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Venue: **Remote - Digital**

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Date: **Monday, 8 February 2021**

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Time: **13.30 - 15.50**

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## Minutes:

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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**  
**Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation**  
**Nerys Evans, Head of Estates and Facilities Management**  
**Matthew Richards, Head of the Legal Service**  
**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:

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.a Introduction and apologies

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 meetings on 7 December and 21 January were agreed.

Matters arising – 7/12/20:

Supplementary budget adjustment. On 13 January Commissioners had agreed a proposal that the financial provision for accrued annual leave contained in the second supplementary budget, and agreed at the December meeting, be reduced to £650,000.

## **2 Election transition - Welsh General Election (Coronavirus) Bill - Impact on Senedd Commission**

- Commissioners were provided with an assessment of the impact of the Welsh Government's Welsh General Election (Coronavirus) Bill ("the Bill") on the Senedd Commission. These related particularly to the Bill's provisions to shorten the dissolution period, to extend the power to vary the date of the election and to extend the period within which the Senedd must hold its first meeting after the poll.
  - Commissioners considered key decisions as preparation for the Bill's potential enactment. These related predominantly to an election period which would be comprised 7 April – 28 April ('pre-dissolution') and 29 April – 5 May (the shortened dissolution period). During this period, strict spending restrictions will apply to all candidates under electoral law.
- 2.** Commissioners noted that there should be a level playing field for all candidates during the election period, as far as possible, to ensure a fair election and equality of opportunity for all; and that as the Bill would create an unusual circumstance, additional Rules and guidance would need to be issued relating to the election period.
- 3.** Commissioners agreed the principle that, during the pre-dissolution period, Members should only be provided with those resources necessary to carry out Senedd business related to the purpose of shortening dissolution as expressed in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill; that is:
- to be able to fix a date for the poll for the election if there is a need to postpone the election for a reason relating to coronavirus; and
  - to enable the current Senedd to respond, if required to do so, to the unfolding public health issues leading up to the election.
- To implement the principle, Commissioners agreed that:
    - a) for the election period (dissolution and pre-dissolution combined), each Member may retain access to their existing ICT profiles. These profiles would be restricted to remove access to social media, webmail accounts and intranet (dissolution intranet will still be available). In addition, each MS may nominate one of their staff to similarly retain their current profile with restrictions to enable support to be available in the event of a

Senedd recall (this could be comprised of part-time staff to make up to 1 FTE, but must include the support staff's full contracted hours which combined may not exceed 1 FTE). The support staff nominated may not themselves be a candidate. These provisions would be in addition to the current provision of up to 4 temporary ICT profiles per Member nominated for individuals. Robust reminders were to be issued to Members of their responsibilities to ensure their accounts are used in such a way that protects them from risk of complaint or a complaint being upheld;

- b) access to the Senedd estate will be restricted from 7 April, but that Members and their staff would have their building passes disabled rather than returning them. In the event of a recall, passes would be reactivated;
  - c) Members and their staff should pack up their offices by the 6 April, within the requirements of Covid regulations, removing personal items as much as possible and schedule this ahead of the election period to allow for social distancing of individuals involved.
  - d) Senedd support for casework during the election period would be restricted in line with dissolution arrangements. The Research Service will continue to publish useful information to the web, which would then be available to any Member and candidate. Members and their staff may not submit any requests to the Research Service, Legal and Translation Services after the start of the election period;
  - e) access to public funds for engagement activities including for surgery notices, central printing and postal services be withdrawn during the election period; and
  - f) Mobile phones / SIM cards used to facilitate homeworking during lockdown may be retained for allowed purposes during dissolution, where home working continues, and will not be subject to hire charges or the need to return the item to the Commission for the dissolution period.
- Commissioners deferred a decision on whether the offer of office hire for personal use, which their discretion could apply only to the shortened dissolution, should be withdrawn. They agreed to flag the matter to their groups and that it would be helpful to understand the position of the Remuneration Board with regard to any personal use of local offices during the pre-dissolution period.

As a contingency, in the event that the Bill were not to be agreed by the Senedd, Commissioners agreed to maintain the June decision relating to ICT provision and agreed to the use of mobile phones provided for homeworking in line with the similar decision set out above.

### **3 Review of initial effectiveness of Communications and Engagement Strategy**

This Commissioners considered a paper outlining progress that had been made in implementing the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

Commissioners welcomed the progress and discussed the digital work that had taken place. They raised points relating to gender balance, age and disabilities. Commissioners noted the update provided.

## **4 COVID-19 Update**

Commissioners were provided with an update on arrangements in place whilst the Senedd continues to operate under the current Welsh Government regulations and guidance. Matters raised encompassed preparedness for the next phases of restrictions, staff welfare (including impacts of home schooling, caring responsibilities, bereavements, and illness), dynamic redeployment and re-prioritisation of activities, and the pressures being felt across the organisation.

## **5 Commission strategic direction**

Commissioners noted that they will consider at the next meeting reflections on the 5<sup>th</sup> Senedd to support the development of the strategy for the Commission over the period of the next few years. To inform this paper, Commissioners agreed to meet with officials individually to capture their reflections on what has been learned through the most significant pieces/key aspects of work of the Commission during the period of the fifth Senedd, and to identify matters that might shape the direction of travel alongside drivers for change for the foreseeable future.

## **6 Ty Hywel windows replacement feasibility study**

Commissioners noted the feasibility report which had been undertaken to seek specialist advice to inform a future decision on the budget implications, timing and phasing of work needed to replace windows in Ty Hywel.

Commissioners asked questions about the specification and practicalities of the work needed, and sought confirmation that none of the need had been identified as a danger. They agreed to defer any decision to proceed to the next Commission, on the basis that there is no funding provision for a windows replacement in the 2021-22 budget.

## **7 Changes relating to the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 (smoking ban)**

Commissioners noted information which outlined changes to legislation relating to the smoking ban, with particular regard to the smoking shelter on the Tŷ Hywel estate. They felt that the Commission for the Sixth Senedd should consider whether the smoking shelter is an appropriate facility for the Senedd estate.

## **8 Papers to note:**

### 8.a Executive Board update (RAD decisions)

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

### 8.b Draft ARAC Minutes November 2020

Commissioners noted the routine update of a meeting of ARAC.

### 8.c Response to PAC's report on the 2019-20 Annual report and Accounts

Commissioners noted the Commission's response to the PAC report, which had been provided since the last meeting.

#### 8.d Remuneration Board Consultation on the Determination

Commissioners noted the letter and consultation from the Remuneration Board.

## **9 Any other business**

- Decisions on ICT provision for the 6<sup>th</sup> Senedd – Commissioners agreed proposals for ICT provision to Members, which had been considered at the previous meeting and discussed further in the interim.

### **Personal Computers**

**Decision 1:** a laptop computer should now be the standard offering - one per Member, plus a one each for support staff up to max of 6. Additional machines may be purchased utilising Office Costs (this would include the ability to use existing purchases which remain within their supported lifespan for returning Members).

**Decision 2:** Members have the option to swap one laptop for a desktop computer.

- **Decision 3:** That all group office staff be supplied with a laptop.
- **Decision 4:** Members can swap their standard laptop for a Microsoft Surface Pro, but, given the higher cost of this device, would give up the tablet device (I-Pad) from their allocation.

### **Computer monitors and docking stations**

- **Decision 5:** a desktop monitor and docking station (+keyboard and mouse) is provided with each laptop at the individual's main place of work.
- **Decision 6:** Members are allocated one further monitor and docking station at a second location (e.g. home).

### **Apple devices**

- **Decision 7:** In exceptional circumstances, Members, or their support staff, who have more knowledge and experience of using the Apple OS than Windows, are able to choose one Apple device instead of a Windows device (one per Member including their staff). Senedd applications and training available are designed primarily for Windows.

### **Software**

- **Decision 8:** Members are allocated a personal Office365 licence, plus a licence for their shared mail box ("The office of..."). In addition to this they are allocated up to a maximum of six further licences for each of their support staff.
- **Decision 9:** Adobe Creative Cloud, if needed, per Member (allocated to a support staff).

### **Printers**

- **Decision 10:** Members are allocated two Multi-Functional print Devices (print, scan and photocopy) and one monochrome laser printer.

### **Tablet Devices**

- **Decision 11:** Members are allocated one Apple I-Pad (unless a Member has chosen a Microsoft Surface Device).

### **Mobile Phones**

- **Decision 12:** Each Member is allocated a suitable mobile phone handset (Apple or Android) together with a monthly call contract that will provide for unlimited UK calls and text messages and 16GB of mobile data pm.

### **Broadband**

- **Decision 13:** That a suitable network connection is provided to the Member's Constituency Office(s)

(max of 2).

- **Decision 14:** Broadband will not be provided to a Member's main residence (except in exceptional cases). Returning Members who currently have Senedd broadband at home will have two months following the election to make replacement arrangements.

Exceptions will be assessed on a case by case basis. Specific circumstances that may justify the provision of broadband to a Member's main residence could include:

- Conventional broadband not being available at the location, requiring the use of different, more costly technologies,
  - More than one member residing at the property necessitating more capacity for remote working, or
  - Other family members not being able to use the home broadband when the Member requires it for Senedd work, such as remote attendance of Plenary.
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- Letter from Finance Committee – Commissioners noted a letter received recommending work be undertaken to educate, engage, and inform the Welsh public on fiscal devolution, and agreed that a response be prepared.
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- Letter from Plaid Cymru group to the Chief Executive – Commissioners were informed of correspondence regarding support for contract staff involved in the December incident on the estate and catering provision.