

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus a
Gweinyddiaeth Gyhoeddus

Craffu ar weinyddiaeth gyhoeddus

PAPA(6)SPA09

Ymateb gan Archwilio Cymru

Welsh Parliament

Public Accounts and Public Administration
Committee

Scrutinising public administration

Evidence from Audit Wales

Scrutinising public administration

- 1 We have set out below some initial observations in response to the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee's consultation on how it should approach the public administration part of its remit. We will look to support the Committee in whatever way we can as it considers the wider responses from other stakeholders and confirms its plans in this regard.
- 2 The remit of the previous Public Accounts Committee already provided broad scope to explore matters relating to public administration where relevant in considering the overall economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are employed in the discharge of public functions of Wales. Notably, the scrutiny of accounts work undertaken by the previous Committee provided a platform for considering how central government bodies are governed and their general administration and performance.
- 3 In our view, the expanded remit of the new Committee provides an impetus for considering where the Committee might go further by taking forward more detailed inquiry work on issues that flow from public bodies' accounts and the reporting on administrative performance and governance that goes with them.
- 4 For example, before the COVID-19 pandemic intervened, the previous Committee showed interest in scrutinising in more detail the work of the Welsh Government's Public Bodies Unit. Among other things, the Unit oversees matters relating to public appointments, including efforts to increase diversity. The effectiveness of Boards and their relationship with management is key to good governance and has often been at the heart of concerns that have emerged about the performance of some public bodies in Wales. Ensuring effective public appointment arrangements and ongoing support for board members is therefore a crucial part of the wider public service administration picture.
- 5 The Public Bodies Unit also supports the creation of new public bodies and is developing a programme of 'Tailored Reviews' of arm's length bodies. The Committee may wish to take an interest in that programme of work and to ensure that the outputs and recommendations flowing from those reviews are subject to wider scrutiny through the life of the Sixth Senedd.
- 6 Beyond this, there is no shortage of issues that the Committee could potentially explore under its expanded remit. This could include matters specific to individual bodies or cross-cutting themes, such as the work undertaken by the Public Accounts Committee in the Fourth Senedd on senior management pay. Topics explored by equivalent committees elsewhere also provide food for

thought, for example the work being undertaken in Westminster on freedom of information or the management of major projects. Or there could be scope for the Committee to explore how the Welsh Government is making the principle of 'One Wales Public Service' a reality and any barriers to progress.

- 7 We think that the Committee faces quite a challenge in the short-term in terms of how it will balance the different aspects of its remit within a business timetable that provides less capacity than was the case for its predecessor. To help, however, our own audit programme should continue to be relevant to broader themes around public administration. For example, we are currently completing work looking at how public bodies are discharging their responsibilities around equality impact assessment. We would also look to consider what we can build into our work programme that might support the Committee in examining topics of interest.

