




Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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# Welsh Government Board Meeting: 29 July 2022

Agenda and minutes from the Board meeting held on 29 July 2022.

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**Agenda**

**Present**

**Welcome**

**Programme for Government update**

**Welsh Government 2025 update**

**Diversity and inclusion**

**Key Performance Indicators**

**Covid-19 – end of the transition phase**

**Any other business**

# Agenda

## 1. Welcome / Current issues

Oral

See minutes.

## 2. Programme for Government

Paper item 2

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

## 3. Welsh Government 2025 update - Values and Behaviours Framework

Paper item 3

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

## **4. Diversity and Inclusion**

Paper item 4

Published.

## **5. Welsh Government Performance Framework**

Paper item 5

Paper not published as it contains information relating to internal performance management.

## **6. Covid 19 – End of Transition phase**

Paper item 6

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

## **7. Any other business**

Oral

See minutes.

## Present

- The Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Gareth Lynn
- Ellen Donovan
- Tracey Burke
- Judith Paget
- David Richards
- Peter Kennedy
- Gawain Evans
- Helen Lentle
- Piers Bisson
- Liz Lalley
- Claire Bennett
- Bekah Cioffi (Shadow Board)
- Zakhyia Begum (Shadow Board)

## In attendance

- Aled Edwards
- Catrin Sully
- Jo Glenn

- Sharon Cross

## Secretariat

- Alison Rees

## Apologies

- Andrew Slade
- Reg Kilpatrick
- Jo-Anne Daniels
- Glyn Jones
- Andrew Jeffreys
- Des Clifford

## 1. Welcome

1.1 The Permanent Secretary welcomed all to the Board meeting. The Permanent Secretary noted that Aled Edwards had been invited to join the meeting in advance of taking up his role as Non-Executive Director.

1.2 The minutes of the Board meeting of 17 June were agreed.

1.3 The Permanent Secretary invited Claire Bennett to provide an update on

Welsh Government's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. At the time of the meeting over 4,000 refugees from Ukraine have arrived in Wales. At present Welsh Government has exclusive use of several welcome centres where it can offer an extensive wrap-around package to refugees. It also has use of a number of other centres, these offer a less comprehensive package of support.

1.4 Welsh Government is working with key partners to look at a wide range of medium to long term accommodation alternatives for refugees from Ukraine, as well as for other refugees and those who are homeless. Claire added that the challenges in finding suitable private rented accommodation for refugees from Ukraine are also being experienced elsewhere in the UK. It is anticipated that over £100,000million will be spent by Welsh Government on the response to the war in Ukraine.

1.5 Aled Edwards recognised the huge pressures involved in responding to the humanitarian crisis and congratulated Welsh Government on its world-leading response. Aled added that it may be some time before the refugees arriving in Wales will be able to return to their homes in Ukraine.

1.6 The Permanent secretary invited Judith Paget to provide an update on the latest NHs position in relation to Covid-19. At the time of the meeting there were just over 800 Covid-19 patients in hospital, with 20 in ICU beds. There are some 1,000 medically fit patients awaiting discharge into the community.

1.7 There is potential for a further Covid-19 wave in October/November, health officials are working with PHW to consider whether precautionary measures will need to be introduced to manage the situation.

1.8 Covid continues to impact on staff sickness levels in the NHS, with staff sickness levels running approximately 1.5% above what would normally be expected at this time of the year.

1.9 Judith noted that NHS Wales also has a role in meeting the health care needs of those arriving from Ukraine.

## **2. The Programme for Government – progress update**

2.1 Catrin Sully provided an update on the Programme for Government. The RAG ratings appear stable, with a slight decrease in those rated as red. The First Minister has indicated that where commitments are rated as red, he expects that lead officials are identified to take forward actions.

2.2 Catrin noted some concerns over the 169 commitments that are not managed centrally. These have been collated and will be circulated to Directors General for consideration.

2.3 Catrin provided an overview of the criteria used to identify topics for the Permanent Secretary's speed assurance sessions. Feedback from officials involved in the first cycle has been positive.

2.4 Gareth Lynn commented that the BIRT system is an excellent operational tool and highlighted the importance of maintaining clarity on the approach to assigning a red status to commitments.



2.5 Ellen Donovan offered her thanks to Catrin and her team for their continued hard work on monitoring the progress of Programme for Government commitments and noted the quality of information captured on the BIRT system. Ellen queried the process for scrutinising the 169 ministerial led commitments, particularly those where deliverables change.

2.6 Piers Bisson offered his thanks to Catrin and her team for their assistance in helping teams make the most of the BIRT system, and noted the need to keep in mind the impact of external factors, including changes in leadership at a UKG level, on the delivery of Welsh Government's commitments.

2.7 Judith provided a brief overview of the approach taken within the H&SS group to monitoring both PfG and other commitments.

2.8 The Shadow Board fed back that it was reassuring to receive an update on the speed assurance sessions and the steer from the First Minister.

2.9 The Permanent Secretary invited Catrin to respond to the comments. Catrin noted that monitoring systems evolve over time and highlighted the challenge of using a management system for multiple purposes. Catrin added that the First Minister has acknowledged the advantage the BIRT system offers in providing a single set of information on progress. Catrin noted recent work by Des Clifford to clarify the definitions of the RAG ratings.

2.10 The Permanent Secretary thanked all for their comments and asked the Non-executive Directors to consider those areas they would like to see explored in depth in future Board meetings.

## Action

Non-Executive Directors to consider those areas they would like to see as deep dives on future Board agendas.

### 3. WG2025 Update – Values and Behaviours Framework

3.1 Natalie Pearson provided an overview of the development of the values and behaviours framework, highlighting the approach taken to engaging with staff and co-producing the framework through both the Let's Talk Live events and other meetings.

3.2 Meena Upadhyaya welcomed the work underway to develop the framework and queried how the organisation will reflect how the values translate into practice in the working day and how often the organisation proposed to review the values.

3.3 Gareth endorsed the approach being taken but queried the absence of focus on delivery in the presentation. Gareth added that values are not an output in themselves, but rather they influence the way in which outputs are delivered.

3.4 Aled noted the important role that Welsh Government's values have played in shaping the response to the pandemic.

3.5 Ellen welcomed the co-production approach and suggested including an explanation of how the values sit alongside the Nolan principles and Piers highlighted the importance of linking back to the civil service code.

3.6 The Shadow Board highlighted the importance of demonstrating how lessons learned from previous iterations of the organisation's values are influencing the current exercise.

## Decision

The Board endorsed the direction of the Values and Behaviours Framework.

## 4. Diversity and inclusion

4.1 The Permanent Secretary invited Jo Glenn and Natalie Pearson to provide an update on equality, diversity, and inclusion within Welsh Government.

4.2 Peter Kennedy noted concerns regarding the outcomes for BAME candidates in the recent promotion gateways; this is being investigated by HR officials.

4.3 Meena welcomed engagement with the Windsor Fellowship programme and queried whether refugees are eligible to apply for Welsh Government's apprenticeship programme. Gareth welcomed the work that was underway and queried whether applicant data was raising any concerns. Regarding meeting

Welsh Government's recruitment targets, Ellen suggested developing an end-to-end process map and identifying milestones might be beneficial.

4.4 The Shadow Board Bekah welcomed the breadth of coverage in the report and highlighted areas that require further attention; namely, improving representation across the organisation and, increasing the resources available to deliver the Anti-racism Wales plan. On increasing representation of BAME groups in the Welsh Government workforce, the Shadow Board suggested recruitment campaigns should emphasise that living in Wales is not a pre-requisite for joining the organisation.

4.5 Natalie thanked the group for their comments. A process mapping exercise of the recruitment process is underway, and this will look specifically at the recruitment of BAME candidates.

4.6 The Permanent Secretary closed the item, noting the need to maintain progress on these very important issues.

## 5. Key Performance Indicators

5.1 The Permanent Secretary invited Sharon Cross to provide an overview of the latest Welsh Government performance report. The Permanent Secretary noted that ExCo had recently received a presentation on building policy capability in Welsh Government. The Permanent Secretary noted the points raised regarding project and programme management in the performance report.

5.2 Ellen welcomed the update but queried whether it accurately reflects the position with legislation. Regarding programme and project management, having sat in as an observer on a training course, Ellen suggested that the focus had been more on leadership skills than on the detail of programme and project management.

5.3 Gareth cautioned against drawing conclusions on data from a short period of time, particularly given the impact of the pandemic over the last two years. Gareth noted the comments on programme and project management.

5.4 Meena queried whether the KPIs align with expectations for long-term organisational performance.

5.5 Gawain Evans noted the Finance Department's continued focus on improving its performance.

5.6 The Shadow Board highlighted the lack of information on staff satisfaction within the HR and Workforce Management theme. Shadow Board noted the lack of progress on project and programme management.

## **6. Covid-19 – end of the transition phase**

6.1 Liz Lalley provided an update on the position after the end of the formal transition period and the conclusion of the Transition Board established to oversee this process.

6.2 Liz noted that there is an agreed organisational approach to ongoing work on

the response to Covid, and there are robust contingency plans in place in the event of a Covid urgent scenario developing. As part of the transition process, all residual risks have been transferred to relevant departments; principally in the HSS Group.

6.3 Ellen noted the excellent work of those working on the response to Covid-19 and highlighted the importance of continuity planning in preparation for further waves given that so many staff from the original teams will have moved on to other roles.

6.4 Meena reflected on the variability in Covid policies across the four nations and queried whether there are plans for a common approach in managing the process of transitioning from pandemic to endemic.

6.5 Bekah noted that as civil servants, Welsh Government officials can contractually be moved at any time to cover a policy area and highlighted the need to ensure that appropriate support in place to support staff wellbeing and mental health.

6.6 Liz thanked the Board for their comments. The First Minister continues to raise questions around planning for future waves of the pandemic, particularly over the coming winter months, with UKG. As part of longer-term planning, consideration is being given as to how to swap in officials and teams to lead on areas of work for a defined period.

6.7 In terms of policy differences across the four nations, Liz commented that Welsh Government's preference has always been to have a four-nations approach, unless not in Wales's best interest. Where policies have diverged,

Welsh Government has worked closely with Comms teams from other governments to explain the differences in approach.

6.8 David Richards noted that the public inquiry into the management of the pandemic has been established and is considering governance and decision-making structure. The inquiry will also consider preparedness for the pandemic and will issue reports periodically throughout the lifespan of the inquiry.

## 7. Any other business

7.1 Gareth welcomed the think piece prepared by David Richards discussing the Wellbeing of Future Generations aspects of the items discussed at this Board meeting.

7.2 Bekah queried whether Board could at a future meeting consider Welsh Government's response to the cost-of-living crisis. The Permanent Secretary replied that these were policy questions for ministers to consider.

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