

The Assembly Commission

Meeting Venue: **Presiding Officer's office, 4th floor – Ty Hywel**

Meeting date: **Thursday, 30 January 2014**

Meeting time: **Times Not Specified**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2014(01)

Committee Members:

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

Officials present:

Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly (Official)
Elisabeth Jones, Director of Legal Services (Official)
Dave Tosh, Director of Information and Communications Technology (Official)
Anna Daniel, Clerk of the Business Committee (Official)
Gareth Price (Official)
Craig Stephenson, Chief Adviser to the Presiding Officer (Official)
Carys Evans, Principal Commission Secretary (Official)

Others in attendance:

David Melding, Deputy Presiding Officer
Mair Barnes, Independent Adviser

1 Introduction

1(i) Introduction and apologies

No apologies had been received.

1(ii) Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1(iii) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 5 December meeting were agreed.

2 Update on Legal Services Directorate's Strategy

The Legal Services Directorate provides services to the Presiding Officers, the Commission, Committees and all Members, as part of a fully integrated team of expert Commission officials. In June 2013, Commissioners agreed an approach to the development of this service that included:

- outsourcing the drafting of non-Government Bills to an expert external drafter in the short term alongside training for the in-house lawyers through that external drafter;
- introducing a concentrated programme of professional development for in-house lawyers;
- exploring the demand for commercial legal services and any unmet demand for legal services in the Assembly.

The outsourcing of drafting non-Government Bills was working well and enabled lawyers to develop skills and knowledge in this area which would enhance capacity within the team over time.

Commissioners agreed to continue with this approach, but wished to see options for increasing the in-house legislative drafting capacity more quickly. It was recognised that this may require an increase in resources. The Chief Executive and Director of Legal Services would consider options and report to the Commission in due course on the further steps taken.

Progress was being made in other areas, including the work that was underway to assess the demand for more in-house commercial legal support and the increased flexibility being seen across the service.

The Directorate would keep its strategy under review to make sure it was able to respond to and support any significant changes affecting the Assembly, such as new financial powers.

3 Progress with Machine Translation

One of the commitments in the Assembly's Official Languages Scheme was to make the best use of technology to help Assembly Members and staff carry out their roles effectively. In November 2013 Commissioners had agreed to continue to work with

Microsoft to develop a Welsh-English / English-Welsh Microsoft translation solution that would be made publicly available in 2014.

Since then quality testing had been carried out and a significant amount of data fed into the system, including data provided by a number of bilingual organisations. Guidance was being developed for Assembly Commission staff and for Assembly Members and their staff to help promote the tool and increase understanding of its appropriate use. The product would be launched at the Assembly on 21 February, to coincide with International Mother Language Day. From that date, the tool would be available to all Members, staff and globally via Microsoft Office and other products.

Officials were congratulated on the rapid progress made with this project, which showed the Assembly leading the way on the use of technology to support bilingualism.

4 Omnibus Survey

To inform the Assembly Commission's work on public engagement and external communications an opinion poll had been conducted in November 2013 collecting data about the public's knowledge of and engagement with the Assembly. The data had been gathered as part of the quarterly Omnibus survey carried out by Beaufort Research.

The results, which generally demonstrated limited public understanding of the Assembly, were unsurprising although awareness amongst young people was lower than expected given the significant efforts made in this area across the education system. Commissioners agreed that further work was required to establish the best way to collect this data in future, including whether there was a more effective way of measuring young people's knowledge of the Assembly. Officials would look at tools that could be used to increase engagement, and at the possibility of whether it might be better to work with an organisation experienced in brand building or product development.

Commissioners agreed that the omnibus survey should not be repeated in March. They agreed to consider whether to conduct further research next year, and the form that research should take.

5 Corporate Performance Report

The second report showing progress against the Commission's Key Performance Indicators representing activity between April and December 2013 showed that good progress had been made in number of significant areas including the estate, ICT, Official Languages and taking forward the Youth Engagement project.

Performance could be seen to improve over the period in terms of timeliness of the services provided and disruptions to committee/ plenary meetings. Commissioners asked for future reports to include an indicator showing the percentage of papers published to mod.gov on time.

Whilst improving performance could also be seen in visitor numbers to the Assembly and in social media interactions, use of Senedd.tv had fallen. Broadcast and print media promotion of Assembly Committee reports had also fallen. It was agreed that the indicator for public engagement would be reconsidered.

Performance remained outside of target levels in relation to reductions in energy usage. Commissioners agreed that they would need to consider further investment in sustainability, or revisit the energy reduction targets.

The Corporate Performance Report would be published on the Commission website and shared with the Assembly's Finance Committee.

6 Future ICT Services Project report

In December 2013 Commissioners had requested regular reports on progress with the Future ICT Services Project, including the readiness assessment for transition towards in-house provision of ICT services. The project remained on track and progress had been made in a number of important areas including recruitment of key staff and knowledge transfer from Atos.

Officials were commended for carefully managing this complex project and for their successes to date. Commissioners would receive regular updates to inform their decision regarding the timing of the transition.

7 Paper to note – Draft Audit Committee minutes 7 November 2013

Commissioners formally noted the minutes of the Assembly Commission Audit Committee meeting on 7 November 2013.

8 Any other business

There were no other items of business.

The next Commission meeting would be held on 13 February 2014.

Secretariat

January 2014