



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING

Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: February 2020

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority Board (WRA) meeting held on 19 February 2020 at Cathays Park.

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Present

Members

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

Ymgynghorwyr (advisors)

- Joanna Ryder, Chief of Staff

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- Melissa Quignon-Finch, Head of HR
- Kate Innes, Interim Chief Finance Officer
- Jim Scopes, Interim Chief Strategy Officer
- Catrin Durie, Head of Communications
- Andrew Jeffreys, Director, Welsh Treasury

Attendee

- Taxation Enforcement Lead

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 everybody to the meeting. No apologies were received. The WRA Taxation Enforcement Lead would observe the meeting.
2. The Chair noted that this would be Sean Bradley's last meeting as an Executive Member of the Board. Sean was congratulated on his new role outside the organisation and thanked for his contribution as a Board member and as a WRA employee.
3. Jocelyn Davies informed members that she had decided not to proceed with a role chairing a commission being set up by Plaid Cymru to examine the constitutional pathway to independence for Wales. The Chair asked that the conflict of interest register be updated to reflect this.
4. The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the

discussion and the redacted minute was also agreed for publication.

5. The Chair noted the decisions of the last meeting and provided an update on outstanding actions; it was agreed that three actions would remain open.
6. The Chair noted that the Communications Principles had been agreed virtually by the Board and asked that the minute formally record that decision.
7. An update was provided on the closure of the QED building following the recent flooding. The building was being assessed for damage and the team were hoping that they would be able to gain access over the coming days to remove our equipment, personal taxpayer information and people's personal belongings.
8. There were a limited number of laptops available for those whose devices were currently in QED. Plans were being put in place to manage this and work was underway to secure appropriate accommodation for teams but it was likely that teams would be dispersed across Welsh Government estate (Cathays Park and Merthyr) and working from home over the coming months.
9. The Board shared their collective thanks to WRA staff, Welsh Treasury and Welsh Government for all the work being done to allow staff to continue with their work. Members also noted that recent events were a testament to the strength of the business continuity plan and the resilience of the organisation. The Board suggested that it would be a good exercise to take some time, once the issue was completely resolved, to assess the effectiveness of the business continuity plan and identify any lessons learned.
10. Arrangements would be put in place to facilitate events aimed at bringing teams together, particularly as it would be some time before they would be working out of one location again.

Reports, approval and decisions

2. Chair's Report

1. The Chair informed members that the Minister would attend part of the June Board meeting. The most recent quarterly meeting with the Minister took place on the 15 January; the focus of this meeting was on operational performance, in particular 'Our Approach' and the tax risk analysis work.
2. The WRA had been invited to participate in a research programme on enacting purpose, run by the University of Oxford. Both the Chair and CEO attended the first research group meeting earlier that month, membership consisted of chairs and senior leaders from private sector organisations such as Siemens, and from the public sector, such as Crown Estates, and the Rural Payments Agency.
3. One piece of learning taken from the meeting was a recommendation for Boards to refer regularly to their purpose statements to ensure they are being used as a touchstone in decision-making. The Chair noted that she had taken an action to ensure the Board does this regularly.

3. CEO Report

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

4. Financial performance

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

5. Report from committees

1. Because of a full agenda, Dyfed Edwards would send a virtual update to members on the most recent People Committee meeting and activity. The

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most recently agreed minute would also be sent to the Board for information.

6. Report from Director, Welsh Treasury

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

Approval, decisions and steer

7. Budget allocation for 2020-21

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

8. Capital Programme

1. An overview of the approach taken to bid for capital expenditure was provided, following the same format as in other Welsh Government departments.
2. The Board were not given the opportunity to comment on the proposed bids before they were submitted because a dual process was run due to time constraints. However, members were asked to review and approve the approach for capital fund bidding, to consider the Capital Pipeline and approve the schedule and process for future years.
3. Welsh Government colleagues were content with the quality of the bid and would consider and respond to the WRA in due course. It was suggested that a different approach may be more appropriate for future years, whereby the WRA seek approval for capital budget alongside revenue; this is done by other Welsh Government Departments.

9. Criminal and civil enforcement policies

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

10. Corporate risk register

1. The Corporate risk register was shared with the Board as part of its annual assurance and scrutiny arrangements.
2. Tîm Arwain were in the process of reviewing the current risk register to ensure all key risks were accurately reflected.
3. The Board agreed the risk register and were content with the way the risks were presented for inclusion in the Annual Report.

11. Welsh language vision statement and next steps

1. The Board were asked to endorse a draft Welsh language vision statement developed by staff at the January away day. The following statement was presented:

The WRA is an organisation where the Welsh language thrives. Our people can learn, enhance and enjoy using the language in their day to day work.

2. The Board were broadly content and agreed to endorse the statement, with the caveat that a link be made to our external services, either in the wording of the statement itself or the wider strategy.
3. The importance of ensuring this strategy reflects the organisation's culture and values was stressed.
4. The Board would be provided with an update at a later date.

Discussion

12. Board effectiveness appraisal and succession planning

1. The Board were informed that a number of Non-Exec appointments would take place over the summer but, since this was a Ministerial appointment, we would need to await formal approval before we begin any communication of this.
2. The Board Effectiveness appraisal took place in January, and an overview of the actions taken from that exercise were sent to Board members following the session. The Chair welcomed suggestions for further actions to improve Board meetings and it was agreed that more time was needed to discuss the results and that this would be a good exercise to do before new members join the Board.
3. The Chair informed the Board that the Secretariat would set up end-of-year appraisal meetings for her and each member for the Board. They had also been asked to contribute to her appraisal through providing comments for consideration by the Permanent Secretary ahead of the Chairs end of year review meeting in March.
4. Visibility of the Board was an area that scored relatively low in the effectiveness questionnaire, and it was suggested that this be discussed at a later date to determine if action was needed. Given that many of our people would be based in WG Merthyr Offices over the coming weeks, it was suggested that a future Board event could be held there.

Meeting closing

15. Any other business

1. The CEO expressed his gratitude to Welsh Government for their support in finding desks for staff following closure of QED. He noted that NRW and Revenue Scotland had also offered support which was much appreciated.

16. Forward look

1. Members were reminded that this was a working document that would be continuously updated.
2. There was an item on the forward look to discuss the Remit Letter in April, but members were informed this may be removed if the Minister felt the current letter was still fit for purpose.

17. Meeting review

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

[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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