

# Senedd Commission



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Venue: **Remote - External**

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Date: **Monday, 13 July 2020**

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Time: **14.00 - 16.20**

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Minutes: SC(5)2020(5)

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Commission  
Members:

**Elin Jones MS (Chair)**  
**Suzy Davies MS**  
**Rhun ap Iorwerth MS**  
**David J Rowlands MS**  
**Joyce Watson MS**

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Officials present:

**Manon Antoniazzi, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Senedd**  
**Siwan Davies, Director of Senedd Business**  
**Arwyn Jones, Director of Communications and Engagement**  
**Dave Tosh, Director of Resources**  
**Nia Morgan, Director of Finance**  
**Kevin Davies, Head of Public Engagement**  
**Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission and Member Support**  
**Gwion Evans, Head of the Llywydd's Private Office**  
**Elin Roberts, Policy Adviser to the Llywydd**

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Others in  
attendance:

**Robert (Bob) Evans, Independent Advisor**  
**Sarah Pinch, Independent Advisor**

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.a Introduction and apologies

The chair welcomed Bob Evans, Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, and Sarah Pinch, Chair of the Remuneration, Engagement and Workforce Advisory Committee, to the meeting.

No apologies were received.

#### 1.b Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 1.c Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting in 15 June were agreed.

## **2 ARAC Annual Report**

Bob Evans, Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee introduced the Committee's Annual Report recognising the strength of the Commission's risk, control, governance and assurance arrangements during the year and highlighting a number of strengths including the Commission's response to Covid-19 and delivery of the annual audit remotely. Commissioners congratulated Commission staff on the achievements, and hard work which led to them.

Bob discussed with Commissioners some of the areas the Committee plan to give focus to in the year ahead, including the management of cyber-security risks, and development of plans for improved external engagement and communications, including a higher profile and more responsive social media presence.

Commissioners noted the ARAC Annual Report.

## **3 REWAC Annual Report**

Sarah Pinch, Chair of the Remuneration, Engagement and Workforce Advisory Committee, presented the Committee's report to the Commission for the first time since the widened remit was agreed. Sarah discussed some similar themes to those raised by Bob Evans, reflecting with the Commission on the calibre of the organisation and its staff and the importance of effective communication and engagement with the people of Wales.

Commissioners noted the REWAC Annual Report.

## **4 Covid-19 update**

Commissioners were updated about the experiences of the previous week's first hybrid plenary, which had gone very smoothly and been a testament to hard work and commitment by everyone involved.

They went on to discuss some of the themes emerging from the Business Committee's consideration of future business needs and asked that work be done in preparation for the autumn term to explore options for delivery.

Commissioners were provided with an indication of necessary adjustments to Commission services to Members over the recess period and discussed the need for staff to use accrued leave and to have a period to plan for next steps.

Commissioners reviewed information detailing the impact that Covid-19 has had on this year's finances, which had also been requested by the Finance Committee.

Commissioners noted the update provided and requested a paper be prepared for their next meeting setting out options for increasing the number of Members able to participate in plenary without the need to be remote in the medium to longer term.

## **5 Senedd Commission 2021-22 Budget Strategy**

Commissioners considered a paper which provided further details on the impact of following the preferred scenario of reducing the planned increase in the operational budget to 1%, agreed at the 15 June meeting.

Commissioners noted the impact on the overall budget and the project fund as a result of following its preferred strategy for 2021-22, and indicated that detailed prioritisation should be a matter for the next Senedd Commission to be able to shape. They also noted the impact of International Financial Accounting Standard (IFRS) 16 – Leases on the presentation of the 2021-22 Commission Budget, and the letter to the Finance Committee updating the Committee on the Legislation Software Project.

## **6 Public engagement during Covid pandemic**

Commissioners considered a paper which outlined ways in which Commission services could be adjusted to deliver engagement services virtually, and proposed options for further engagement in the autumn.

They considered the ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the ability for Commission services to deliver projects and services aimed at engaging the public in the work of the Senedd.

Commissioners did not feel that there was sufficient evidence of a need to provide a virtual/hybrid alternative MS Sponsored Events, if restrictions on face to face engagement and access to the Senedd continue beyond 13 September. However, they agreed a prioritisation order for on-the-estate engagement services in the event that restrictions are lifted but social distancing is required as:

1. MS sponsored events and Commission events
2. Education visits
3. Booked tours
4. General visitors

Commissioners also agreed that the organisers of events currently booked in during the first six weeks of autumn term should be contacted to make alternative arrangements.

Commissioners discussed ways to engage the public on the impact which Covid-19 is having on Wales, and identifying the public's priorities for the future, in relation to the role of the Senedd.

Their preferred approach to delivering a programme of engagement in the autumn was to commission research through a citizens' panel, and they stressed that in particular they wanted engagement activity to focus on reaching those who haven't engaged with the Senedd in the past.

## **7 Papers to note:**

### **7.a Executive Board update (RAD decisions)**

Commissioners noted the routine summary of recruitment decisions provided to each Commission meeting.

#### 7.b ARAC draft minutes

Commissioners noted the draft minutes of the June ARAC meeting.

#### 7.c Accounting Officer Rules on the use of Senedd Commission Resources

Commissioners noted the re-drafted Accounting Officer Rules on the use of Senedd Commission Resources, which are issued under the authority of the Code of Conduct for Senedd Members, paragraph 10, by the Accounting Officer of the Senedd Commission under section 138 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

### **8 Any other business**

- Members Pension Scheme Trustees

Under the rules of the Members of the Senedd Pension Scheme and the Terms of Reference for the Pension Board, the Accounting officer, in consultation with the Commissioners, is responsible for identifying who should stand as the Commission representatives on the Pension Board. Nia Morgan's four year term as Trustee is due to end on 4 August 2020. The Terms of Reference for the Board allow for existing Trustees to continue for a further four years to help retain experience on the Board. Commissioners were supportive of the Accounting Officer's proposal that Nia continue as a Trustee for a further four years.

In the period since the last meeting Commissioners had taken one urgent decision relating to extending the period of cancellation of face-to-face public engagement activities.