

The Assembly Commission

Meeting Venue: Presiding Officer's office, 4th floor - Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: Monday, 7 July 2014

Meeting time: 14.00 - 15.30

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2014(10)

Committee Members:

Dame Rosemary Butler AM (Chair)
Peter Black AM
Sandy Mewies AM
Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM

Officials present:

Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly (Official)
Craig Stephenson, Chief Adviser to the Presiding Officer (Official)
Nicola Callow, Head of Finance (Official)
Mike Snook, National Assembly for Wales (Official)
Nerys Evans (Official)
Carys Evans, Principal Commission Secretary (Official)

Others in attendance:

Eric Gregory

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and apologies

Angela Burns AM and David Melding AM had sent their apologies.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 26 June meeting were agreed.

2 Draft Budget 2015-16

In line with previous discussions, the Commissioners maintained their position that the budget for 2015-16 would be managed in accordance with changes to the Welsh block, with the exception of those items falling outside of the Commission's control. Work would be concluded over the summer to plan for the impact of the expected increased cost of the PCSPS pension and final advice would be given to the Commission with the final draft budget in September. Commissioners' noted that there was no further update available from the Cabinet Office.

3 Making the most of the Assembly Estate

A number of enhancements and improvements had been made over the last 12 months that had improved the environment for those visiting and working on the Assembly Estate. These included changes to the Tŷ Hywel security arrangements and the reception area resulting in a significantly improved visitor experience and the creation of new meeting rooms for Members to meet visitors to the building, improved signage near the Senedd and the upgrading of some facilities. Following feedback from Members, work had been carried out on the heating system to ensure a more comfortable working environment in the Senedd, Siambr, Committee Rooms and offices. Work would be carried out over the summer recess to refurbish the remaining toilets in Tŷ Hywel.

Commissioners agreed that the Estates and Facilities Management team should consider further areas for improvement as part of ongoing maintenance. The priorities for the remainder of this Assembly should be those areas that were used by the significant number of visitors to the Assembly Estate, such as the Pierhead and the conference rooms in Tŷ Hywel. The team should also consider any feedback arising from the findings in the annual Member and support staff survey, which would be available during the summer recess.

The team would engage with Party Groups to identify any necessary changes (such as furnishing of AMs and Group Offices) to ensure accommodation continued to meet their needs. Any major work would be carried out during the dissolution period between the Fourth and Fifth Assemblies, to minimise disruption to Members and their staff.

It was also suggested exploring the feasibility of a glass partition being erected in the Siambr Hywel milling area to provide an additional flexible space for events etc.

4 Highlight Report

The highlight report summarised work that had been carried out to achieve the Commission's Strategic Goals from April to July 2014.

The launch of the Assembly's work on youth engagement was to be held on 16 July, to showcase the excellent youth engagement work already undertaken by the

Assembly and present the Commission's vision for improving youth engagement services. A number of activities were being arranged including a Question Time event with a panel of Assembly Members, the signing of a Young Person's Charter by Party Leaders and Plenary statement from the Presiding Officer.

Commissioners also discussed the:

- FOI requests;
- final transition out of the contract with Atos at the end of July;
- publication and debate of the Official Languages Scheme Annual Report;
- the planned strike on 10 July; and
- ending of the protest by an individual on hunger strike on the Assembly Estate.

A recent trial had been carried out by the Public Accounts Committee to tweet during its proceedings. Commissioners discussed the value of this type of activity from a public engagement point of view. It was agreed that, until the impact and added value of this activity had been evaluated, all live tweeting during committee proceedings should be halted. Commissioners asked for a social media policy to be prepared for their consideration.

5 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee update from 7 July meeting

The Assembly Commission Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had met that day. Claire Clancy provided an update on the matters discussed at the meeting. The Wales Audit Office had reported on the Assembly Commission's annual accounts and the Auditor General for Wales would be signing these off with an unqualified opinion. The WAO had identified the HR and payroll project as an area for further attention, and the committee was satisfied that there was sufficient scrutiny of the project.

The audit and review of Members' allowances, which included the recruitment of support staff, had shown no issues of concern.

The Committee had concluded that the accounts could be signed by the Chief Executive.

6 ACARAC Annual report

The Assembly Commission Audit and Risk Assurance Committee must present an Annual Report of its activities to the Commission each year. The Chair of the committee since the start of the year, Eric Gregory, presented the annual report and highlighted the following:

- the committee had put in place some new arrangements to strengthen its work, including enhancing corporate risk management arrangements and reviewing its own effectiveness within the year;
- the committee had found that the Commission's overall risk and governance arrangements were very strong and that there was effective alignment of strategic goals and objectives with activities and projects;

- the ICT Futures work had been an exemplar change programme, managed with clear objectives and strong oversight, governance and planning within the organisation, including by the Commission;
- work on value for money had put the Commission in a positive position; and
- the Commission's internal audit function was working extremely well with the new Head of Internal Audit making significant progress.

Areas of focus for the committee during the forthcoming year would include:

- embedding the lessons learned from the HR and Payroll project;
- the review of the performance management system for Commission staff;
- the regular review of the corporate risk register;
- business continuity plans; and
- reviewing of the overall assurance framework and making sure the new arrangements for ICT are delivering the benefits anticipated.

Commissioners thanked Eric for his work with the committee during the year and his contribution to the meeting. It was agreed that the Commission should find more opportunities to discuss the committee's work in future.

7 Paper to note - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee - Minutes of 9 June

The minutes of the Audit and Risk Assurance committee meeting of 9 June were noted.

8 Any other business

The next meeting would be held in September. Commissioners would be discussing the draft Budget for 2015-16 before this was laid before the Assembly for consideration.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas and Peter Black would be appearing before the Assembly's Finance Committee on 16 July to give evidence on the Commission's performance on ICT and bilingual services.

The Assembly Commission Official Languages Scheme Compliance Report 2013-14 would be debated in Plenary on 16 July.

Secretariat
July 2014