



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

# Welsh Government Board Meeting: 3 March 2023

Minutes from the Board meeting held on 03 March 2023.

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# Agenda

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Oral

See minutes.

## 2. Board Review – discussion on the findings of the review carried out in 2022

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## 3. Staff Survey – presentation on the results of the 2022 survey and action planning

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## 4. Diversity and Inclusion update

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## 5. Corporate Risk Register

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## 6. Finance update – Period 10

[Paper Item 6]

## 7. AOB

### Present

- The Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Gareth Lynn
- Ellen Donovan
- Aled Edwards
- Carys Williams
- Tracey Burke
- Judith Paget
- Andrew Slade
- Jo Salway
- Reg Kilpatrick
- Tim Moss
- Peter Kennedy
- Gawain Evans
- Helen Lentle
- Des Clifford
- David Richards
- Amelia John
- Natalie Pearson

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- Zakhiya Begum

## **In attendance**

- Andrew Jeffreys
- Isabel Owen
- Nigel Brown
- Sharon Cross
- Polina Cowley
- Angharad Evans
- Karl James

## **Apologies**

- Jo-Anne Daniels

## **Secretariat**

- Alison Rees

# **1. Welcome/Current Issues**

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the Board meeting. The minutes of the meeting of 13 January were agreed.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Carys Williams to her first Board meeting as Non-Executive Director. The Chair noted that Ellen Donovan would be stepping down from her role as Non-Executive Director as of 03 March and offered thanks on

behalf of the Board to Ellen for her input over the last five years, noting her enthusiasm and determination in supporting the work of Welsh Government.

1.3 The Chair noted the recent Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee scrutiny session on the 2021/22 Welsh Government accounts and thanked officials for their input to preparations for the scrutiny session.

1.4 Industrial action – Judith Paget provided an update on negotiations with the nursing unions. The Chair noted the planned strike action by the PCS and the ongoing negotiations with the teaching unions.

1.5 Ellen Donovan noted the specialist skills needed by officials leading negotiations and Peter Kennedy responded that Welsh Government has a number of senior officials with these skills.

1.6 NHS update - The Chair invited Judith Paget to provide an update on the current position in the NHS in Wales. Judith noted the recent decision to place the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in special measures and the resignation of the independent members from the Health Board.

## **2. Board Review – discussion on the findings of the review carried out in 2022**

2.1 The Chair welcomed Sharon Cross to the meeting and invited her to provide an overview of the findings of the 2022 Board Review.

2.2 Ellen Donovan supported the points raised in the review and highlighted the importance of there being clarity on the Board's remit as an advisory and assurance board.

2.3 Gareth Lynn welcomed the report of the 2022 review and noted the trusting

and open relationship amongst the Board and the opportunity for constructive challenge.

2.4 Carys Williams suggested holding Board seminars to explore issues in more detail.

2.5 Tracey Burke suggested that future reviews should explore views on the Board's effectiveness and achievements as well as governance issues; Sharon noted this point and agreed to consider for the 2023 review.

2.6 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted the suggestions made.

### **3. Staff Survey – presentation on the results of the 2022 survey and action planning**

3.1 The Chair welcomed Andrew Jeffreys (Welsh Treasury), Isabel Owen (Rural Payments Wales) and Nigel Brown (CAFCASS Cymru) to the meeting, they had been invited to join the discussion on the Staff Survey as representatives of areas of Welsh Government which scored particularly highly on learning and development and taking action to support staff wellbeing.

3.2 The Chair invited Natalie Pearson and Sharon Cross to take the Board through an in-depth analysis of the latest People Survey results and the proposed areas for action. While the engagement index (and theme scores more generally) saw a decline from the peak experienced during the two years of the pandemic, Welsh Government continued to perform above the UK benchmark in around two thirds of the survey questions. Knowledge and Analytical Services team undertook some further analysis on the survey results, focusing on the areas where Welsh Government performed particularly well in relation to the UK benchmark as well as the themes which were less positive or saw a decline on 2021 scores.

3.3 Nigel highlighted the importance of ensuring that the values and culture of the organisation underpin daily working life and the benefit to staff wellbeing when individuals feel valued and respected.

3.4 Isabel noted the emphasis that Rural Payments Wales places on listening to staff concerns and taking practical steps to respond to issues.

3.5 Andrew discussed the importance Welsh Treasury places on learning and development and the willingness of staff to share skills and experience with colleagues.

3.6 Reflecting on the survey results, Gareth stressed the importance of line managers feeling equipped with the skills to address under performance. Carys echoed this point and noted the importance of investing in training line managers to enable them to hold difficult conversations with staff. Jo Salway noted the challenges posed when teams include staff from other organisations with different workplace cultures.

3.7 Carys queried what actions could be taken at pace to address the issues highlighted in the survey.

3.8 Zakhiya Begum on behalf of the Shadow Board noted the points raised echoed the discussion at Shadow Board and added that Shadow Board had also considered the impact of hybrid working on line management.

3.9 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted that ExCo would drive forward actions taken in response to the survey results.

## 4. Diversity and Inclusion update

4.1 The Chair invited Amelia John and Andrew Jeffreys as the current and former Board Equality Champion to provide an update on progress against the



Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021-26, including an update for 2022 and look ahead to 2023.

4.2 Andrew noted the progress made on recruitment and becoming a more diverse organisation but stressed the challenge for the organisation if it is to meet its recruitment targets. Amelia stressed the role of leadership in bringing about the necessary cultural change.

4.3 Peter Kennedy echoed the points made and stressed that diversity and inclusion is not simply a matter for HR teams but a leadership issue. Peter noted the progress made and the areas where improvements are needed. Peter cautioned against losing ground on the progress made on diversity in recruitment following the planned move away from promotion gateways. Peter noted the benefits increasing external recruitment could bring in terms of attracting candidates from a wider range of backgrounds to Welsh Government.

4.4 Carys noted the points raised and offered her support to any of the staff networks that might benefit from a Board member's input.

4.5 Helen Lentle noted the challenge in encouraging more women to apply for posts in the Senior Civil Service (SCS) as often individuals believe that the drawbacks of joining the SCS outweigh the benefits.

4.6 The Chair noted the points raised and thanked all for their comments.

## 5. Corporate Risk Register

5.1 The Chair invited Clare Collett to provide an update on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR).

5.2 Clare noted that the current iteration of the CRR has been scrutinised at Finance and Corporate Services Subcommittee (F&SC), Audit and Risk

Assurance Committee (ARAC) and at ExCo. ExCo has asked F&SC to focus its attention on mitigations to ensure that they are driven forward when managing risk and has approved a proposal from F&SC to consider the top-rated Group-level risks.

5.3 Gareth noted the positive direction of travel in managing risk and echoed ExCo's views on ensuring that mitigations are being delivered.

## **6. Finance Update – Period 10**

6.1 The Chair invited Gawain Evans to provide an update on the Welsh Government's 2022-23 forecast outturn and reserves position as at 31 January 2023 (period 10).

6.2 Gawain noted the positive impact of decisions made earlier in the financial year on the current position and highlighted the importance of maximising reserves for the 2023/24 financial year.

6.3 Gareth noted his surprise at the underspends being declared at Period 10 and stressed the need for accurate financial profiling, particularly given budgetary pressures going forward.

6.4 Tracey highlighted the need for a system to allow timely decisions on repurposing any underspends.

## **7. Any Other Business**

7.1 No items of Any Other Business were raised.

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