



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING

Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: 16 September 2020

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) Board meeting held on 16 September 2020.

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Present

Members

- Kathryn Bishop, Chair
- Dyfed Edwards, Deputy Chair
- Jocelyn Davies, Non-Executive
- Lakshmi Narain, Non-Executive
- David Jones, Non-Executive
- Dyfed Alsop, Chief Executive Officer
- Becca Godfrey, Chief Strategy Officer
- Sam Cairns, Chief Operations Officer
- Lucy Robinson, Customer Insight and Strategy

Ymgynghorwyr

- Melissa Quignon-Finch, Chief People Officer
- Rob Jones, Chief Finance Officer

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- Jim Scopes, Head of Design
- Catrin Durie, Head of Communications
- Amy Bowden, Interim Head of Legal
- Anna Adams, Deputy Director of Tax Strategy, Policy and Engagement - Welsh Treasury

Attendee

- Kate Innes, Interim Chief Finance Officer
- Mary Champion, External
- Rheon Tomos, External

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 and noted that the Board would now revert back to the usual arrangement of meetings. Meetings would continue to take place virtually for the time being.
2. Mary Champion and Rheon Tomos were welcomed as observers, as part of their induction ahead of their appointment as Non-executive members for a period of 12 month from October 2020. Special dispensation was obtained in order for Mary and Rheon to attend the meeting and have access to meeting papers.
3. Rob Jones was also welcomed to his first meeting as WRA Chief Finance Officer and ymgynghorwr to the Board.
4. Apologies were received from Andrew Jeffreys, for whom Anna Adams would deputise, and Jo Ryder.
5. The latest version of the Board's register of interest had been circulated prior

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to the meeting. No new interests were declared but Jocelyn Davies noted that she was no longer Chair of Plaid Cymru's ARAC.

6. The minutes of the last four meetings, including the redacted versions for publication were agreed as an accurate record of what was discussed. An update on outstanding actions had been circulated out of committee and it was agreed two actions would remain open.
7. The Board received an update on **A19-05-02** - *Undertake discovery work of culture project and return to the Board with more information*. Due to the flooding and the restrictions brought on by Coronavirus (covid-19), HR had refocused on staff wellbeing, rather than initiating the culture project work. The benefits of this include an opportunity to engage more directly with our people at the outset. In future, the work may develop into an active project which will be reported to the Board as normal. It was agreed that the action could be closed with future updates as appropriate.
8. The Chief Executives report would include an operational reprioritisation update, **A19-06-03** - *Provide Board with further update on the issue regarding filing with the wrong tax authority once things had progressed* – would be included as part of that item and could therefore be closed.

Reports, approval and decisions

2. Chair's report

1. The Chair informed the Board that despite the pandemic restrictions, regular meetings with the Permanent Secretary and separately with the Minister had continued. The Chair had also recently had her annual performance appraisal with the Permanent Secretary.
2. The Board's 2020-21 strategy away-day had taken place in July, with some good discussion and direction-setting. The Chair noted that the uncertainties and changes arising from COVID-19, the end of the Brexit transition period and the related changes continuing into 2021, as well as the Welsh

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Parliamentary Elections. There would be a degree of turbulence from those three things and it was important that the Board and the WRA be ready to adapt to accommodate them.

3. The Chair thanked the Board and ymgynghorwyr for adapting to the temporary ways of working since March.

3. CEO report

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

4. Financial performance

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

5. Report from committees

1. The Chair informed the Board that the two new non-executive members of the Board, Mary and Rheon would both join ARAC, following the end of the term of office of the two existing non-executive members of that committee, David Jones and Lakshmi Narain. Both members were thanked for their contribution to the committee's work.
2. There had been no formal ARAC meetings since the Board last met but two workshops were held to consider the organisations resilience. The sessions covered a number of areas including health and safety, wellbeing, and cyber security which were presented by staff undertaking the work. The committee were impressed with the good work being done under the circumstances brought on by COVID-19.
3. The People Committee met on 14 July to focus solely on succession planning given that recruitment had been frozen. The committee discussed the risks and opportunities involved with the many roles that were either temporarily staffed by people from different roles or staffed by individuals on

loan. A broad discussion took place and the Chief Executive was provided with advice on how he might take the issues forward.

6. Report from Director, Welsh Treasury

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

Approval, decisions and steer

7. Annual report and accounts – performance report

1. The Performance Report was presented to the Board the previous week: the document had since been reviewed with the feedback from the Board at that meeting. The draft document would be shared with the editors the following week before being shared with the Board for final review in the week commencing the 28 of September.

8. Welsh Language Strategy

1. The draft Welsh Language Strategy was presented to the Board for consideration and approval. Members agreed that the strategy's ambition felt right for the WRA and reflected its culture and behaviours.
2. Members were informed that the next step would be to establish a steering group to oversee the development of an action plan to deliver the strategy. This would then be agreed by the Tîm Arwain and implemented by different areas of the business.
3. The Board agreed the strategy and asked to see the action plan once developed.

9. Financial baselining

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

10. Strategic plan 2020-21

1. An overview of the strategic plan for 2020-21 was provided. The Board agreed that the organisation would need to continue to remain flexible and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances and therefore this plan would act as a guide rather than a set of rigid rules.
2. The Board were content with the current plan and noted that it was concise and easy to read and the level of detail felt consistent throughout and pitched at the right level.
3. It was suggested that the plan be brought back to the Board in December to be discussed alongside the review of the organisation's key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure those pieces of work were appropriately connected.

Meeting closing

11. Any other business

1. The Board shared their collective thanks to Jim Scopes and Kate Innes for their contribution to the organisation, the improvements they have each made during their time with the WRA, and their support in their roles as ymgynghorwyr to the Board.
2. David Jones and Lakshmi Narain were thanked for their contribution as non-Executive members. Whilst they would continue in their roles up until the middle of October 2020, this would be their final Board meeting. The Chair noted that their involvement began at the point that the organisation was legally formed in October 2017, and that they had contributed to some of the

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most important and historical decisions the organisation had made.

3. The WRA had recently posted a tweet on Multiple Dwellings Relief (MDR), which had generated some negative responses. It was noted that this was the first instance since the organisation was established, the communications team had taken action and an overview of the lessons learnt was provided.
4. There had been some interest in the statistics on the purchases of second homes in Gwynedd. Incorrect conclusions had been drawn but the communications team had been working with Welsh Treasury and journalists to correct the information.
5. The Chief Executive had been invited to sit on a WG committee considering future workspace for WG.
6. A decision was taken by Tîm Arwain the previous week to pause the collection of post for a fortnight due to local lockdowns, a result of a recent increase in the number covid-19 cases. Staff were being asked to work from home during this period.
7. The Chief Executive would appear in front of the Finance Committee in October, firstly on an inquiry into the implementation of the Wales Act 2014 and operation of the Fiscal Framework and secondly to provide a briefing on the WRA's performance report. The Public Accounts Committee would also receive a briefing.

12. Forward look

1. The Chair noted that the forward look was a working document and would change regularly. During the meeting, the Board indicated that they would like to schedule future items on our culture, Welsh language strategy update and financial baselining, when appropriate.

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13. 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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