



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



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Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on 15 January 2024.

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Present

- Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS (Chair)
 - Rebecca Evans MS
 - Vaughan Gething MS
 - Lesley Griffiths MS
 - Jane Hutt MS
 - Julie James MS
 - Jeremy Miles MS
 - Eluned Morgan MS
 - Mick Antoniw MS
-
- Hannah Blythyn MS
 - Dawn Bowden MS
 - Julie Morgan MS
 - Lynne Neagle MS
 - Lee Waters MS

Officials

- Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary
- Des Clifford, Director Office of the First Minister
- Matthew Hall, Head of Cabinet Division
- Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications
- Rory Powell, Head of First Minister's Office
- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser

- Madeleine Brindley, Special Adviser
- Alex Bevan, Special Adviser
- Daniel Butler, Special Adviser
- Ian Butler, Special Adviser
- Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
- Sara Faye, Special Adviser
- Sam Hadley, Special Adviser
- David Hooson, Special Adviser
- Clare Jenkins, Special Adviser
- Owen John, Special Adviser
- Phillipa Marsden, Special Adviser
- Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan, Head of Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- Damian Roche, Cabinet Secretariat
- Catrin Sully, Cabinet Office
- Kathryn Hallett, First Minister's Office
- Helena Bird, Permanent Secretary's Office
- Nia James, Director of Legal Services
- Tracey Burke, Director General Climate Change & Rural Affairs
- Sioned Evans, Director General Public Services and Welsh Language
- Tim Moss, Chief Operating Officer
- Judtih Paget, Director General Health and Social Services
- Andrew Slade, Director General, Economy, Treasury and Constitution
- Owain Lloyd, Director Education and Welsh Language (item 4)
- Georgina Haarhoff, Deputy Director School Improvement and Qualifications (item 4)
- Claire Bennett, Director Environmental Sustainability (item 5)

- Spencer Conlon, Head of Natural Resources and Communities (item 5)
- Rachel Garside-Jones, Director Co-operation Unit (item 5)

Item 1: Minutes of the previous meeting

1. 1 Cymeradwydd y Cabinet gofnodion y 8 Ionawr/ Cabinet approved the minutes of 8 January.

Item 2: First Minister's items

Visit to Silesia, Poland

2.1 The First Minister informed Cabinet that he had visited Silesia, Poland the previous week to renew the agreement with the Silesian Voivodeship, which had been signed over 20 years ago. The Action Plan for cooperation focused on life sciences, cyber, education, science and innovation.

Fujitsu

2.2 The First Minister advised Cabinet that, following questions in the Siambr the previous week about Welsh Government contracts with Fujitsu, the Minister for Finance and Local Government would be writing to all Members highlighting that 2 Fujitsu contracts had been identified, both with Transport for Wales, which

were due to expire in July.

Industrial action in the Health Service and winter pressures

2.3 The Minister for Health and Social Services informed Cabinet that a great deal of work had taken place to prepare for industrial action by junior doctors.

Item 3: Senedd business

3.1 Cabinet noted that voting time was scheduled for 5:05pm on Tuesday and around 5.55pm on Wednesday.

3.2 Ministers acknowledged that business for the following Tuesday would be mostly themed around child poverty issues, with the launch of the government's Child Poverty Strategy.

Item 4: School improvement: The roles and responsibilities of Education Partners

4.1 The Minister for Education and the Welsh Language introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to note the findings of the review of the roles and responsibilities of education partners. Ministers were also asked to agree that

the review should move to work closely with partners to design a more streamlined and focused approach to improve educational performance in Wales.

4.2 A review of the roles and responsibilities of education partners and the delivery of school improvement arrangements had been commissioned.

4.3 In December the minister had received an update on the findings of the review and next steps. The review had found considerable frustration with the current arrangements and consistency of support provided to schools.

4.4 It concluded there was a need for more focus on local collaboration and partnership working between school leaders and their local authority, with partnerships between two or more Authorities rather than wider regional structures. Strong national leadership and priorities were important, and mechanisms would need to ensure that as much resource as possible was provided directly to schools or supporting groups of schools who collaborated.

4.5 The review was originally intended to continue until March 2024, however, given the consistency of response, which aligned with other evidence, it was recommended the review team should move to working directly with education partners to design a simplified and streamlined approach to school support in Wales, in addition to defining what was needed at a national level.

4.6 This would align with the plans to amalgamate education grants that were provided to local authorities, regional consortia or other partnerships, which would streamline processes, reduce burdens and align with existing accountability and governance arrangements.

4.7 The review process would help to shape a preferred model. This would need to be accompanied with national capacity to ensure that schools were operating within a clear and prioritised policy framework, focused on delivery of outcomes.

4.8 There would be a National Coherence Group to ensure the coherence of the new arrangements across Wales.

4.9 Cabinet agreed the focus should be on providing consistency and delivering better outcomes for children and young people.

4.10 Cabinet approved the paper.

Item 5: Environmental governance and biodiversity targets – white paper and Bill

5.1 The Minister for Climate Change introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to approve the direction of travel set out in the proposed Securing a Sustainable Future: Environmental Principles, Governance and Biodiversity for a Greener Wales White Paper.

5.2 Climate change and biodiversity loss continued to pose a real and present threat to Wales. The evidence was clear that human activities were causing the Earth's climate to change at an unprecedented rate, leading to more extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and melting glaciers.

5.3 The previous year had been the warmest on record globally, with the

average temperature 1.48c above the pre-industrial average. The temperature had been well above average in both the Antarctic and the European section of the Arctic, with a significant reduction in ice. Next year was expected to be even higher with the El Nino event. Thereby demonstrating the existential threat of climate change.

5.4 The proposed white paper set out how the Government intended to further address these threats. It had been split into three distinct but complementary sections, which contained a range of proposals around how environmental protections could be strengthened, while taking effective action to restore biodiversity.

5.5 The first section considered embedding environmental principles effectively into policy making at an early stage, which was based upon the principles set out in EU legislation where Member States were required to give due regard. These principles within Welsh legislation would meet the commitment to ensure there was no roll-back in environmental standards since leaving the EU, while presenting an effective foundation to develop future policy and legislation that was not otherwise provided through existing environmental law.

5.6 The second section built upon this foundation, detailing proposals to strengthen environmental governance arrangements through the establishment of an environmental governance body for Wales, based on a commission with experts. The aim was for the organisation to share back-room functions with other arm's length bodies, such as the new Coal Tip Authority, to reduce costs.

5.7 Thirdly, there was a new approach to combat the decline in biodiversity in Wales. This included a headline nature positive target to reverse the decline in

biodiversity with an improvement in the status of species and ecosystems by 2030 and their clear recovery by 2050. This target would be supported by proposals to strengthen implementation, monitoring, and reporting, as well as place further duties for Welsh Ministers to set out how this would be delivered through supplementary targets.

5.8 There would also be a statutory biodiversity duty to require public authorities to contribute to the delivery of the targets.

5.9 Collectively, the proposals met commitments set out within the Programme for Government commitment as well as part of the co-operation agreement with Plaid Cymru. The proposals also supported broader commitments towards tackling the Climate and Nature emergencies.

5.10 Furthermore, the proposals built on previous consultation and engagement in 2019 and 2020, as well as lessons learned through the UK and Scottish Government's recent experience in taking forward their legislation. The white paper also aimed to build on the positive action taken by the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor in Wales.

5.11 Cabinet welcomed the white paper and noted that the headline nature target would be built upon the biodiversity indicator within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, to avoid duplication.

5.12 Cabinet approved the recommendations in the paper.

Item 6: The Social Partnership and Public

Procurement (Wales) Act 2023: Operationalising the Social Partnership Duty on Welsh Ministers

6.1 The First Minister introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to agree the approach to discharging the social partnership duty on Welsh Ministers, under Section 17 of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. Ministers were also asked to confirm that longer term strategic matters should be considered for consultation with the Social Partnership Council (SPC).

6.2 The Act became law at the end of May the previous year and, amongst other issues, it placed a new duty on Welsh Ministers to consult the SPC on strategic decisions in relation to the reasonable steps within the commitments set out under the well-being objectives in the Programme for Government.

6.3 It was proposed that the SPC should be consulted on the strategic drivers that would be pre-requisites to delivery. This would discharge the duty.

6.4 The specific drivers would be: the Government's approach to prioritisation of funding through the budget setting process; the prioritisation of legislation, as set out in the annual legislative statement; and the annual review of the well-being objectives set under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The timing of the reviews should be considered in line with the annual processes.

6.5 There would also be an opportunity to consult the SPC on longer term strategic issues.

6.6 Cabinet welcomed the paper and the proposed proportionate approach to

consulting the SPC on the government's strategic drivers.

6.7 Cabinet approved the paper and noted that the First Minister would communicate the decision to the SPC at its next meeting on 1st February.

Cabinet Secretariat
January 2024

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