



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Cabinet Sub-Committee on Justice meeting: 9 November 2022

Minutes of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Justice meeting on
9 November 2022.

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Present (via Teams)

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

Welsh Government officials

- Claire Bennett - Director, Communities and Tackling Poverty
- James Gerard - Deputy Director Justice Policy
- Karin Phillips - Deputy Director, Community Safety
- Kate Edmunds - Special Adviser
- Thomas Dowding - Cabinet Secretariat
- Damian Roche - Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- James Oxenham - Cabinet Division
- Bethan Phillips - Cabinet Division
- Merisha Weeks - Justice Policy (minutes)
- Tony Jones - Justice Policy
- Cerys Gage - Community Safety
- Adam Turbervill - Legal Services
- Louis Urutty - Communications

External attendees (for item 1)

- Dr Robert Jones - Wales Governance Centre
- Professor Richard Wyn Jones - Wales Governance Centre

Item 1: The Welsh Criminal Justice System - on

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the Jagged Edge (external presentation)

1.1 The Counsel General thanked Robert Jones and Richard Wyn Jones for their work in publishing, 'The Welsh Criminal Justice System: on the Jagged Edge' on 15 October, which was a hugely important contribution to the public understanding of criminal justice in Wales. He invited them to present the key points.

1.2 Richard Wyn Jones and Robert Jones summarised the evidence within the book around how the constitutional underpinnings of the Welsh criminal justice system raised problems with joined up policy and accountability, as well as evidence showing significant reasons for concern about the performance of the Welsh criminal justice system in relation to other parts of the UK and internationally. He stressed the need to keep producing reports and systematically produce up to date data on these issues.

1.3 The Counsel General reflected on the stark headline points and invited comments from the Sub-Committee.

1.4 The sub-committee noted that the book would form part of the evidence base of making the case for devolution of policing and justice and recommended that Robert Jones and Richard Wyn Jones consider giving evidence to the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

1.5 The sub-committee noted that Wales was a constitutional outlier in not having its own devolved justice system, uniquely amongst countries which had a version of the Westminster model.

1.6 The sub-committee also reflected that while parts of the book made for a distressing read, it was important to also reflect successful partnership working that had been managed despite the 'jagged edge', including, for example, collaborating with criminal justice agencies on the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

Item 2: Transformation programme stocktake

2.1 The Counsel General introduced the item, which provided an update on the latest position with the justice work programme and other live justice issues.

Part 1: Update on Cabinet Sub-Committee work programme

2.2 It was noted that Sir Gary Hickinbottom, a former judge in the Court of Appeal, would succeed Sir Wyn Williams as President of Welsh Tribunals on 1 April 2023.

2.3 The Counsel General highlighted other updates, including the work on the Tribunals (Wales) Bill, North Wales law centre and publication of the Family Drug and Alcohol Pilot phase one evaluation.

2.4 The sub-committee welcomed these updates.

UK government discussions

2.5 The sub-committee noted updates on discussions with the UK government regarding the Bill of Rights, Inter-Ministerial Group on Justice and the Thomas Commission recommendations triage exercise.

Part 2: other live issues

2.6 The Counsel General provided an overview of the other live issues in the justice sphere and invited the Minister for Social Justice to update on the Women's and Youth Justice Blueprints.

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2.7 The sub-committee expressed disappointment that the Ministry of Justice were not successful in obtaining planning approval for the Women's Centre in Trehafod. It was noted that crime and justice partners were considering options for next steps.

2.8 Work continued on data disaggregation and the specification of data needs would be shared with the sub-committee at a future meeting. Some disaggregated dashboards were now available, but more work was needed to automate the update process and increase their scope.

Item 3: Devolution of Justice - key public messages

3.1 The Counsel General introduced the paper, which presented an approach for building on the increasing engagement from stakeholder organisations with the idea of devolution of justice.

3.2 The sub-committee supported the key principles of the communications approach, particularly around the need to build and use evidence and demonstrate what was being achieved now as a guide to the approach that should be taken to a devolved system. This included ensuring continuing engagement around the 'Delivering Justice for Wales' publication.

3.3 The sub-committee endorsed the suggested approach for the next phase.

Item 4: AOB – HMP Swansea prisoner health update

4.1 The Counsel General referred to the Health Inspectorate Wales report from

June 2022 on the delays with provision of dentistry and mental health services at HMP Swansea.

4.2 The sub-committee noted the update Cabinet Secretariat and Justice Team.

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