

The Assembly Commission

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

Meeting date: **Thursday, 24 November 2011**

Meeting time: **09: – 11:30**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2011(6)

Committee Members:

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

Officials present:

Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly (Official)
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)
Carys Evans, Principal Commission Secretary (Official)
Non Gwilym (Official)
Brian Davidge, Head of ICT and Broadcasting (Official)

Others in attendance:

Tim Knighton, Independent Adviser

1. Introduction

1(i) Introduction and apologies

It was noted that the Commission's budget was agreed by the Assembly on 16 November 2011. Angela Burns AM was thanked for leading the work on the budget and presenting it effectively to the Assembly.

1(ii) Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1(iii) Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were formally agreed.

2. Bilingual Services

At its meeting on 14 July 2011, the Commission agreed to consult on a draft National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Bill and Bilingual Services Scheme and to provide a translated Record of Plenary Proceedings subject to a sustainable arrangement being found at reasonable cost.

Following the pre-legislative public consultation, officials had analysed the responses, which related to both the draft Bill and Scheme. Respondents had suggested a number of revisions to both the Bill and Scheme. The effort made to encourage participation in the consultation was noted and the responses were welcomed by the Commission.

The Commission decided that a duty to provide a fully bilingual Record of Plenary Proceedings would not be included on the face of the Bill. The other proposed revisions to the draft Bill were agreed. The Commission considered the possible revisions to the Scheme and made a number of suggestions which they asked officials to reflect in the revised draft.

Consideration was given to the comments made during the consultation in relation to the Record, and to investigations undertaken into the latest technological developments to assist with translation services.

The Commission decided that from January 2012, the written record of plenary proceedings would be published, within five working days, with English language contributions translated into Welsh and vice versa. This would be achieved using a combination of machine translation and proof reading, with in-house control and editing to ensure that the published Record met the Assembly's existing standards in terms of style, consistency and quality. Precise cost would depend on a range of factors including the speed at which technological advance increases the accuracy of machine translation but would, in any case, not exceed £95,000 per annum.

The revised draft Bill, supporting Explanatory Memorandum, and proposed Scheme would be introduced in January 2012.

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM was authorised by the Commission to be the Member in Charge of the Bill. Commissioners thanked Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM and officials for the work undertaken to date. Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM also thanked the Welsh Language Board for the assistance it had provided.

Action: Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM to finalise any pre-introduction amendments to the Bill and Scheme in consultation with Angela Burns AM, who will be responsible for ensuring relevant financial provisions are included in the accompanying Explanatory Memorandum.

3. Carbon Management Strategy Update

In November 2009 the last Commission agreed a Carbon Management strategy. This included an ambition to reduce annual emissions by 8 per cent for energy and 3 per cent annual for business travel, and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2015.

The Commission welcomed the 11.1 per cent reduction in energy emissions that had achieved in Year 2 across the Assembly estate, equating to savings of 182 tonnes of carbon and £50,000 in costs. Overall, emissions have been reduced by 19 per cent against a target of 40 per cent by 2015.

Commissioners noted the good progress to date and reaffirmed its commitment to the Carbon Management strategy in order to maintain the Assembly's status as a leading parliamentary body on sustainability issues, and agreed in principle to proceed with a pilot project to replace the windows in Tŷ Hywel with better designed, part-automated models to support efficient natural ventilation.

Action: Officials to develop a detailed costing of the pilot project for approval by Management Board.

4. ICT Future Service Provision

ICT services at the Assembly are currently provided by Atos under the Merlin contract, which will expire in 2014. The Assembly has no direct contractual relationship with Atos, with services instead provided under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Commission and Welsh Ministers at separation in 2007. Following the UNO project, which created an independent ICT platform, the Assembly's ICT systems are no longer integrated with those of the Welsh Government, giving the Assembly greater choice in terms of its future ICT provision.

The Commission endorsed the vision for the future delivery of ICT services, and the range of models by which these services might be delivered. It was agreed that officials would continue to explore the agreed options.

5. Supplementary Budget 2011–12

In its budget for 2011–12, the Commission included separate funds relating to election costs, but made it clear that any excess would be returned to the Welsh block through a supplementary budget.

The Assembly Members' budget included £3.460m, based on an estimated turnover of 30 Members at an average cost of £115k per Member, and the Assembly Services budget included £0.655m. These budget allocations were ringfenced for costs relating to the election. It was noted that actual turnover of 23 Members had resulted in an underspend of £1.8m against the Assembly Members' budget, and of £0.2m against the Assembly Services budget.

The Commission agreed that £2.0m would be returned to the Welsh block through a supplementary budget motion.

6. Portfolio Holder Updates

Commissioners provided an update on activities within their portfolios.

Sandy Mewies AM, Commissioner with responsibility for equalities, said that she would be working with the Equalities Team on the development of the Commission's equalities scheme and the Access Fund for Members.

All Commissioners commented on the feedback they had received from Members and their staff in relation to ICT problems and agreed that it was not acceptable that the problems had persisted over such a lengthy period. Peter Black explained that a meeting had been held at senior level with BT who had given assurances that the broadband problems, which had been UK-wide, would be resolved within about 10 days. Other problems should be resolved once the move to UNO Version 2 (V2) had been completed for everyone, with subsequent fixes for the casework system. If problems remain following these solutions, officials were asked to escalate the complaint, working with the Welsh Government.

7. Assembly Commission Rolling Programme

The rolling programme was noted.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.