

The Assembly Commission

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

Meeting date: Monday, 3 November 2014

Meeting time: 14.30 - 16.00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2014(13)

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, Interim Director Commission Services (Official)
Nicola Callow, Director of Finance (item 2) (Official)
Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business (Official)
Gareth Price, Clerk to the Remuneration Board (Official)
Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission Secretariat (Official)

Others in attendance:

Sandy Blair CBE DL, Chair, Remuneration Board
Stuart Castledine, Remuneration Board Member
Professor Laura McAllister, Remuneration Board Member

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 29 September meeting were agreed.

2 Finance Committee report and budget sign off

Commissioners considered the Finance Committee report on the Commission's draft budget and agreed responses to the recommendations that the Committee had made.

The Commission addressed the recommendations to publish a breakdown on the estimated pre-election funds and to publish Corporate Performance Indicators by adding information to the budget document.

Commissioners accepted the point made by the Finance Committee about considering options for utilising the travel subsidy for train travel as well as coach travel, in relation to Schools and Youth engagement. They asked officials to continue to ensure that the subsidy is available across all geographical areas of Wales. They added a commitment to a full review before the end of the year. This review will cover all youth engagement, not just through schools.

Commissioners welcomed the Committee's recommendation to pursue opportunities to purchase the freehold of Tŷ Hywel and have added a point to the budget document.

The Commission agreed to update the Committee on planning for the Fifth Assembly particularly the planning for dealing with new financial powers and asked the CEO to write to the Finance Committee once plans are further advanced.

Commissioners approved the final Budget for 2015–16 and agreed for it to be laid on 12 November 2014, with a view to a debate taking place in Plenary on 19 November 2014. This would ensure that the timetable to include the Commission's budget figures in the Welsh Government's Annual Budget motion, planned for December, can be met.

3 Discussion with Remuneration Board members

The Commission met formally for the first time with members of the Remuneration Board following an exchange of letters about the work of the Board. Sandy Blair, Chair

of the Board, Laura McAllister and Stuart Castledine joined Commissioners to discuss the Commission's thinking on the strategic issues around the challenge, magnitude and complexity of responsibilities that fall to Assembly Members. The Commission's priority is the long term needs of the Assembly as an effective democratic institution, and making sure that Assembly Members can discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Commissioners felt it was important to highlight these issues to the Board because the work they are doing will play an important part in the capacity of Assembly Members to meet these challenges in the future.

The Board said that they are looking to supporting the capacity of Members, particularly whilst they are under additional pressure due to the small size of the Assembly. Commissioners stressed the importance of both flexibility and clarity in the allowances that may be available, and recognised the challenge of striking the right balance. They also placed emphasis on changes being effectively communicated to Members.

Commissioners and the Board members discussed an engagement fund and the considerations that would need to be undertaken if a 'pilot' were to be established and run.

Members of the two bodies discussed the relationship between responsibility allowances and training/professional development for office holders, using committee chairing as an example. They hoped that together they could create an environment where on-going CPD is regarded as normal and relevant to everyone. Linked to the proposal around the expansion of the Commission's apprenticeship scheme, Commissioners also raised the possibility of some funding for intern roles with Assembly Members.

Commissioners and members of the Board agreed that the discussion had been useful, and agreed to meet again.

4 Any other business

The next meeting will be held on 17 November.

Agenda items will include updates on machine translation, the Record of Proceedings and the review of committee support. The Commission will also be considering constitutional implications of Silk 1 and 2.

Secretariat

November 2014