



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Cabinet Sub-Committee on Justice meeting: 29 November 2021

Minutes of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Justice meeting on
29 November 2021.

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Present

Justice Transformation Programme

Police and Crime Commissioners

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence

Present (via Teams)

- Rt. Hon Mark Drakeford MS
- Mick Antoniw MS (Chair)
- Jane Hutt MS

Welsh Government officials

- Des Clifford, Director General, Office of the First Minister
- Piers Bisson, Director European Transition and Constitutional Affairs
- Will Whiteley, Deputy Director Cabinet Division
- James Gerard, Deputy Director, Justice and Constitutional Affairs
- Karin Phillips, Deputy Director Community Safety
- Ruth Meadows, Deputy Director – Communities
- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
- Ian Butler, Special Adviser
- Mitchell Theaker, Special Adviser
- Owen John, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan, Cabinet Secretariat

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- Damian Roche, Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- Huw Llewellyn Davies (Cabinet Division)
- Adam Turbervill, Legal Services
- Paul Webb, Communities division
- Andrew Felton, Head of Justice Stakeholders
- Bethan Phillips, Justice Policy
- Merisha Hunt, Senior Justice Policy Manager

Police and Crime Commissioners - Wales

- Dafydd Llywelyn (Police and Crime Commissioner - Dyfed-Powys)
- Alun Michael (Police and Crime Commissioner – South Wales)
- Andy Dunbobbin (Police and Crime Commissioner – North Wales)
- Wayne Jones (Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner – North Wales)
- Jeff Cuthbert (Police and Crime Commissioner Gwent)

Item 1: Justice Transformation Programme stocktake

Action under the current settlement

1.1 The Counsel General introduced the item, which provided a progress update on the programme of activity under the current devolution settlement.

1.2 The Law Council of Wales was formally established earlier in the month, which was a positive milestone. The Family Drug and Alcohol Court pilot was also now operational.

1.3 It was noted the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill would include further amendments including bringing domestic abuse and sexual violence within the scope of the definition of serious violence. Legislative Consent Motions would be debated in the Senedd in early January.

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Conversations with the UK government

1.4 It was reported the process of starting conversations with the recently reshuffled UK Government on the recommendations of the Thomas Commission was underway. The Lord Chancellor had suggested an initial meeting between the Counsel General and Lord Wolfson in the first instance, which would take place on 13 December.

1.5 The opportunity would be taken to outline the Welsh Government's position with Lord Wolfson, although in due course a meeting with the Lord Chancellor would likely also be important.

Building consensus in pursuit of the devolution of justice

1.6 It was noted the paper outlined developments in building consensus in pursuit of the devolution of those areas where the case for devolution of justice was strongest, as previously agreed by the Sub-Committee.

1.7 It was important to make progress in each of these areas, and important as well that there was alignment with the extent to which work in these areas should focus on devolved models for these services in Wales, or whether the focus should be on changes that were possible under the existing devolution settlement.

Justice Plan publication

1.8 It was noted that next steps included a document outlining current and planned justice-related activity across the Welsh Government, scheduled for publication in the spring. A statement to the Senedd by the Counsel General would follow and a further discussion on this would be scheduled for the next meeting in the new year.

Item 2: Discussion with Police and Crime

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Commissioners

2.1 The Counsel General welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to their first meeting of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Justice and thanked the PCCs for the close working relationships developed across partners throughout the pandemic.

2.2 The Counsel General invited the Chair of Policing in Wales group, Dafydd Llywelyn PCC, to provide initial comments.

2.3 It was reported the regular engagement with Welsh Government officials was very useful in the context of the pandemic and ultimately for the reform of justice agenda, as these close ties would be essential to move the agenda forwards.

2.4 The effectiveness of PCCs working across political boundaries in a co-operative model was recognised and would be built upon through the co-operation agreement.

2.5 PCCs agreed that it would be important to keep working on how devolution of justice and policing should and could work in practice. PCCs would be happy to be part of that work, alongside work to further improve the performance of the criminal justice system under the current settlement.

2.6 The Counsel General thanked the PCCs for their attendance and invited them to remain for the next item.

Item 3: Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence – Presentation by officials

3.1 The Counsel General welcomed the Deputy Director of Communities and asked her to provide an update on the latest situation on VAWDASV.

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3.2 It was reported the WG had opted to follow the Blueprint approach to delivery, in order to create a delivery structure and action plan jointly owned by devolved and non-devolved organisations, to encourage accountability as well as peer support and challenge.

3.3 This model would be delivered primarily through a robust governance structure, which had at the top a new co-chaired Ministerial-led National Partnership Board. The board would oversee the work of the regional boards and also sub-groups, which would be created to take forward key actions.

3.4 At present the draft strategy mirrored Programme for Government commitments and suggested that sub groups cover street based harassment and abuse, workplace harassment and abuse, tackling perpetration, sustainable commissioning and user engagement.

3.5 Membership of the board would reflect those bodies who had key duties in tackling VAWDASV and would include departments across Welsh Government, Police, PCCs, Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service and WLGA. Advisory voices from the specialist sector would be included and particular attention paid to those with lived experience of VAWDASV, so the survivor voice was heard at the highest level.

3.6 The focus of the work was very much on the threat to women, as they were overwhelmingly the victims of domestic abuse. In addition, the work would centre on the actions of the perpetrators rather than those of the victims.

3.7 The Counsel General invited the PCCs to provide their views, and there was a shared view the funding provided by PCCs for programmes such as the Drive project, to tackle the most serious offenders, and the IRIS programme, to ensure increased reporting of violence against women, was key. The Safer Streets programme was another example of effective co-operation.

3.8 The work had been co-commissioned collaboratively by the PCCs and it was acknowledged the critical role these programmes played across the piece in terms of education, housing and health all joining together to deliver better outcomes for victims.

3.9 The issue of addressing abuse within individual Police force areas was raised and it was acknowledged that undesirable behaviours had been experienced, but these were dealt with swiftly and a zero tolerance approach taken within the service.

3.10 The committee agreed that Wales was at the forefront of work to engage between services and with the victims and survivors of these entirely unacceptable forms of abuse and agreed to continue working in partnership to deliver improvements in this area.

Cabinet Secretariat

December 2021

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