



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: 15 December 2021

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority (WRA) Board meeting held on 15 December 2021.

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# Present

## Members

- Kathryn Bishop, Chair
- Dyfed Edwards, Deputy Chair
- Mary Champion, Non-Executive
- Jocelyn Davies, Non-Executive
- Rheon Tomos, Non-Executive
- Dyfed Alsop, Chief Executive/Accounting Officer
- Sam Cairns, Chief Operations Officer
- Melissa Quignon-Finch, Chief People and Communications Officer
- Karen Athanatos, Staff Elected Member

## Ymgynghorwyr (Advisers)

- Anna Adams, Deputy Director, Tax Strategy and Intergovernmental Relations, Welsh Treasury

## Meeting opening

### 1. Welcome and introductions, conflicts of interest and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was Karen's first formal Board meeting as the Staff Elected Member. Observers, attending in order to gain useful experience, were welcomed. Anna Adams was standing in for Andrew Jeffreys, Welsh Treasury.

2. The Chair explained that there were two substantial items for discussion at this meeting, but decisions or conclusions on either matter were unlikely at this stage. It was nevertheless important that these items were discussed, and issues aired as part of WRA's planning for the future.
3. The Board conflict of interest log was accepted without additions.

**Redacted.**

## **2. Minutes of the last meeting**

1. **Redacted.**
2. In terms of Actions and Decisions, the Chair noted that she intended to sign the zero tolerance statement at the earliest opportunity. Previously agreed actions including on the Corporate Plan were noted as still outstanding.

## **3. Matters arising**

1. The Welsh Government tax policy framework update was circulated in response to a request during discussion.
2. The Chief Executive Officer/Accounting Officer reported a Welsh Government meeting on covid response, noting the need to reduce as much as possible the amount of face to face contact. There was also a strong sense of the need to be flexible in supporting efforts to manage the situation over coming weeks and further. The communications challenge included warning people about what was expected in coming weeks. This meeting would need to take that context into account.

# Reports

## 4. Chair's report

1. The Chair explained that this meeting had been intended as 'paper-light', and thanked members for agreeing to cancel the pre-meet on Monday 13 December. Consideration would be given again in future as to whether pre-meets were required, on a meeting-by-meeting basis, and input from Board members was invited.
2. The Chair and CEO/AO had met the Permanent Secretary in November. The Chair would copy her personal Objectives to the Board, which would inform the appraisal of her performance.
3. The Chair proposed delaying the 2021-22 Board Effectiveness Review (BER), previously scheduled for 26 January 2022, and arranging a revised date near in time to individual Board member appraisals. The timing of recent and ongoing developments meant that postponement of appraisal arrangements would allow immediate focus on higher priorities and provide more meaningful appraisal in due course. New governance arrangements had been introduced, new Board members had been brought in recently and another would be introduced in the new year, remote working had been in place for more than a year, and WRA had other pressing and imminent priorities at this time.
4. After discussion, it was agreed the BER would be delayed until the end of the financial year, to align with the expected completion of the Corporate Plan. This would make best use of time in January to March, allow a future-focused perspective on the Board's requirements, and the extra time afforded would allow new Board members to contribute more substantially. The online survey to support the BER would be conducted in late January to February, with discussions of results in March, and individual reviews concluded by early May.
5. Discussion included comment on whether the questionnaire could be

delayed further, whether appraisals would be better conducted face to face where possible, and whether the BER could focus on what sort of Board we want for the future, as well as being retrospective.

6. The Board meeting slot of 26 January would be kept for now, as it may profitably be used for discussions and other activities for new members, and arrangements would be proposed in due course.
7. While still hopeful the Board could meet in person at some time in the Spring, the Chair acknowledged that that now seemed less likely.
8. The Chair would issue a Christmas message to Staff, which would include thanks for and acknowledgement of staff efforts.

## **5. Chief Executive Officer and Accounting Officer's report**

1. The CEO/AO explained this was a good opportunity to reflect on 2021; this would also be done on 16 December with staff in a WRA live event.

**Redacted.**

## **6. Welsh Treasury report**

**Redacted.**

## **7. Update on debt performance**

1. The Chief Operations Officer presented this item in response to a request from the Board in a previous meeting. This was an interim report, a fuller update would be provided in February as part of the quarterly performance report. The COO noted the fluid nature of debt and the different types of debt managed, which challenged and influenced the way debt was reported.

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Redacted.

## Discussion

### 8. Accommodation

1. The Chair thanked the Chief People and Communications Officer for the discussion note.

Redacted.

### 9. Corporate plan and Programme for government

1. The CEO/AO had shared a paper in advance. Granular data would be useful now and in the future, either by addressing LTT geographical variants, or by doing something more usable for the future. Similar sets of stakeholders would be involved in the pursuit of either.
2. Redacted.
3. Redacted.
4. Redacted.
5. Corporate Plan. The CPCO reported the outcomes of the first staff engagement session (the second session had been postponed due to illness). Coproduction of the CP would be reflected in how it would be written and presented. The CP would be presented so as to engage different audiences with different requirements.

# Closing

## 10. Forward look

1. In February (and - if - applicable January) 2022 meetings, the Board would hear more about work on data to give assurance on governance arrangements and impact on capacity.
2. Welsh Language Standards – preparations were being made for WRA being named in legislation as required to formally adopt WLS. WRA had already been shadowing the rest of WG, so would be well prepared.

## 11. Any other business

1. **Redacted.**
2. The Chair confirmed that the Board Effectiveness Workshop would not go ahead on 26 January 2022. A decision should be made in due course as to whether to conduct other Board business on that day or to cancel the slot.

## 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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