed Williams, Director of Senedd Resources**  
**Siân Wilkins, Head of Procedures and Parliamentary Skills**  
**Matthew Richards, Head of the Legal Service**  
**Leanne Baker, Acting Chief People Officer**  
**Simon Hart, Interim Head of Financial Services**  
**James Attridge, Senior Security Manager**  
**Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission and Member Support**  
**Gwion Evans, Head of the Llywydd's Private Office**

Others in  
attendance:

**David Rees MS, Deputy Presiding Officer**

## 1 Introduction

### 1.a Introduction and apologies

No apologies were received.

Simon Hart was welcomed to the meeting, having resumed the post of Interim Chief Finance Officer.

#### 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 15 July, and agreed to discuss the outstanding decision from the last meeting under AOB.

## **2 Commission Draft Budget 2025-26**

Commissioners considered the most recent work on the draft Budget 2025-26, with changes since their previous meeting.

The discussions reflected that the draft would be the first year of the significant and permanent upward movement in Commission budget due to Senedd Reform as the organisation increases staffing to prepare and complete structural adaptation to the estate to accommodate the enlarged Senedd and support in readiness for 2026-27. They reflected on the historic nature of the change.

Although ringfenced at present, Senedd Reform costs would move into 'business as usual', as anticipated by the RIA for future years when it was published in 2023.

Commissioners approved the 2025-26 Draft Budget to be laid and the letter to Finance Committee. They also noted the Finance Committee's statement of principles, which were addressed within the letter to the Committee, and the letter sent from the Minister for Finance and Local Government to the Chair of the Finance Committee.

In agreeing the Draft Budget, Commissioners noted that following two years of budget reductions and savings as a result of cost of living payments, and noting the feedback from Members received as a result of temporary pauses on international travel, training support and the concern for the well being of staff, no further savings were identified without permanent reductions in services provided to Members, due to the level of programme and change delivery for 2025-26.

The MTRF principles mean the Commission has in place processes which ensure that the organisation would consider savings and efficiencies on an ongoing basis as it makes operational decisions.

Commissioners approved the increase in the operational budget of 20.96% between 2024-25 and 2025-26 (11.08% excluding Senedd Reform, Ways of Working and non-cash budgets), and the increase in the overall budget of 16.77% between 2024-25 and 2025-26. Taking into account the known RIA additional costs expected in 2025-26, this increase in budget is 11.56% overall (10.80% RIA adjusted for pay awards and inflation).

Commissioners also discussed the process of engagement with Members which had been undertaken, and wished to expand on that in future years as the Commission budgets to

provide the property, staff and services required for the Senedd's purposes. It was noted that enhanced engagement with Members could be undertaken as part of the annual process, as directed by the Commission, once the MTRF has been updated each Spring

### **3 Pay Negotiations Update**

The Commissioners noted an update on the latest position in the ongoing pay deal negotiations, and the context in relation to the Commission's budget, following a letter sent to TUS on 9 September and a response received on 18 September. They anticipated the pay award being taken forward.

### **4 Senedd Reform updates**

Commissioners received an update on two aspects of work relating to Senedd Reform.

#### 1) Outcome of Business Committee/Senedd Commission away day

The Deputy Llywydd was welcomed to the meeting and provided a progress update on proposals for progressing elements of the Seventh Senedd preparatory work. He outlined an intention to request a formal committee be established to take forward the work. He would be taking proposals to the Business Committee in the next few weeks.

#### 2) Commission / IRB dialogue

Commissioners received two items of correspondence relating to the direct support provided to assist Members in undertaking their parliamentary work, following on from the Commission/IRB dialogue meeting in July. Commissioners discussed the importance of Members engaging with the Board, and noted the updates provided.

### **5 Managing long-term sickness absence**

Commissioners had requested information and assurance on the Commission's approach to managing sickness absence, specifically long term sickness and sickness caused by poor mental health.

They received information setting out the policies, processes and frameworks in place to effectively manage sickness absence. Commissioners asked to be provided with benchmarking information against public sector and Commission historic data, so far as reasonably available.

### **6 Independent Advisors**

Commissioners considered information about the contractual position of the Commission's current Independent Advisors. They agreed to offer an extension to the existing contract of Aled Eurig until 26 November 2026. This would provide consistency of the chairs of the two advisory committees over the period of transition to the Seventh Senedd.

They agreed to consider the requirements of a recruitment exercise for the next cohort of Independent Advisors, and the proposed approach to that exercise, which includes continuing to stagger appointments, in Spring '25.

## **7 Letter to Finance Committee**

Commissioners agreed a letter to provide further information to Finance Committee in relation to the Committee's recommendations set out in their Scrutiny of the Commission Draft Budget 2024-25 Report, in particular updating in relation to Staff Wellbeing surveys. The letter will be published as part of the Finance Committee's meeting papers.

## **8 Letter to PAPAC**

Commissioners noted a response which would be provided by the Chief Executive to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee to provide further updates on the recommendations from the Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2022-23. This related to

- progress in implementing projects as part of the Carbon Neutral Strategy;
- the work of the groups looking into the role of Artificial Intelligence within the Senedd; and
- work undertaken to encouraging applications from individuals from a variety of socio-economic and geographic backgrounds.

The letter also provided updates on projects actioned through the Project Fund and contracts awarded to Welsh suppliers.

## **9 Papers to note:**

9.a ARAC Minutes - June and July 2024

Commissioners noted the minutes of the ARAC meetings on 10 June and 8 July 2024

9.b Executive Board update (RAD decisions)

Commissioners noted the summary of recent recruitment decisions.

## **10 Any other business**

Security Glazing - The Commission had an outstanding decision to take from the last meeting. This related to the glazing around the public gallery which provides a barrier between the gallery and the Siambr. Further information was presented. Notably, the Security Service highlighted a significant risk for the Commission in terms of increased liability and future insurability were the glazing to be removed. Commissioners agreed the recommendation to retain the glazing, and for this to be reflected in the final designs for the adapted Siambr that would be considered later in the year.

Pierhead – Commissioners were advised that external support had been engaged, at relatively minimal cost, as part of the normal Estate Strategy activity, to assist with an options exercise for the long-term use of the Pierhead building. This exercise would incorporate Member needs within its core criteria and would be undertaken within the Ways of Working programme.

Cardiff Central to Cardiff Bay tramway consultation – Commissioners were informed as to the live consultation on the tramway by Cardiff Council and Transport for Wales. They noted Officials would respond with reference to Commission sustainability annual plan.

In the period since the last meeting Commissioners had agreed a letter from Hefin David MS to Finance Committee dated 19 July 2024, regarding how the Commission will engage with Members on future service delivery.

They also noted a letter from the Chief Executive to the IRB dated 2 September 2024, relating to Commission support for Members, and a letter from the Llywydd dated 18 July 2024 following a meeting of Commissioners with Business Committee, about work being taken forward by the Deputy Llywydd.