

The Assembly Commission

Meeting Venue: **Conference Room 4B – Ty Hywel**

Meeting date: **Wednesday, 29 June 2011**

Meeting time: **11: – 13:00**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2011(2)

Committee Members:

Rosemary Butler (Chair)
Peter Black
Angela Burns
Sandy Mewies
Rhodri Glyn Thomas

Officials present:

Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business (Official)
Dianne Bevan, Chief Operating Officer (Official)
Keith Bush, Director of Legal Services (Official)
Craig Stephenson, Principal Private Secretary to the Presiding Officer (Official)
Helen Finlayson, Secretariat (Official)
Steven O'Donoghue, Head of Assembly Resources (Official)
Nicola Callow, Head of Finance (Official)

Others in attendance:

Mair Barnes, Independent Adviser
David Melding, Deputy Presiding Officer

1. Introduction

1(i) Introduction and apologies

No apologies were received.

1(ii) Declarations of interest

Rhodri Glyn Thomas declared an interest in the discussion on the catering contract at item 5. Although he did not have a direct interest in any of the organisations that had tendered for the contract, he had corresponded as an Assembly Member with Commission staff about the matter.

1(iii) Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of meeting – 16 June 2011

The minutes were formally agreed.

Matters arising from the meeting on 16 June 2011

There were no matters arising. However, the Presiding Officer stated that to improve transparency of Assembly Commission proceedings, draft Commission papers would no longer contain a security classification as a norm. Where papers carried a security classification in future, the Commission would be asked if that classification should be removed once the formal discussion had taken place.

2. Assembly Commission annual report and accounts

The Commission discussed the draft Annual Report for 2010–11. It was noted that a separate process would be followed for the accounts for the same period. The Assembly Commission Audit Committee of which, Angela Burns, the Commissioner with responsibility for the budget and governance was the Assembly Commission's representative, would scrutinise the accounts. The annual report and accounts would then be drawn together into a single publication which would be published on 14 July.

In addition to the Commission's statutory responsibility to prepare and submit the annual report and accounts, Commissioners wanted to ensure that the publication reached as wide an audience as possible and this would be achieved by providing an on-line version which would take the form of an interactive timeline and would be fully accessible. In addition, a summary document would also be prepared which would be available to the public.

The narrative provided a review of activity in 2010–11 which would be valued by those looking at the history of the Assembly. Commissioners provided some specific comments which would be included in a revised version. In addition, Iwan Williams would discuss some specific amendments suggested by Sandy Mewies.

Action: Iwan Williams to discuss the amendments suggested by Sandy Mewies. Claire Clancy to amend the narrative as suggested during the meeting.

3. Draft Commission strategy 2011–16

Claire Clancy introduced the paper which provided a draft, high level strategy for the next five years. It was noted that the new Commission Strategy would be underpinned by service plans for each of the Assembly's service areas. These would provide objectives against which performance would be measured. The three strategic goals were agreed by the Assembly Commission though further work was requested on the wording of the third goal in order to make it more positive. Commissioners also suggested a fourth strategic goal in relation to the Assembly as an "ambassador" for Wales.

The draft Strategy detailed how the goals would be delivered by Commission staff. The aim had been to set out the Commission's expectations and provide clarity to aid delivery of the strategic goals. A number of suggestions were offered by Commissioners about this approach. It was agreed that a revised version of the draft strategy would be prepared for the Commission's next meeting on 14 July.

Action: Claire Clancy to provide revised draft version of the Assembly Commission Strategy.

4. Draft Commission budget strategy

Claire Clancy introduced the paper. It was noted that in order to provide property, staff and services to the Assembly, the Commission would need to consider its priorities which would drive the strategy. Their priorities would inform more detailed work on the budget which would be considered in more detail during the coming months.

The Commission noted the experience in implementing the existing strategy and the measures taken to reduce the overall budget to date. Commissioners were concerned that a further reduction in staff headcount was likely to affect services to the public and to Members. The Assembly is now a legislature with additional powers and the Assembly Commission needed to be confident that it had the resources to deliver its services over the next five years. Value for money and efficiency would be paramount. The need for sufficient flexibility in the budget to support core functions was discussed. The impact of known increases such as inflation, salary increments, rent and depreciation on fixed assets were noted. It was expected that the 0.2 per cent comparator with the Welsh block would provide sufficient flexibility to ensure the delivery of the required services. However, it was agreed that further discussion was required and a paper was commissioned for the next meeting of the Assembly Commission on 14 July.

Action: Claire Clancy to prepare a paper for the next meeting.

5. Update on current issues

This paper provided the Commission with an update on a number of ongoing key issues:

Flow of information – The Commission noted that the First Minister had agreed to provide access to Welsh Government officials by the Research Service when pursuing requests on behalf of Assembly Members. The Assembly Commission was pleased to note that the issue had been resolved.

Security Issues – The Commission considered the position outlined in the report and noted that formal negotiations on shift changes for security guards had been on-going since October 2010. The proposal would reduce the overtime bill and increase efficiency and the Assembly's ability to provide improved security cover across the estate. A number of security guards had accepted the new working pattern. The Presiding Officer had received correspondence from the PCS Union which had been shared with Commissioners. A formal response to the correspondence would be prepared. The Commission agreed that the negotiations should proceed as sensitively as possible.

Grant of catering contract – The Commission noted that the contract had now been awarded.

Bilingual Services – A meeting had been held with the Welsh Language Board on 15 June prior to the publication of the report on the Board's investigation on the translation into Welsh of the Record of Proceedings. It was noted that the Board had found the Assembly to be in breach of its Welsh Language Scheme. The Commission would be discussing the issue in full at its meeting on 14 July.

Vulnerable Witnesses – The Commission noted the vulnerable witness programme which would provide guidance to Assembly committees and staff on how witnesses should be treated when interacting with the Assembly. The protocol was welcomed by the Assembly Commission.

6. Schedule of contracts

This item was deferred until the meeting on 14 July.

7. Minutes of Remuneration Committee

The minutes were noted.

8. Assembly Commission rolling programme

The rolling programme was noted.

9. Any other business

The Commission noted that Memorandum of Understanding between the Assembly and the Wales Governance Centre would be agreed shortly.