

Concise Minutes – Management Board

Meeting Venue:

Conference Room 4B – Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: Monday, 6 February 2017

Meeting time: 13. – 15.30

MB 03–17

Attendance

Category	Names
Management Board Members:	Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation Non Gwilym, Head of Communications Nia Morgan, Director of Finance Mair Parry-Jones, Head of Translation and Reporting Service Mark Neilson, Head of ICT and Broadcasting Kathryn Potter, Head of Research Service Matthew Richards, Head of Legal Services Craig Stephenson, Director of Commission Services Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission and Member Support Dave Tosh, Director of Resources Christopher Warner, Head of Policy and Legislation Committee Service Gareth Watts, Acting Head of Governance and Audit Siân Wilkins, Head of Chamber and Committee Service Lowri Williams, Head of Human Resources



Management Board Staff:	Liz Jardine (Secretariat)
Others in attendance:	

1 Introductions, apologies and declarations of interest

Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business, sent his apologies. There were no declarations of interest.

2 Examine the effectiveness of the Assurance Framework components, through discussion identifying overall strengths and weaknesses

Claire Clancy welcomed Hugh Widdis to the meeting, and thanked him for attending to provide independent challenge and scrutiny on the assurance statements. As part of his role as a member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Hugh's involvement added further assurance to the Commission on the governance statement process and, in particular the quality of Directors' assurance statements.

The meeting would form a key formal element of the process for gathering the assurances that Claire, as Accounting Officer, needed for the production of the Governance Statement for 2016–17.

The purpose was to ensure that the draft Directorate Assurance Statements identified: aspects for each Directorate that had strengthened; any concerns for this financial year; and development areas for the next financial year.

Copies of the statements from the Directors, which drew upon the individual assurance statements from each Service area, had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The key outcomes for the meeting were to agree:

- action to finalise the Assurance Statements;
- items of corporate significance for inclusion in the Governance Statement; and
- improvements to be made by the end of the financial year and beyond.

A detailed note of the discussion is at Annex A.

3 Discussion of draft Directorate Assurance Statements, with each Director to lead by summarising:

Annex A

Note of discussion on Governance Statement 2016–17

Introduction

Attendance at the meeting is captured in the formal minutes.

Discussion of draft Directorate Assurance Statements

The Board scrutinised the Assurance Statements prepared by the Directors, having considered the statements from their respective Service Heads.

The Directors outlined the key points from their statements.

Resources Directorate

Dave Tosh highlighted the good progress made against the strategic goals, issues that had been identified in the previous year, together with the challenges ahead. There had been progress made generally in the Directorate, but notable successes included :

- the accounts, which had received external recognition;
- the Corporate Performance and Annual reports showing sustained good performance across the board;
- external awards received, such as the Assembly's success in the Stonewall awards;
- employer related awards such as family friendly award and liP Gold, together with the staff survey that evidenced the organisation listening and acting on what staff say.

The compliance and assurance work of Audit, HR and Finance had spread across the organisation, as a result of the teams getting out to Service areas through HR partnering and information governance support, for example, with the outcome being improved PMDR completion rates, better financial management etc. A major review of risk policy had resulted in better support of risk management.

Dave outlined the issues from the previous year and the progress made:

- efficiency and effectiveness report – which had been well received at PAC and Finance Committee and set the direction for the organisation to be more focussed on efficiency and effectiveness;
- new KPIs – service based indicators have been reviewed and improved, with the report being more useful and easier to read;
- managing VES – well managed and audited process, that delivered the aim to enable restructuring and refocus of resources, being achieved with some financial saving;

- developing new Resources Directorate – going forward it was necessary to ensure that resources were there to do the work within the Directorate, but also to support the rest of the organisation in their aims and priorities.

Particular areas of focus for the Directorate were:

- to ensure understanding of changing priorities across the organisation with sufficient flexibility to respond to it and be an enabler to support it;
- the project to replace the finance system, which was going well;
- the next stage of ICT strategy in moving to ‘the cloud’ and the identification and mitigation of risks, such as cyber security;
- the events review, which would result in significant changes, to make it more effective, efficient and responsive to the way it needs to work in future; and
- to ensure the new Chief Executive was assured of the organisation’s governance and could demonstrate it in how it operates and what it does.

The area that was most challenging was prioritisation, when so much was high priority and ensuring the capacity to respond to the rapidly changing demands and few periods of down time. It would be important to have the assurance that the consequences of decisions made on priorities had been thoroughly considered, not just within the Directorate but across all the interdependencies.

Hugh Widdis recognised that this was a very high performance organisation but challenged the Directorate to evidence whether there was staff engagement in the areas of governance. Good measures of engagement used on a frequent basis were the staff survey, regular formal and informal staff meetings and further communication through staff notes and publication of RADs, service plans and team meetings. As an example, the Security review had sought to develop the culture and engagement to improve the Service, through listening and involving staff in the re-design of outcomes, enabling junior members to step up and embedding an HR person in the team to work with them on culture and line management. Setting up a good culture enabled governance information and activity to be disseminated. Governance across the organisation was supported by ‘champions’ such as on MyView and risk, and innovative ways of raising awareness, such as a governance quiz at team meetings. The Wales Audit Office audit process had resulted in a discounted fee due to improved internal processes.

Commission Services

Craig Stephenson outlined the areas that had been strengthened over the period. Areas that the Directorate had either been leading on or working with others were:

- improved cooperation between service areas, evidenced by TRS staff on integrated teams supporting Committees, which has led to more focus on

what their needs are and to help develop bespoke services in future for individual Members; also improved planning and resource management around translation of papers;

- staff readiness to support other areas in organisation where there have been shortages to make sure priorities are met, using their knowledge and expertise;
- the Events review where a core team had been developed from all affected areas increasing ownership in all areas of project;
- bilingual working across organisation has improved again; and
- use of North Wales office staff in facilitating effective CPD for offsite staff, contributing to better Member and staff engagement, plus assisting in interviewing for Members' staff.

Areas for further development in the next financial year were:

- the development of an information dashboard in TRS and using it to inform decisions and revisiting KPIs as there was more volume of work and demand on service since the start of the Fifth Assembly;
- delivery of the RoP project with new software and training for staff and how it can be used to engage others;
- the Private office staff changes to support efficient working going forward, along with the potential changes with the new Chief Executive;
- the delivery of the outcome from the Events Review to improve customer experience; and
- the new Official Languages Scheme, once approved where themes identified up to 2021 will bring about challenges, especially in recruitment, and working with all service areas to get that effectively and sensitively embedded.

There was a need to keep a watch on capacity issues and the impact of changes on motivation and well being of staff, and put in place effective methods of communication in teams to share information about and support the changes. There was good understanding and consideration of the impacts of other teams on the Service areas, and regular discussions between Managers and Heads to highlight potential impacts and concerns that might affect capacity.

Hugh asked whether teams understood what was required of them in terms of knowledge of changes and the role they play in governance. It was confirmed that there was expertise and knowledge and the organisation was small enough to communicate what was required. The organisation was effective at working within processes, with templates and flow charts used where helpful to assist people in

knowing how to work. Staff know who to go to for advice or assistance, and feel able to get help and the organisation was very collaborative in the way it produces results, involving others as needed during the process.

Hugh also questioned the understanding between the Remuneration Board and the ambitions and strategic direction of the Commission was reassured of the relationship with the new Chair and strength of the Board.

Assembly Business Directorate

Standing in for Adrian Crompton, Chris Warner highlighted the significant contribution to the Commission strategic goals, particularly around the transition to the Fifth Assembly, the flow of work and challenges, setting in place the procedural side with Llywydd and reconfiguration of Assembly Business services to support extra committees. There had been growing appetite of committee chairs for committee public engagement as well as external challenges, such as the Wales Bill, and enabling committees to pursue their own agendas. Legal services had joined the Directorate enabling quicker response to issues and providing further integration of services to Members.

Budget management was being managed satisfactorily by individual staff within the Directorate; risk management arrangements were different in each area, but appropriate for the areas' needs, and each provided challenge to the other on a regular basis to ensure working effectively. There had been risks identified around transition of the Remuneration Board and Standards Commissioner which had been effectively managed and both were now in a strong position.

New elements of governance were in: the MySenedd Board, driving projects across the organisation; the Chairs' forum linking the Commission strategy with the work in committees; and the Digital news and information taskforce, providing external challenge.

Work had progressed on the priorities identified in the previous assurance statements:

- a large amount of work had been done on capacity planning by service areas, using the capacity planning process effectively to articulate the needs of the Directorate;
- bilingual services had improved and progress had been supported by the use of the language plans and close working with Commission Services Directorate to ensure delivery of services to Members.

The Commission goals and Brexit were weighty matters to contend with but in order to continue to deliver excellence it was recognised that the priorities needed to be very clear and there was a need to be firm about how resources are allocated. Governance arrangements were essential to enable robust and rapid responses to the changing political context and the volume of work involved. There were three weekly governance

meetings in Communications, for example, due to the nature of the work and regular discussions between Service Heads about risks and how to capture and manage them. The public engagement strategy provided a framework for assurance, enabling mapping of engagement and measuring of impact and an internal group was being established to develop that work further.

Challenges that would impact on the ability to respond swiftly to the changing priorities and that needed monitoring were the stress on staff expected to deliver excellence all the time and having the right staff in place, with the right skills. It was challenging to accomplish ground breaking work and mitigate all the risks at the same time, so the approach to risk may need to adapt.

Areas for future development

Claire Clancy invited the Management Board to consider areas that might be improved in the way the organisation is run and its governance.

The RAD process, which was very thorough and provided assurance, was time consuming, particularly where staff members needed assistance to complete the form. They had been made as streamlined as possible, but further consideration could be given to reducing the burden.

Internal communications could be better, for example around accommodation changes and MySenedd; and it was recognised that short, concise messages were helpful to keep people informed, and the informal meetings of small groups of staff with the Chief Executive had also been particularly successful.

Being able to respond quickly when there was a need to draw in external help was difficult. The future demands were going to be more challenging and it would be necessary to plan early for the right resources.

Hugh Widdis advised that it was important to fight hard for budget and resources when prioritisation and demand for resources became more acute.

Next Steps

Claire was content that nothing had been raised that indicated any gaps in good governance.

Action to finalise Assurance Statements

Each Director would finalise their statements, adding or redrafting as necessary, including sufficient examples and ensuring properly evidence based.

Claire Clancy, together with the Governance team would then review the statements to decide what should go into the Governance Statement, picking up on areas emphasised in the Directors' presentations.

The themes that had been highlighted of corporate significance to be included in the Governance Statement were:

- being proud of progress on integration within Directorates and across Services;
- sustaining the level and quality of work in the face of the big challenges ahead;
- effective and meaningful prioritisation;
- developing corporate planning to be sustained and sophisticated, using staff capability and expertise in different ways effectively;
- being flexible in period of uncertainty and change;
- achieving balance between striving for excellence and recognising stress factors, taking sensible decisions on how this is managed;
- delivering all the changes, including Brexit.

The draft Governance Statement would be finalised by Claire in advance of her end date. Kathryn Hughes would send confirmation to the Board of what needed to be done with deadlines.

Examine the effectiveness of the Assurance Framework components

The Assurance Framework was a structured means of mapping the assurance processes within the organisation and had been used by Heads of Service as an aide memoire in the preparation of their individual statements, to help identify any gaps, weaknesses or duplication in the assurances. Having it captured in this way also provided a means of measuring performance against the Framework.

The Board reviewed the Framework and the RAG status of assurance map components and suggested changes.

- Equality Impact Assessments should be added to the framework;
- the external challenge exercise under the third line of defence should be described in broader terms than “exercise”;
- there had been a big improvement in the PMDR process, with staff having quality conversations, but it should still be kept as amber due to completion times during the busy periods. The next round of PMDRs should see that move towards green;
- there was still further work to do on programme and project governance with a lack of visibility at corporate level but it had progressed a lot in the last 12 months. The status should be changed to green; and
- ‘Service plan reviews’ should be changed to ‘planning cycle’.

The Board were content that the status of those already marked green was appropriate.

Summing up

Thanks were given to Kathryn Hughes and Gareth Watts for their work in preparing for the meeting, to Hugh Widdis for his input to the process of challenge, and to Board members for their contribution to the evidence gathering process.

4 Next steps

Claire thanked everyone for the work that had gone into preparing the next Governance Statement.

The note of the meeting would be circulated to Management Board, and outcomes would feed into the Governance Statement. The note would also outline actions to be taken forward and where further input was needed.

5 Paper to note