



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Board Meeting: 28 April 2023

Minutes from the Board meeting held on 28 April 2023.

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Agenda

1. Welcome / Current issues

Oral

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2. Interim Report of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales

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3. Update on the work of the Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group

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4. Board forward look

[Paper Item 4]

5. AOB

Present

- The Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Gareth Lynn
- Carys Williams
- Aled Edwards
- Jo-Anne Daniels
- Tracey Burke
- Judith Paget
- Andrew Slade
- Reg Kilpatrick
- Tim Moss
- Peter Kennedy
- Sharon Bounds
- Helen Lentle
- Des Clifford
- David Richards
- Amelia John
- Natalie Pearson
- Zakhyia Begum

In attendance

- Professor Laura McAllister
- Piers Bisson
- Gareth Morgan
- Sophie Brighthouse
- James Gerrard
- Polina Cowley
- Geraint Walsh
- Ben Henriques

Apologies

- Gawain Evans

Secretariat

- Alison Rees

1. Welcome/Current Issues

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted the apologies received. The notes of the meeting of 03 March were agreed.

1.2 The Chair noted the strike action by PCS members taking place on 28 April.

1.3 The Chair noted that following the Tolley Review he has asked David Richards to reflect on the findings and consider whether the Ministerial code requires updating.

2. Interim Report of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales

2.1 The Chair welcomed Professor Laura McAllister, Co-Chair of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales to the meeting and invited Professor McAllister to present to the Board on the work of the commission and the findings set out in its interim report.

2.2 The Chair thanked Professor McAllister for her presentation and invited Board members to comment. David Richards asked Professor McAllister for her thoughts on any issues that had come up during the work of the commission that had surprised her. Professor McAllister replied that the continued lack of understanding of the role of the Welsh Government and its areas of responsibility had been surprising. Professor McAllister added that the work of the commission was anchored in a set of values based on agency, accountability, subsidiarity and equality and inclusion and highlighted the importance of communicating that improving services for people in Wales is at the heart of calls for changes to the constitutional future of Wales. Aled Edwards thanked Professor McAllister for her excellent presentation and noted that as a member of the All-Wales Convention he had come up against a similar lack of knowledge amongst the public on the remit of Welsh Government versus UK Government.

2.3 Gareth Lynn noted that as Chair of Welsh Government's Audit and Risk Committee he and the committee have started to consider the longer-term risks and issue Wales will face asked how the commission was factoring in the ways in which Wales will change over the next eight to ten years to its thinking. Professor McAlister responded that projections had been included in the commission's work as far as is practicable, often through the work of the sub-groups.

2.4 Meena Upadhyaya queried how the machinery of inter-governmental relations can be reformed to guard against UK Government making unilateral decisions that impact on Welsh Government. Professor McAllister agreed that this is an area where improvements are needed and highlighted the need for buy-in from all partners for relations to work effectively.

2.5 Piers Bisson noted that inter government relations can be challenging and added that the Inter-Governmental Relations Review does provide a structure that could work to good effect, but that it needs to be accompanied by a set of behaviours to enable that to happen.

2.6 The Chair invited Zakhyia Begum to offer the views of the Shadow Board. Zakhyia noted that Shadow Board had queried whether the commission had captured the views of the deaf and BSL users adequately and concluded that further devolution needs to be coherent, adequately resourced in terms of numbers, skills, and complementary powers to be effective.

2.7 The Chair invited Professor McAllister to make any final comments. Professor McAllister noted that several commentators have highlighted how the so-called ‘jagged edges’ of policy - that is where devolved and non-devolved policies interrelate – impact on delivery. For example, the interrelationship between crime, justice and policing and mental health and housing. The ‘jagged edges’ between these areas can prove challenging for Wales and improved policy coherence is perhaps the strongest argument for change.

2.8 The Chair invited Piers Bisson to make any final comments. Piers noted that officials will be holding a session with the WG 2025 Project Board to discuss the implications on the organisation of further powers being devolved to Wales.

3. Update on the work of the Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group

3.1 The Chair invited Tracey Burke, Director General Climate Change and Rural Affairs to present to Board on the work of the Group. In her presentation Tracey highlighted the top priorities for the Group in the period April to September 2023 and touched on feedback from Deputy Directors and Directors across the group on the challenges they face and possible solutions.

3.2 The Chair invited Board members to comment on the presentation. Carys Williams noted that the feedback from Deputy Directors and Directors was particularly powerful and queried whether the Non-Executive Directors might be able to offer support and advice to officials address these challenges. Tracey

thanked Carys for her offer of support adding that sharing experiences of different ways of working could be beneficial and suggested discussing further outside of the meeting.

3.3 David Richards thanked Tracey for her excellent presentation and asked whether Welsh Government has sufficient depth and breadth of expertise to address some of the technical challenges around the climate change agenda. Tracey responded that although there is a depth of specialism within the Group there are some gaps in technical expertise around climate change which the Group is looking to address.

3.4 Gareth Lynn welcomed the presentation, in particular the opportunity to gain an understanding of the head count position, competing priorities and budget pressures faced by the Group. Gareth noted the position on the Core Valley Lines.

3.5 Meena Upadhyaya asked the extent to which it is possible to broker long-term working partnerships with specialists to collaborate on technical areas. Tracey noted that this is something the Group would very much like to do.

3.6 The Chair invited Zakhyia Begum to give the views of the Shadow Board. Zakhyia noted that Shadow Board welcomed the opportunity to consider the breadth of work covered by the CCRA Group and highlighted the volume of Programme for Government commitments that the Group has responsibility for delivering. Shadow Board had considered the impact the considerable volume of work might have on staff.

3.7 The Chair thanked Tracey for her excellent presentation and drew the discussion to close.

4. Board forward look

4.1 The Chair invited Board members to comment on the draft forward plan of Board items circulated ahead of the meeting.

4.2 Carys Williams opened the discussion and queried whether there are areas where input from the Non-Executive Directors would add value and bring a fresh perspective to the debate. The Chair responded that providing oversight of the WG2025 change programme would be particularly beneficial, Tim Moss agreed with this suggestion.

4.3 Gareth Lynn noted that the Non-Executive Directors had discussed the forward look as a group and would feedback on the discussions to the secretariat.

4.4 Amelia John welcomed the focus on diversity and inclusion in the forward look.

4.5 Meena Upadhyaya suggested that Board could perhaps be more proactive in celebrating achievements across Welsh Government.

4.6 The Chair asked Zakhyia Begum for the views of the Shadow Board and she responded that the Shadow Board would welcome an update on Cymraeg 2050 and developments in terms of diversity and inclusion. The Shadow Board would also welcome a discussion on how the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy could be enhanced in terms of inclusion. The Shadow Board also suggested that a presentation from Welsh Government's Chief Scientific Officer on maximising the use of research and development in policy making.

4.7 The Chair thanked all for their comments and closed the discussion.

5. AOB

5.1 The Chair invited Board members to raise any items of any other business.

5.2 Zakhyia Begum noted that members of the Shadow Board had participated in the recent cost base efficiency workshop hosted by Tim Moss, there were many synergies between the points raised in the workshop and discussions at Shadow Board.

5.3 Des Clifford noted that it has been agreed that the Office of National Statistics and Welsh Government will undertake a joint project to understand anomalies between the reporting of Welsh language usage in the Census and the Annual Population Survey. Aled Edwards welcomed this proposal.

5.4 The Chair thanked Board members and closed the meeting. Board will next meet on 09 June.

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