

Workforce Partnership Council (WPC)
15 March Meeting Notes

**Meeting of the Workforce Partnership Council (WPC)
Thursday 15 March 2018
Cathays Park, Cardiff**

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

1.1 The Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services (CSLGPS) welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced the Leader of the House and Chief Whip (LoH) attending for items 1, 3 and 4 and explained that the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning would be attending later for item 6 on apprenticeships. In addition, he introduced Gill Lewis and Alison Ramsey of the Public Services Staff Commission (PSSC) attending for item 2. Due to the full agenda he asked for apologies and substitutes to be recorded at the end of the minute.

Asbestos

1.2 The CSLGPS began by noting that Trade Unions had requested that the issue of asbestos in public buildings be placed on the agenda for this meeting. He was grateful for their subsequent agreement that, rather than taking up time on this agenda, and subject to the outcome of the review, the new Joint Executive Committee should consider the matter as a priority.

Action: The new Joint Executive Committee to consider the matter of asbestos in public buildings as a priority

Budget

1.3 The CSLGPS confirmed he did not intend covering budgetary issues in any detail as he felt members would already be sufficiently familiar with this subject.

European Transition

1.4 The CSLGPS made clear that there is no prospect of recommending consent to the EU Withdrawal Bill as currently drafted as it would allow the UK Government to take control of laws and policy areas that are devolved. The UK Government had not brought forward an agreed amendment to the EU Withdrawal Bill, and in response, the Welsh Government had recently introduced the Law Derived from the European (Wales) Bill which passed its first stage on the 14 March. He confirmed that on the same day the First Minister had met with the Prime Minister and that discussions over European Transition had been more positive in tone.

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2. WPC Review

2.1 The LoH introduced the item and outlined the recommendations set out in the accompanying papers.

2.2 Trade unions and employers welcomed the papers and the WPC ratified the recommendations. In discussion, the trade unions stressed that their membership of the Education and the Devolved Government Sector Groups had recognised the benefits of engagement through their current structure and proposed that those meetings should continue. The LoH assured members that the review group recognised the value of the sector groups, and was recommending that the groups themselves should determine whether or not they should continue, albeit outside the refreshed WPC arrangements.

2.3 The trade unions proposed a final meeting of the Review Group to ensure agreed arrangements were in place. In terms of HE and FE membership of the new WPC, LoH explained that she remained very keen for them to be full members and that positive discussions were taking place. It was agreed that this issue should be addressed in the final meeting of the Review Group. The employers particularly welcomed the Joint Executive and Secretariat arrangements considering that the new structure would address the challenges of specific engagement issues for them. The LoH put on record her thanks to the Review Group for their work.

Action: WPC Secretariat to arrange a final meeting of the WPC Review Group.

3. Public Services Staff Commission (PSSC)

3.1 The CSLGPS introduced the item and welcomed Gill Lewis and Alison Ramsey to present their final report to the WPC. Gill Lewis ran through three aspects of the PSSC's work:

- I. employment policies - not for discussion at this meeting but raised in order to make members aware that they had been published on the PSSC's website and to seek a recommendation that this work be transferred to the new Joint Executive Committee
- II. the work completed over the last twelve months as laid out in the final annual report of the PSSC (published on the PSSC's website). Gill Lewis also recommended that the key lessons learnt set out in the covering letter to the CSLGPS be taken forward under the new arrangements
- III. the work on pay harmonisation. The PSSC recognised that this was a very complex area that would require a social partnership approach if taken forward

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3.2 Summing-up, Gill Lewis sought:

- WPC's agreement to the recommendation that the work be transferred to the Joint Executive Committee
- comments on the pay harmonisation paper

3.3 Mike Payne, for the trade unions thanked the Commission for their hard work over the past two years, acknowledging the progress made on joint guidance for joint services in Wales and recognising the complexities of the different ways of working between the 22 local authorities. He suggested that discussions on pay harmonisation and harmonisation policy and procedures should be a priority for the new Joint Executive and the WPC. The CSLGPS agreed that this item should be on the agenda for the first meeting of the new Joint Executive.

3.4 For the employers, Alison Ward echoed her thanks to the Commission for the quality of work it had produced and reassured them that the legacy work would be taken forward across services. Shavanah Taj for the PCS Union talked of her positive experience of engaging with the PSSC in developing policies and guidance but emphasised the importance of evaluating whether employers were adhering to them. Margaret Thomas echoed her thanks to the PSSC for its work and for working in partnership with employers and trade unions. She confirmed the importance of those relationships and the reassurance that a Joint Secretariat would be in place to take this forward. However, she expressed her disappointment that the new structure had not been put in place sooner.

3.5 Steve Thomas expressed his gratitude to the PSSC for all their work including that on pay harmonisation. He suggested that a consistent approach to pay harmonisation should be taken forward across the wider public sector and should not be restricted to just local authorities. Margaret Thomas supported this view. The CSLGPS suggested that discussion of 'One Public Service' should form part of the agenda for the first Joint Executive meeting.

3.6 The CSLGPS also extended his gratitude to the PSSC and his appreciation of their commitment during this time. He also confirmed that the final report of the PSSC would form part of the agenda for the first Joint Executive meeting.

Action: The WPC Secretariat to ensure the following items are placed on the agenda of the first meeting of the Joint Executive:

- **Harmonisation of policies, procedures and pay**
- **One Public Service**
- **Final report of the PSSC**

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4. Workforce Planning and Mobility (WPM)

4.1 The CSLGPS introduced the workforce planning and mobility update and handed over to the LoH who informed members that the final meeting of the WPM under the current arrangements was held on the 8 February. She extended her thanks to WPM members for all their dedication and hard work in driving the agenda forward, and to the WPM secretariat for supporting them in doing this.

4.2 The LoH reflected on the achievements of the WPM and updated members on the progress that had been made across a range of issues including:

- developing a set of robust, cross-public sector data for the first time in Wales
- working with the PSSC to develop cross-public sector planning guidance
- the design, development and implementation of the People Exchange Cymru (PEC) model across the public services sector
- working with lawyers and, more recently the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) to develop a workforce mobility protocol
- developing a cross-public sector survey to establish the extent of redeployment both within and across public services in Wales
- development of a Cross Sector Apprenticeship framework

4.3 The LoH stressed the significant progress that had been made in addressing the issues that had hindered the mobility of staff. However, she emphasised the need to adopt a more strategic approach based on a clear vision for mobility both within and across public services. She explained how she thought this could be taken forward by the Joint Secretariat through: the expansion of open workforce data; a fundamental review of PEC technology and branding; exploring the GMCA mobility model further; and taking forward the PSSC's agenda. The LoH sought comments from members.

4.4 David Evans referred to the challenges he felt teachers and support staff faced in relation to redeployment. In his view, this could only be addressed by revisiting legislation and putting in place more robust arrangements. The LoH explained work on a survey on the redeployment of staff across the public sector was taking place and referenced the draft survey proposal contained at paper 3. She confirmed she had spoken to the Cabinet Secretary for Education who supported this work. She would be looking for the Joint Executive Committee to take it forward.

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4.5 Margaret Thomas observed that a 'One Public Service' vision for mobility across the devolved public sector was part of the proposed work plan for the WPC Joint Secretariat moving forward. The ambition was to include schools in any new mobility protocol.

4.6 The LoH concluded that the GMCA model had been developed with the support of the Mayor of Manchester. LoH indicated that the intention was to set-up meetings between the Mayor of Manchester (and possibly other mayors) and Welsh Government ministers - there was some discussion about the impacts of current modification order arrangements on mobility. Rex Phillips (NASUWT) felt that in some ways they were helpful in terms of enabling the education workforce to be redeployed. He felt the problem lay with local authorities which prevent schools from redeploying their staff.

4.7 The LoH thanked members for their comments and assured them that the WPM secretariat would prepare a legacy document for handover to the Joint Secretariat.

Action: Joint Executive Committee to take a strategic approach to workforce planning and mobility through an expansion of workforce data, a fundamental review of PEC technology/branding, exploring the GMCA Mobility Model further, undertaking the redeployment survey and taking forward the PSSC's agenda.

Action: Meetings between the Mayor of Manchester and Welsh Government ministers to be set up

Action: WPM Secretariat to prepare a legacy document for handover to the new Joint Secretariat.

5. Digitisation and Public Service Jobs

5.1 The CSLGPS invited the LoH to introduce the associated paper which was characterised as an initial conversation. Ministers explained that a panel was being drawn together to consider the issues associated with digitisation across the economy. This would be announced shortly. Amanda Wilkinson drew attention to a major piece of work in this space, which was being led by Julie Lydon at UK level. She indicated that this would need to be fed into these discussions.

5.2 The trade unions considered that there were significant implications around digitisation for the workforce, training and trade union numbers. They proposed that the issue should be included in the WPC forward work programme and suggested a small group may need to be convened to explore the issue in greater depth. Prompted by the reference to a panel, the trade unions noted that they continued to stress the need for representation on various Welsh Government and other governance panels. CSLGPS

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assured members that governance was an issue which he took extremely seriously and was looking at it now.

5.3 A discussion followed about the various groups with which trade unions were engaged and where they had representation within these structures. It was emphasised by the trade unions that their representation be considered at the outset when developing governance/advisory bodies. Trade union representation on relevant boards was supported. The CSLGPS invited Mike Payne to write to him about this issue. Steve Thomas indicated that he would do likewise.

Action: The WPC Secretariat to ensure Digitisation is included in the WPC's forward work programme.

Action: Mike Payne and Steve Thomas to write (separately) to the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services regarding trade union representation on specific governance and advisory bodies.

6. Apprenticeships

6.1 The CSLGPS welcomed the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to the meeting and invited her to speak on this item. The Minister covered recent promotional activity for apprenticeships which included updating employer toolkits and process charts. The Minister also confirmed that officials had met with the WLGA to discuss proposals for a cross sector apprenticeship and that the Welsh Apprenticeship Advisory Board (WAAB) had met for the first time on the 13 March to discuss the structure, frameworks and delivery of apprenticeships moving forward.

6.2 Referencing the specific request for information on apprenticeships and pedagogy, the Minister confirmed the Apprenticeship Standards for Wales may need to be strengthened to cover pedagogy which would require time to make changes to the necessary regulations. In the meantime the Head of Quality at the National Training Federation for Wales is working to support professional learning and the sharing of good practice in work-based settings.

6.3 The Minister explained that the Apprenticeship Levy was, in effect, a UK Government employment tax and that as the revenues from the levy have replaced existing apprenticeship funding in England, the levy does not provide significant new money to Wales. Nonetheless, she confirmed that the progress made in developing apprenticeships in Wales compared to England has been significant.

6.4 Alison Ward emphasised the importance of raising the profile of apprenticeships so they are not just demand led, but are aligned with our ambitions for the future of employment in Wales. Sam Huckle confirmed that support mechanisms have been put in place to help promote the value of apprenticeships in high priority areas. The Minister emphasised the

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importance of working with the Regional Skills Partnerships to promote apprenticeships and Margaret Thomas felt the scope of the Partnerships should be expanded to include representation from all trade unions.

6.5 Margaret Phelan welcomed the paper on apprenticeships and its focus on pedagogy and highlighted the need to ensure there are proper governance arrangements in place for Regional Skills Partnerships. Andrew Clark confirmed governance issues are being considered by the Welsh Government and that a briefing would soon be submitted to the Minister on this matter.

6.6 Donna Hutton asked whether, and to what extent, the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) was being factored into the regional skills debate. The Minister recognised that this was an important programme providing, for example, literacy and numeracy support in the workforce for employees who would perhaps prefer not to go via their employer for this support. For this reason, she was inclined to retain the separation but indicated that she would be happy to discuss further if helpful.

6.7 Gareth Howells confirmed that the Historic Wales Strategic Partnership has established a Working Group to develop a strategy for specialist skills within the sector to identify gaps in provision and wondered whether the Minister would offer her support to this. The Minister confirmed that a Heritage Sector meeting was being held the following week to discuss employment planning where some of these issues would be covered. Tina Donnelly confirmed that the new NHS education body, Health Education and Improvement Wales will be engaging across the health sector on the most effective use of apprenticeships. The Minister indicated she would be speaking to Vaughan Gething about this.

6.8 Steve Thomas agreed that the UK Government's Apprenticeship Levy represents a tax on apprenticeships in Wales and asked if this could be challenged with the UK Government. The Minister confirmed that she intended writing to the UK Government about this again. The Minister concluded by flagging that she would be publishing the Employability Plan the following week, which would focus on: the economically inactive; employers taking more responsibility for up-skilling their employees; skills gaps emerging as a result of Brexit; the future of work; and helping more disabled people into work.

Action: The Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to speak to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services about Health Education Improvement Wales' engagement with the health sector over the most effective use of apprenticeships.

Action: The Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to write to the UK Government about the Apprenticeship Levy.

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7. Minute/Sector Reports/AOB

7.1 The CSLGPS confirmed the draft minute of the previous meeting had been shared with the WPC and asked whether this was agreed by members. Margaret Thomas raised concerns that a number of action points were outstanding from the previous meeting but Judith Cole confirmed these were all being progressed and would be completed shortly. Gareth Howells asked if the Dying to Work Charter could be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the WPC. The paper on European Transition was noted by WPC members.

7.2 Alison Ward confirmed this would be her last meeting as Chair of the Employer side of the WPC after eight years in the role. She thanked members for all their hard work and support. In response, CSLGPS and LoH, Margaret Thomas and Mike Payne for the Trade Unions and Steve Thomas for the Employers thanked Alison for all her work and wished her all the best for the future.

Action: Secretariat to ensure the Dying to Work Charter is placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the WPC.

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List of Attendees - Workforce Partnership Council – 15 March 2018

<p>Cabinet Alun Davies – Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services Julie James – Chief Whip and Leader of the House Eluned Morgan – Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning</p>	
<p>Trade Unions Mike Payne – GMB (Joint Secretary) Margaret Thomas – Unison Bethan Thomas - Unison Gareth Howells – Prospect Nisreen Mansour – TUC Wales David Evans – NUT Donna Hutton – Unison Tina Donnelly - RCN Shavanah Taj - PCS Rex Phillips – NASUWT Margaret Phelan – UCU Cymru</p> <p>PSSC (standing invitation) Gill Lewis - (Chair) Alison Ramsey - (CEO)</p> <p>Observers Mark Pruce – Welsh Government Neil Welch – Welsh Government Mark Lewis – WPC Secretariat Chris Hartwell – WPC Secretariat Dawn Owen – WPC Secretariat Colette Eley – Welsh Government</p> <p>Apologies Martin Mansfield – Wales TUC Peter Hewin – BAOT Althea Phillips – GMB Kevin Tucker – SCR Cerith Griffiths - FBU Lisa Gostling – NHS Simon Smith – North Wales FRS Joanne Oak – Social Care Wales</p>	<p>Employers Alison Ward -Torfaen County Borough Council (Joint Secretary) Steve Thomas - WLGA Jonathan Lloyd - WLGA Richard Tompkins – NHS Claire Vaughan – Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust Amanda Wilkinson – Universities Wales Iestyn Davies – Colegau Cymru Sharon Carney – Flintshire County Council Councillor David Poole – Caerphilly County Borough Council David Michael – National Library for Wales James Owen - Welsh Government</p> <p>Supporting Officials – Welsh Government Reg Kilpatrick – Director - Local Government Judith Cole - Workforce and Social Partnerships – Local Government Jo Trott - Workforce and Social Partnerships – Local Government Caren Fullerton – Chief Digital Officer David Costa – Special Adviser Andrew Clark - Head of Further Education and Apprenticeships Sam Huckle – Further Education and Apprenticeships Emma Smith - Strategic Budgeting Simon Brindle - European Transition</p>

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	Action	Owner
1	The new Joint Executive Committee to consider the matter of asbestos in public buildings as a priority.	Joint Executive Committee.
2	WPC Secretariat to arrange a final meeting of the WPC Review Group.	WPC Secretariat.
3	The WPC Secretariat to ensure the following items are placed on the agenda of the first meeting of the Joint Executive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonisation of policies, procedures and pay • One Public Service • Final report of the PSSC 	WPC Secretariat.
4	Joint Executive Committee to take a strategic approach to workforce planning and mobility through an expansion of workforce data, a fundamental review of PEC technology/branding, exploring the GMCA Mobility Model further, undertaking the redeployment survey and taking forward the PSSC's agenda.	Joint Executive Committee.
5	Meetings between the Mayor of Manchester and Welsh Government ministers to be set up.	Secretariat.
6	WPM Secretariat to prepare a legacy document for handover to the new Joint Secretariat.	WPM Secretariat.
7	The WPC Secretariat to ensure Digitisation is included in the WPC's forward work programme.	WPC Secretariat.
8	Mike Payne and Steve Thomas to write (separately) to the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services regarding trade union representation on specific governance and advisory bodies.	Mike Payne/Steve Thomas.

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9	The Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to speak to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services about Health Education Improvement Wales' engagement with the health sector over the most effective use of apprenticeships.	Private Office – Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning.
10	The Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to write to the UK Government about the Apprenticeship Levy.	Welsh Government Apprenticeships Policy Team.
11	Secretariat to ensure the Dying to Work Charter is placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the WPC.	WPC Secretariat.