



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Welsh Government Board Meeting: 21 October 2022

Agenda and papers from the Board meeting held on 21 October 2022.

First published: 22 March 2023

Last updated: 22 March 2023

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-government-board-meeting-21-october-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Contents

Agenda

Present

Welcome

Senedd reform

Corporate Risk Register

Programme for Government update

Reform of the school day and year

Finance update

Any other business

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-government-board-meeting-21-october-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Agenda

1. Welcome / Current issues

Oral

See minutes.

2. Senedd Reform

Paper item 2

Papers not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

3. Corporate Risk Register

Paper item 3

Papers not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

4. Programme for Government

Paper item 4

Papers not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

5. Reform of the school day and school year

Paper item 5

Papers not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

6. Finance update

Paper item 6

Paper not published as it contains information relating to the financial interests of the Welsh Government.

7. Any other business

Oral

See minutes.

Present

- The Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Gareth Lynn
- Ellen Donovan
- Aled Edwards
- Tracey Burke

- Judith Paget
- Andrew Slade
- Jo-Anne Daniels
- Reg Kilpatrick
- Tim Moss
- Peter Kennedy
- Gawain Evans
- Helen Lentle
- Andrew Jeffreys
- Zakhyia Begum (Shadow Board)

In attendance

- Catrin Sully
- Piers Bisson
- Peter McDonald
- Owain Lloyd
- Emma Alexander

Secretariat

- Alison Rees

Apologies

- David Richards

1. Welcome

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the Board meeting and noted the apologies received. The Chair welcomed Zakhyia Begum to her first meeting as Lead Co-Chair of the Shadow Board.

1.2 The minutes of the Board meeting of 02 September were agreed.

1.3 The Chair provided updates on a number of areas.

Annual accounts and PAPAC

1.4 The Chair noted the recent scrutiny by PAPAC of the 2020/21 accounts. The final deliverables for the 2021/22 accounts will be delivered to Audit Wales shortly, before the statutory deadline.

Cost of living

1.5 This is being considered by Welsh Government both through a Wales-lens and an organisational- lens to consider the impact on Welsh Government staff. Oversight mechanisms are in place at ministerial level and an interim team to lead on this area has been set up led by Reg Kilpatrick.

HR matters

1.6 The staff survey has been extended by a week. Gateways have been paused in response to staff feedback while progression arrangements are reviewed. Let's Talk Live session are being used to unpack issues and Judith Paget has led a staff Wellbeing Event.

Covid-19 Public Inquiry

1.7 Work on the inquiry continues with officials endeavouring to build a productive working relationship with the Public Inquiry team. The Chair noted the intensive work needed over the coming months to prepare written submissions. Aled Edwards commented that the co-production approach in Wales to the pandemic response may not be understood by the inquiry.

2. Senedd reform

2.1 The Chair invited Andrew Slade to introduce the item before handing over to Piers Bisson and Peter McDonald. Andrew commented that Senedd reform is a complex piece of work that is central to the Co-operation Agreement and will have major consequences for Welsh Government which need to be factored into plans for WG2025. Andrew noted the outstanding work by the team leading on Senedd Reform. The Chair invited comments from Board Members.

2.2 Ellen Donovan noted the good progress being made and recognised the excellent work being done to develop the legislation underpinning the reform programme. Ellen queried the long-term affordability of increasing the size of the Senedd.

2.3 Meena Upadhyaya noted the proposals for gender quotas and queried whether a similar approach would be adopted for other underrepresented groups.

2.4 Aled Edwards echoed the comments made by fellow Non-Executive Directors highlighting that the Senedd must look a little more like modern Wales. Aled asked that if strong legislative drivers are not available to shape the appearance of the Senedd, then what policy drivers are available to make it

easier for people from underrepresented groups get elected.

2.5 On behalf of the Shadow Board, Zak noted that they agreed with many of the points already made and highlighted the challenge of making the case to the public of the need to spend on a larger Senedd when other areas are facing cuts. The Shadow Board noted the increased workload a larger Senedd will mean for staff.

2.6 The Chair noted the impact that targeting resources to deliver on legislation for Senedd reform is having on Legal Services. On the issue of costs, Andrew Jeffreys noted that the figures of £10 million is considerably below that the actual costs will be. Tim Moss asked how the Welsh Government Board fits into the governance structure for the work programme

2.7 Piers thanked all for their comments. Initial discussions have been held with the First Minister on the how Welsh Government will need to adapt to meet the demands of a larger Senedd. On the question of gender quotas, Piers noted the complex policy questions involved which touch on legal issues that are not devolved. Regarding other diversity issues, Piers added that there is no political consensus at present

3. Corporate Risk Register

3.1 Estynnodd y Cadeirydd wahoddiad i Gawain roi diweddariad ar y Gofrestr Risgiau Corfforaethol, a gofynnodd am sylwadau'r Bwrdd.

3.2 O ran y risgiau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r argyfwng ynni, awgrymodd Gareth yr ymddengys fod naratif yn 3.1 The Chair invited Gawain to provide an update on the Corporate Risk Register and for comments from the Board.

3.2 On the risks associate with the energy crisis, Gareth suggested that there

appears to be a narrative emerging that this is a short-term crisis but advised that Welsh Government should look much further ahead.

3.3 Ellen noted that the way the CRR is used by the organisation is very important and queried whether it needs to be considered by four different committees/groups. Regarding major projects and programmes, Ellen queried whether the mitigations identified are a wish-list or a set of actions that will have impact. Meena noted the role that the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan plays in mitigating risks around equality, diversity and inclusion. Aled noted the risks associated with faith groups bringing legal challenges to policy decisions and the associated costs in terms of both time and money.

3.4 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted the importance of actively using the risk register within the organisation and bringing it regularly to Board.

4. Programme for Government update

4.1 The Chair invited Catrin Sully to provide an update on the Programme for Government commitments and for comments from the Board.

4.2 Catrin noted that speed assurance sessions have continued. At the Cabinet Away Day in September the First Minister proposed reviewing the Programme for Government commitments to re-prioritise considering the current financial challenges facing Welsh Government. Officials are working through Programme for Government commitments to identify those that will be impacted if a balanced budget is to be achieved. This includes considering options to deliver over a longer time-period or scaling back on ambitions. The draft budget will be published on 13 December and the First Minister will make a statement on the Programme for Government on that date too.

4.3 Ellen noted the importance of involving Finance Directors closely in the discussions. Catrin replied that weekly meetings are being held with Treasury colleagues and finance leads to quality assure returns before they are shared with DGs and the Permanent Secretary.

4.4 Jo-Anne suggested that there would be a need to revise the exercise after the UK Government makes its autumn statement; Tracey noted the impact on staff this additional workload would have. Jo-Anne added that there will also be a need to scale back business-as-usual activities alongside Programme for Government activities if the necessary savings are to be achieved.

4.5 Reg queried whether it will be necessary to re-open some MEGs as it will be impossible to achieve a balanced budget in some areas given the forecast shortfalls.

4.6 Andrew Jeffreys commented that while ministers may have accepted the macro implications of the need to make cuts, they may not yet have come to terms with the micro implications and the need to either drastically pare back or drop areas of work.

4.7 On behalf of the Shadow Board, Zak queried the timeline for decisions on ending activities and noted the impact these decisions could have on staff.

4.8 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted that the level of savings that are being looked for are greater than during the recent period of government austerity.

5. Reform of the school day and year

5.1 The Chair invited Owain Lloyd to update the Board on progress and next steps in taking forward the Programme for Government commitment to explore

reform of the school day and the school year and invited comments from the Board.

5.2 Ellen noted the challenges and asked whether Education officials are confident that the reforms can be delivered particularly considering the re-prioritisation of PfG commitments. Gareth asked for further information on the pilots; in particular, how they were being planned, delivered, and funded. Meena asked for further information on how many schools applied to be part of the pilot and if schools from disadvantaged areas are included. Aled noted the array of cultural events that are time specific, for example the Urdd Eisteddfod/ the Royal Welsh, and asked for further information on how officials are liaising with stakeholders to ensure these issues are considered.

5.3 On behalf of the Shadow Board, Zak noted the impact reforms to the school day and/or year could have on school staff. Zak added that Shadow Board would welcome sight of a summary of the findings of the impact assessments to inform future discussions.

5.4 In response, Owain noted that the First Minister is firmly of the opinion that the long summer school holidays have a disproportionate impact on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Regarding the pilots, the activities have been planned by the schools themselves in conjunction with partners and are funded by Welsh Government. Thirteen schools applied to part of the pilot and all thirteen were accepted. The schools are spread across Wales with some in disadvantaged areas and are doing a range of different enrichment activities. The pilots will be evaluated, and the report shared with the Board. If any changes are to be made to the school day/year, then they will be phased in over a period of time. Owain noted the range of cultural and faith-based factors that need to be considered in reaching a decision.

6. Finance update – Period 5

6.1 The Chair invited Gawain Evans to provide an update on the Period 5 finance position. Gawain noted that there have been slight improvements in the forecast outturn position. It is unlikely that Welsh Government will receive any significant consequential from UK Government in this financial year. Work continues on managing the in-year position. The Chair added that while the 2022/23 position is manageable, there are concerns over resilience for the next financial year.

6.2 The Chair invited comments from the Board. Gareth noted the rapidly changing financial circumstances and queried when decisions on how to proceed are needed by. Gareth stressed the importance of ensuring that there is sufficient time for scrutiny and challenge of the decisions being made.

6.3 Ellen asked how teams were coping with the demands at this challenging time. Judith responded that within the Health and Social Care Group, although teams are extremely busy, there is good cross-group working to help ease the burden.

6.4 Aled suggested that as many stakeholders would be feeling the impact of budget cuts, and some may suspect that there are underspends in some areas, it will be important to be transparent about the decisions Welsh Government is having to make.

6.5 Regarding timings, Gawain suggested that by early November there would be further clarity on the options for managing the in-year position. Gawain added that there are sufficient funds available in the Wales reserve for the 2022/23 financial year. On the question of governance, Gawain noted that proposals would be discussed at the Finance and Corporate Services subcommittee followed by ExCo, before discussions with the Finance Minister, First Minister and Cabinet.

6.6 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted the important issue of ensuring staff wellbeing at this challenging time.

7. Any other business

7.1 It was suggested that looking more closely at the data in the HRMI dashboard and what it says about the organisation would be a useful future agenda item.

This document may not be fully accessible.

For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-government-board-meeting-21-october-2022-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).