



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING

Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: 28 October 2020

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) Board meeting held on 28 October 2020.

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Present

Members

- Kathryn Bishop, Chair
- Dyfed Edwards, Deputy Chair
- Jocelyn Davies, Non-Executive
- Mary Champion, Non-Executive
- Rheon Tomos, 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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- Catrin Durie, Head of Communications
- Amy Bowden, Interim Head of Legal
- Anna Adams, Deputy Director of Tax Strategy, Policy and Engagement - Welsh Treasury

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. Mary Champion and Rheon Tomos joined for their first meeting as WRA non-executive Board members.
2. Apologies were received from Mary who was unable to attend the morning session. She would join for the second part of the meeting later that afternoon. **Information redacted.**
3. Rheon had notified the Board Secretariat of an error with one of his declared interests, which had since been amended. Jocelyn Davies informed the Board that she had an oversight role with the leadership academy mentioned in the Chief Executive report, but that there was no conflict to declare.
4. The minutes of the last meeting and the redacted minute for the purpose of external publication were agreed. Members agreed the actions and decision from the last meeting and agreed that three actions would remain open.
5. The Board discussed outstanding action **A20-05-02** *Share Welsh Language Strategy action plan with the Board for information* and agreed that this action would be closed and a review of the strategy would be planned for a later date. A process for reviewing strategies and principles would be mapped out and shared with the Board over the coming months.
Information redacted.

Report, approvals and decisions

2. Chair's report

1. The Chair provided an update on recent activity. A meeting had taken place with the Minister for Finance and Trefnydd since the Board last met, and an overview of the items discussed was provided.
2. The Chair had attended the most recent Public Leaders Forum conference earlier that month. The event included a presentation on Remote Working Policy from Lee Waters MS, and an update from the Future Generations Commissioner, who described some interesting innovations in a variety of organisations designed to improve economic, cultural social and environmental well-being.
3. The Board were reminded that they have in place a set of performance management arrangements for mid-year and end-of-year review. As part of this, particular areas for non-executives and the staff elected member are agreed, for them to exercise specific oversight and to contribute their experience. Over the coming weeks, the Chair would review these arrangements, to ensure that they still work well in the remote working context and given the strain on productivity. The Board Secretariat would also prepare a short document to summarise the Board's performance management arrangements, which would also include the performance management arrangements for the Chair.
4. The Board congratulated Welsh Government (WG) on the success of the 2020 Tax Conference and noted that the presentations given were both informative and interesting.

3. CEO report and operational performance

1. The written report had been shared with the Board ahead of the meeting. The report included information about a set of three bitesize online courses that had been delivered to managers to help them with managing from a distance, whilst remote working. The sessions had been a success and had provided the team with some innovative ideas, along with the opportunity to

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- reflect on what had worked well as less well over the previous 7 months.
2. A Board briefing would be held in November to focus on tax risk. Given that this area of work was unique and specific to the WRA's approach to tax collection and management, there was no prior experience from elsewhere to inform decisions. For that reason, the Chief Executive noted the importance of treading carefully and taking the time to learn and understand this area of work.
 3. The Board noted that significant effort in this area could bring with it considerable rewards for the public purse and that future conversations were needed around resource allocation.

Operational performance

Information redacted.

4. Financial performance

Information redacted.

5. Reports from committees

1. The Chair of the People Committee reported on the Committee's most recent meeting. The focus of the meeting was on civil service pay awards and Tim Arwain succession planning.
2. The Committee also discussed the wellbeing of staff, given the difficulties of local lockdowns in Wales and the need to relocate the WRA headquarters following the closure of the QED building.

6. Report from Director, Welsh Treasury

1. WT provided an update on recent activity. The Board were informed that although it was still the intention to publish the WG 2021-22 budget on 8 December, the date might change, due to the UK Government spending

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reviews announcement on 25 November. **Information redacted.**

2. The Chief Executive thanked Anna Adams and WT for their consistent support and for their help in facilitating discussions with other WG departments.

Discussion

7. Financial baselining update

1. The Board met earlier in October to discuss proposed financial baselining, before a submission was made to WG. Some changes were made to the submission to ensure that budget elements were clear and understood within WG.
2. A summary of those changes was provided and key areas for concern were highlighted. The restrictions of the baseline budget were noted and the Board stressed the importance of being open and honest about our resource needs to ensure the WRA was able to operate effectively.
3. Work would continue over the coming months to develop the baseline model further.

8. TMS and CRM projects closure and benefits

1. Project closure reports were presented for the Tax Management System (TMS) and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. An overview of project activity was provided and the key benefits for both projects were set out. These benefits included improvements to the tax risk mitigation and recovery work, making things more effective and efficient for our people. **Information redacted.**
2. It was noted that procurement and contract management expertise would have been beneficial during the duration of these contracts. An overview of other lessons learnt was provided.
3. A benefits report for TMS2 would be shared with the Board later in the year.

Meeting closing

9. Any other business

1. It was suggested that the environmental impact of the WRA could be measured in a different way to what was currently referenced in the annual report; it was suggested this should be considered during the review of the WRA's measures in December.

10. Forward look

1. The Chair reminded the Board that the forward look was a working document and would change regularly. It was agreed that TMS2 would be added to the forward look as an agenda item for a meeting later in the year.

11. Meeting review

1. The agenda was managed well and good contributions were made. The discussion felt as though it was at the right level but as always, the challenge was knowing whether the appropriate amount of time had been allocated to each item.
2. The two-hour break between the morning and afternoon session provided some flexibility in case discussions ran over or required more time.

Redacted information

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 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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