



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Cabinet meeting: 30 January 2023

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on 30 January 2023.

First published: 16 March 2023

Last updated: 16 March 2023

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Present

- Lesley Griffiths MS (Chair)
- Rebecca Evans MS
- Vaughan Gething MS
- Jane Hutt MS
- Julie James MS
- Jeremy Miles MS
- Eluned Morgan MS
- Mick Antoniw MS

- Hannah Blythyn MS
- Dawn Bowden MS
- Lynne Neagle MS
- Julie Morgan MS
- Lee Waters MS

Apologies

- Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS

Officials

- Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary
- Des Clifford, Director Office of the First Minister
- Rebecca Dunn, Head of Cabinet Division
- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
- Alex Bevan, Special Adviser
- Daniel Butler, Special Adviser
- Ian Butler, Special Adviser

- David Davies, Special Adviser
- Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
- Sara Faye, Special Adviser
- Sam Hadley, Special Adviser
- Clare Jenkins, Special Adviser
- Owen John, Special Adviser
- Phillipa Marsden, Special Adviser
- Mitch Theaker, Special Adviser
- Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan, Head of Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- Damian Roche, Cabinet Secretariat
- Catrin Sully, Cabinet Office
- Tracey Burke, Director General Climate Change & Rural Affairs
- Jo-Anne Daniels, Director General Education, Social Justice and Welsh Language
- Reg Kilpatrick, Director General, COVID-19 recovery and Local Government
- Tim Moss, Chief Operating Officer
- Judith Paget, Director General Health and Social Services
- Andrew Slade, Director General, Economy, Treasury and Constitution
- Helen Lentle, Director Legal Services
- Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer (item 2)
- Sioned Rees, Director Public Health Protection (item 2)
- Stacey Jo Smith, Head of Pandemic Preparedness (item 2)
- Peter McDonald, Director Economic Infrastructure, (item 3)
- Robert Kent-Smith, Deputy Director Transport Strategy and Policy (item 3)
- Emma Williams, Director Housing and Regeneration (item 4)
- Stuart Fitzgerald, Deputy Director Homes and Places (item 4)
- Rhidian Jones, Head of Regeneration Strategy (item 4)

Cabinet observed a minute of silence to reflect on the recent passing of Clare Drakeford, the wife of the First Minister.

Item 1: Senedd business

1.1 Cabinet considered the Plenary grid and noted that the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd would be responding to First Minister's questions the following day. Voting time would be around 7:05pm on Tuesday and the Senedd would not be meeting on Wednesday due to industrial action by Commission staff.

Item 2: Update on COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses

2.1 The Minister for Health and Social Services introduced the paper, which provided an update on COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses. The paper also outlined some of the extreme pressures the NHS experienced at the end of 2022.

2.2 December saw record levels of demand across many parts of the urgent and emergency care system. Community prevalence of respiratory viruses was very high and in the third week of that month there had been the second highest peak in GP consultation rates for flu like illnesses since 2010/11, there had also been around 400,000 contacts to general medical services in one week.

2.3 The situation was now improving with COVID-19, flu and respiratory syncytial virus cases decreasing. Hospital admissions and related calls to NHS Direct had also decreased.

2.4 Even with an improving situation with respiratory viruses, the health and care system was still under a great deal of pressure, particularly against the backdrop of ongoing industrial action.

2.5 A number of significant investments in urgent and emergency care had been initiated, which had improved the overall position. This included management of 999 patients in the community, the recruitment of ambulance clinicians, along with patient handover improvement plans and workforce efficiencies. UK ministers had recently made announcements in relation to these areas, but they had a long way to go to catch up with the Health Service in Wales. For example, Wales had 270 hospital beds for every 100,000 of the population, whereas in England the figure was 170 for every 100,000.

2.6 Ministers welcomed the update.

Item 3: The Roads Review and National Transport Delivery Plan

3.1 The Deputy Minister for Climate Change introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to agree the Roads Review Policy Statement and the National Transport Delivery Plan. Ministers were also asked to note the Roads Review Panel's Final Report, which set out recommendations on when road investment was appropriate and recommendations relating to individual schemes.

3.2 The Roads Review Panel made recommendations about future transport policy along with judging the 55 roads schemes in the current Welsh Government pipeline against existing policies.

3.3 Cabinet welcomed the amended proposals within the paper, which included plans to deliver an accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system that was fair for everyone, while seeking to address transport poverty.

3.4 It was recognised that all new roads would need to contribute towards achieving modal shift, both to tackle climate change and to reduce congestion on the road network for freight. It was also important to consider what was

affordable given the significant reduction in spending power, caused by inflation and the UK Government's decision to cut capital budgets.

3.5 Cabinet approved the paper.

Item 4: Town centres position statement

4.1 The Minister for Climate Change introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to agree to the publication of the Town centres position statement, the delivery of the associated actions and proposed governance arrangements.

4.2 The position statement was the culmination of a considerable amount of work across government and with key external stakeholders, over some months. Its purpose was to set out the key challenges facing town centres and help to ensure that these were universally understood. This shared understanding would underpin a cross sector and cross-government approach to tackling the issues.

4.3 Recognising that the Welsh Government was a key enabler, a set of national actions had been proposed, across a range of policy areas, to enable local authorities and others to help address those challenges.

4.4 Town centres were not all the same across Wales and no single action would resolve the issues they faced, but the collective actions, which mainly provided a focus on existing Programme for Government commitments, policies or strategies across government, would have an impact.

4.5 Cabinet welcomed the paper.

4.6 The importance of the public and Third Sector within communities was recognised, not least given that many health and social care services along with social enterprises, advice and support services were located within town

centres. There was a need to make sure that empty properties above high street shops were used for social housing while ensuring that these were supported by an integrated transport system. Furthermore, there was a need to have a mix of socio-economic groups and, now with the flexible working arrangements, establish office space, which would lead to increased footfall in the high street.

4.7 Cabinet approved the paper.

Item 5: Any other business

My tree our forest hubs update

5.1 The Minister for Climate Change informed Cabinet that, through the 'My Tree Our Forest' initiative, anyone in Wales would be able to pick up a free tree from 20th February when over 50 distribution hubs would reopen. Free packets of wild-flower seeds would also be available from these hubs.

5.2 For those who did not have space for a tree, they could utilise the 'Plant a Tree for Me' option on the campaign webpage to have a tree planted on their behalf. This would become part of the fast-growing National Forest.

Cabinet Secretariat
January 2023

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