



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Board Meeting: 20 October 2023

Minutes from the Board meeting held on 20 October 2023.

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Agenda

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Present

- Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Aled Edwards (until 12:30)
- Carys Williams
- Tim Moss
- Judith Paget
- Tracey Burke
- Andrew Slade
- Jo-Anne Daniels
- Reg Kilpatrick
- David Richards (until 12:30)
- Gawain Evans
- Helen Lentle (from Item 3)
- Zakhyia Begum

In attendance

- Polina Cowley
- Clare Collett
- Cuong Vinh
- Nick Wood
- Kate Hearnden
- Rocio Cifuentes
- Kirrin Spiby-Davidson

Secretariat

- Alison Rees

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Apologies

- Des Clifford
- Gareth Lynn
- Amelia John

1. Welcome/Current Issues

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted the apologies received. The Chair noted that this was the first time Board had met face-to-face since the pandemic.

1.2 The minutes of 02 September were approved, subject to a minor amendment to paragraph 3.3 requested by Carys Williams.

1.3 The Chair updated Board on the plans to recruit two new Non-Executive Directors and thanked Carys Williams, Gareth Lynn and Zakhyia Begum for their efforts in the shortlisting process.

1.4 The Chair noted that Meena Upadhyaya has kindly agreed to extend her term as Non-Executive Director for a short period of time until the recruitment campaign to find her replacement has ended.

1.5 The Chair noted that Nashima Begum, Race Equality Senior Adviser won a Black History Wales Community Award for her contribution to race equality and inclusion at the recent Black History Wales 365 Youth Awards.

1.6 The Anti-racist Wales Plan Policy team been nominated for the Diversity and Inclusion Award category in the Civil Service Awards 2023 and that the team have made it to the final round of judging.

1.7 The Chair noted the ripple effects across communities in Wales of the Hamas led attacks on Israel on 07 October. The Minister for Social Justice has met with faith groups and is committed to ensuring that people across Wales can go about their daily lives and worship without fear or threat.

1.8 The Chair noted the emerging in-year financial position and the challenges for the 2024-25 financial year.

1.9 Work on the Covid Inquiry continues with significant work underway across the organisation to prepare statements. Aled Edwards commented that he was reassured that the way in which the civic society in Wales contributed to the pandemic response will feature in the inquiry.

2. Children's Commissioner for Wales - key priorities and relationship with Welsh Government

2.1 The Chair welcomed Rocio Cifuentes, Children's Commissioner for Wales to the meeting and invited her to present the key priorities for her office and outline her ask of the Welsh Government.

2.2 Carys Williams asked the Commissioner to outline the truths she would like Welsh Government to hear. The Commissioner suggested that more radical thinking is needed to address issues and highlighted the need to provide better explanations to young people for the decisions Welsh Government makes, especially around decisions on budgets and spending.

2.3 Aled Edwards asked the Commissioner for her thoughts on how to reshape and remove toxicity from the public values system. The Commissioner highlighted two areas in her response. First, the importance of educating children and young people on all elements of diversity and the recognition that

poverty and cuts on public services can lead to the scapegoating of incomers to communities.

2.4 Tim Moss asked the Commissioner for her views on the similarities between the issues faced by young people and older people. The Commissioner replied that there are similar issues but added that adverse experiences in childhood have a long term impact and will shape the future of the whole country.

2.5 Meena Upadhyaya noted the physical impact of Long Covid on children and young people and queried the support available to children.

2.6 David Richards asked about the themes coming out of the engagement sessions with children and young people. The Commissioner responded that the issues highlighted depend on the groups but issues such as the impact of the cost of living and global issues are often raised.

2.7 Gawain Evans asked if the Commissioner saw her role as helping children and young people raise their ambitions. The Commissioner agreed that her role did involve this but for many the struggles are immense and basic needs must be met before children can hope to achieve their potential.

2.8 Jo-Anne Daniels noted the energy and focus the Commissioner has brought to the role and highlighted the positive and constructive relationship officials have with the Commissioner's office.

2.9 Tim Moss suggested improving access to segmented data to inform policy development. The Commissioner agreed and noted the need to improve the broader evidence base too.

2.10 Zakhyia Begum noted that several of the Shadow Board had found aspects of the presentation triggering and asked how the social model of disability will form part of the Commissioner's work. The Commissioner replied that while she would make every effort to speak for children, there is nothing more powerful

than children and young people having an opportunity to speak their truth directly.

2.11 The Commissioner closed the item by noting the critical friend relationship that exists between Welsh Government and the Commissioner's office.

3. The Corporate Risk Register

3.1 The Chair welcomed Clare Collett to the meeting and invited her to provide Board with an update on the most recent iteration of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). The CRR has been informed by discussions at Finance and Corporate Services (F&SC) Committee, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and ExCo. Clare highlighted the changes to the process of producing the CRR, noting the work done over the summer months to review the CRR and horizon scanning.

3.2 Tim Moss invited the Board forward on outside of the meeting any queries on the process of compiling the CRR and suggested focusing discussions on the strategic issues outlined in the slide pack accompanying the item.

3.3 The Chair noted the number of risks on the CRR rated as 'red' and asked Board members for their views on the organisation's risk appetite and the residual scores set out in the CRR.

3.4 On the question of residual scores, Carys Williams queried whether the mitigating actions outlined in the CRR would deliver the residual score. Carys suggested the need to take a broader view of risk and plan for external issues that may impact on Welsh Government.

3.5 On the issue of external risks, Reg Kilpatrick stressed the importance of understanding the wider risk landscape, including risks that are not owned by

Welsh Government, but queried whether these risks should be recorded in the CRR.

3.6 David Richards asked whether there should be a Wales Risk Register. David noted the importance of reviewing the effectiveness of mitigating actions once a risk has materialised.

3.7 Andrew Slade commented that risk appetite can vary across the organisation depending on the area of business and suggested that there needs to be an upfront dialogue with both Audit Wales and the Public Accounts and Public Administration committee on the approach being taken.

3.8 Meena Upadhyaya welcomed the proposal to keep the risks on IT resilience and Cyber Security separate and queried whether Welsh Government liaised with Cardiff University on cyber security. Tim responded that Welsh Government does liaise with Cardiff University.

3.9 Jo-Anne queried the process for escalating risks from Group Risk Registers to the Corporate Risk Register and suggested that there may be additional risks from the Education, social Justice and Welsh Language Group that should appear on the CRR.

3.10 On the issue of recording external threats on a risk register, Jo-Anne suggested that there should be an external focus noted the impact on Welsh Government of issues such as Covid, the war in Ukraine and EU-exit.

3.11 Judith Paget noted that the Health and Social Services Group has been reviewing its risk register. The group also has oversight of the NHS Wales risk register.

3.12 On behalf of the Shadow Board, Zakhyia Begum referred the Board to the Shadow Board minutes and highlighted the comments on staff capability as well as capacity in relation to risk 2.3 on the CRR.

3.13 Clare thanked all for their comments and noted that Welsh Government does have a risk appetite statement which drives the organisation's approach to risk management. The statement was revised during the Covid pandemic and will be reviewed again to reflect the experience of the pandemic.

3.14 The Chair thanked all for their comments and closed the item.

4. Health and Social Services Group (HSSG): System Resilience and Winter Preparedness

4.1 The Chair welcomed Nick Wood to the meeting and invited him to provide an overview of the Health and Social Services Group's approach to system resilience and winter preparedness.

4.2 Meena Upadhyaya noted the challenge that delays in care pathways had caused in winter 2022 and asked how this would be addressed this winter.

Judith Paget

replied that several steps were being taken to address the winter pressures experienced in social care, including working with Regional Partnerships to build capacity as well as investment in allied healthcare professionals. Nick added that officials are looking for long-term solutions as well as addressing the immediate peaks over the winter months.

4.3 Carys Williams highlighted the need for being proactive in the approach to adult social care issues and noted the importance of engaging with third sector and volunteer groups to support the social care sector. Judith commented that efforts are underway to work with General Practitioners across Wales to identify before winter the most vulnerable and offer support before issues escalate. The aim is to build on this approach for future years.

4.4 On behalf of the Shadow Board, Zakhyia Begum noted that the paper

supporting the item did not address how marginalised or minority groups may be disproportionately impacted by the pressures in the NHS. The Shadow Board highlighted the challenges that deaf people, face accessing services. Judith welcomed the views of the Shadow Board and recognised the need to improve services for the deaf community.

5. Update on Tata Steel (TSUK)

5.1 The Chair welcomed Kate Hearnden to the meeting and invited Kate and Andrew Slade to provide an update on following the recent announcement by UKG and TSUK of a joint agreement on funding towards TSUK's decarbonisation of their UK operations.

5.2 Meena Upadhyaya noted her surprise that Wales is not considered a centre of excellence given the research into the production of steel in Wales, Andrew Slade agreed and suggested that Welsh Higher Educations Institutions may be more involved in the future.

5.3 Carys Williams noted the impact on the local community and prospects for young people living in and around the area. Zakhyia Begum agreed, noting that the decision will ripple through the community and suggested that a whole-government approach will be needed to mitigate the impact on the community and young people.

6. AOB

6.1 The Chair invited Board members to raise any other business.

6.2 Zakhyia Begum updated the Board on the recruitment process for the new

Shadow Board which will be in place from January 2024 and thanked Meena Upadhyaya for her support. Meena noted the high-quality candidates that have applied to join the Shadow Board.

6.3 The board will next meet on 08 December.

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