



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

MEETING

# Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: June 2019

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority Board (WRA) meeting held on 19 June 2019 at Treforest.

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## Present

### Members

- Kathryn Bishop, Chair
- Dyfed Edwards, Deputy Chair
- Jocelyn Davies, Non-Executive
- David Jones, Non-Executive
- Lakshmi Narain, Non-Executive
- Dyfed Alsop, Chief Executive Officer
- Sean Bradley, Chief Legal and Policy Officer
- Lucy Robinson, Customer Insight and Strategy

### Ymgynghorwyr (advisors)

- Joanna Ryder, Chief of Staff
- Andrew Jeffreys, Director, Welsh Treasury

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## Attendees

- Executive Assistant
- Customer Experience and Engagement Manager
- Head of Operations
- LDT Lead Technical Caseworker
- Policy Advisor
- Head of Data
- Head of Digital
- Head of Finance
- Director of Governance and Ethics – WG
- Implementation Manager for Public Bodies - WG

## Secretariat

- Ceri Sullivan, Board Secretariat

## Meeting opening

### **1. Welcome and introductions, conflicts of interest and apologies, minutes of the last meeting, matters arising**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the WRA Board meeting. She noted that the Board conflicts of interest log had been circulated as a Board paper and would be included in the package of papers for future meetings. Its purpose was to ensure members were considering their interests alongside agenda items and papers. The CEO took the opportunity to declare that he had been appointed as an advisor to Cardiff University's Data Science Board. No conflicts of interest were raised.
2. Welsh Government representatives would join the meeting to provide a presentation on public sector governance. This was being done in light of findings that came out of the Review of Welsh Government's Sponsorship of Public Bodies and would be rolled out to all Boards of public bodies in

Wales.

3. Apologies were received from Sam Cairns. The Board noted the resignation of Martin Warren as a non-executive member of the Board and expressed their thanks for his service during the important initial phase of the organisation's development. The Chair informed the Board that one of her objectives for 2019-20 was succession planning, part of which would include looking at the current Board membership over the coming months. It was noted that there were an adequate number of non-exec members to ensure meetings were quorate. The Audit and Risk Committee had also carried out a skills check and were content that there was sufficient expertise to proceed with committee business.
4. The draft minute of the last meeting did not indicate an issue with quorum for a decision on headcount increase, and the Board therefore requested that a reworked version be circulated. The full minute and redacted version for publication were agreed subject to this change. Members were content with the recorded decisions of the last meeting.
5. The outstanding actions were discussed, and it was agreed that five actions would remain open:

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

6. Members noted a decision that was taken at the last meeting for operational performance slides to be circulated ahead of Board meetings for consideration. It was suggested that the Tîm Arwain share what they currently produce and revisit this if Board discussion warrants this.
7. Following the review of Board effectiveness, it was agreed that Ymgynghorwyr would only attend for specific items on a trial basis of three months. The Chair noted that this would be reviewed following the meeting.
8. The CEO informed the Board that the Tîm Arwain had been carrying out business planning for the organisation's 12 areas of focus. Further information would be provided at the Board Strategy Away Day in July.

9. WG were in the process of reviewing how it reports its performance data. It was suggested that WRA liaise with them on this so that both sides could share best practice.

## **Board discussion**

### **2. Public sector governance – Welsh Government presentation**

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

4. Board encouraged more frequent information sharing between WRA and WG in light of the organisation's contribution to improving public services. The Chair suggested that she would continue to brief members about her attendance at the Public Leaders Forum workshops.

### **3. LDT update**

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

### **4. Debt collection and enforcement**

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

### **5. Framework document**

1. A light touch review of the 2018-19 Framework Document had been undertaken. A paper highlighting those changes was presented, none of which were contentious.
2. The Board noted that the document had worked well for the WRA, its circumstances and its unique partnership with WT. Information redacted

([Footnote 1](#)).

3. A point was raised about clarity around some of the terminology being used within the document. It was suggested that a glossary of terms be included to resolve this issue. It was also suggested that the document should not refer to the dates of other key governance documents e.g. 2019-20 Remit Letter or to specific individuals since these may be superseded.
4. The Public Bodies Unit were in the process of reviewing the approach to standardised framework documents. Once reviewed the WT, in partnership with WRA, would look to mirror any of the approach where appropriate. Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

## Reports, approval and decisions

### 6. Report from the Chair

1. The Chair provided an update on recent activity. The draft agenda for the Board's Strategy Away Day in July had been agreed and would be sent out ahead of the event. The focus of this event would be very much on the year ahead, looking at the organisation's priorities and determining what is and isn't achievable.
2. The Chair was due to meet the Minister on the 17 July for the next quarterly meeting, where she would finalise her 2019-20 objectives, updated in light of the most recent remit letter.
3. The WRA hosted the most recent British Isles Tax Forum event, where the Deputy Chair represented the Board. The event was a success and it was felt the other organisations looked to the WRA as an exemplar in many areas. The Board expressed their thanks to the team for arranging the event.

## 7. Report from the CEO (operational performance)

1. The Board were informed that the data presented would be the version inserted into the annual report and accounts.
2. The proportion of paper returns had dropped by a third in the last 2 months (from 2.4% in Mar to 1.6% in May). Information redacted (**Footnote 1**).
3. Cheque payments were continuing to decline, and continued engagement was improving this further. The percentage of returns filed within 31 days had been broadly consistent at around 99% from Jan – Apr 2019 with 90% of those returns filed under 14 days in April. Data from May was not yet available.
4. Timeliness of refunds for individuals entitled to claim if they sell their former residents within three years is taking roughly 10 days, with the WRA's target being 30 days. The organisation is currently well within target but this is monitored closely in case volumes increase.
5. Information redacted (**Footnote 1**).
6. The Board requested sight of performance data slides and a summary of Tîm Arwain's observations on a monthly basis. They also stressed the importance of measuring the effectiveness of our approach and ensuring our performance data is clearly linked to our corporate plan objectives.
7. An update on recent activity was provided, which included an overview of key events, people, and celebrations. The launch of the Corporate Plan was noted as another success and an overview of current vacancies were presented.

## 8. Financial performance

Information redacted (**Footnote 1**).

## **9. Report from committees**

### **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)**

1. The ARAC Annual report had been sent to the Board for information and assurance. The committee were satisfied that the activities undertaken can give the Board and CEO assurance that robust processes, policies and procedures are in place.
2. The committee would look at cyber security at its next meeting. There was a concern that a high percentage of staff and board members were opening phishing emails, and this would continue to be monitored.

## **10. Report from Director, Welsh Treasury**

1. The Director, Welsh Treasury provided an update on recent activity. Members were informed that a cross-party motion was expected in relation to the devolution of Air Passenger Duty Tax. Work continues at pace on the Social Care Levy to look at how it would work in practice, with some good partnership work between the WT and WRA. A consultation on Vacant Land Tax policy was expected next year.
2. A number of Welsh Rate of Income Tax payers have incorrectly been assigned a Scottish rate Income Tax code. Discussions were underway to resolve this.
3. The second Welsh Government Tax conference would take place in July.

## **11. Annual report and accounts/ WAO audit of finance statements report**

1. The Board were sent the draft Annual Report and Accounts (AR&A) for consideration ahead of the meeting. The AR&A Steering Group had been managing the development of the document but it had also been considered



and scrutinised by Tîm Arwain, ARAC and WAO.

2. The Board were informed of some small changes to be made in light of comments received from various sources and noted that the document would be laid on the 3 July. No major changes were expected between now and then, but just some minor tweaks to style of text. A revised copy would be sent to the Board for information.
3. The CEO suggested some changes to the performance section since it conflates performance from both the past and future. It was also suggested that the section explaining how money has been spent on consultants needs to be broken down to provide further clarity.

## **WAO audit of finance statements report**

4. The ISO260 report carried out by WAO was presented. Its purpose is to provide organisations with an overview of the WAO's findings. The Board were informed that the cost for the audit service would be more than was initially agreed but the WAO were unable to provide the final figure at that stage. A summary of each appendix was provided and members were assured that there were no concerns to be raised.
5. WAO gave their thanks to WRA for their work and noted it had been a smooth and easy process. The Board raised some questions on the report.

## **12. Digital**

1. Because of time constraints, the Board agreed that this item be dealt with and agreed virtually.

# Meeting closing

## 13. Any other business

1. No other business was raised.

## 14. Forward look

1. The forward look was being updated in light of business planning being undertaken by the WRA. It was agreed that a revised version would be sent out before the Board Strategy Away Day.

## 15. Meeting review

1. It was suggested that the Board reflect on how it uses its time before and during full Board meetings. The purpose of the Board's pre-meet is to discuss the detail and enable more strategic discussions during full Board meetings. However, a lot of time was spent querying and checking facts during the meeting itself and the question was raised whether this time could be better spent.

[1] There are certain circumstances where it is not appropriate to share all of the information contained within the Board minutes, for example, where it contains personal or commercial data or relates to the formulation of government policy etc. or the effective conduct of public affairs. In such circumstances, the information has been redacted and the text is marked clearly that this has been the case.

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