
Minutes of the Board Meeting, 11 September 2020 – TEAMS Meeting

Present:

Shan Morgan
Meena Upadhyaya
Ellen Donovan
Jeff Farrar
Gareth Lynn
Andrew Goodall
Tracey Burke
Andrew Slade
Des Clifford
Peter Kennedy
Natalie Pearson
Gawain Evans
David Richards
Andrew Jeffrey
Sarah Wakeling
Robin Bradfield
Francesca Hill

Secretariat:

Charmain Watts

Observer:

Kirsty Scotter

Apologies:

Helen Lentle

1. Welcome

- 1.1** The Permanent Secretary welcomed all attendees to the fifth remote meeting of the Welsh Government Board. Robin Bradfield, TUS was also welcomed as a substantive member of the Board.
- 1.2** The Board agreed the minutes from the last meeting which will be published following this meeting.

2. Current Issues

- 2.1** The Permanent Secretary highlighted the key pieces of work within the organisation which included:
- Delivering Ministerial priorities
 - The Covid-19 response
 - Implementing Brexit
 - Delivery of statutory work
- 2.2** The Permanent Secretary also advised that the Executive Committee, along with TUS are taking forward work to prioritise staff resources to ensure delivery of these 4 key areas of work. The Non-Executive Directors and Robin Bradfield recognised the challenge around this work.

Covid-19 update

- 2.3** Andrew Goodall updated the Board on the latest developments on Covid-19 and the current position in Wales, discussion focused on:
- Transmission of virus in Wales and the R rate,
 - Protocol around the Caerphilly local lockdown,
 - Number of positive cases,
 - Track, trace and protect,
 - Personal protective equipment,
 - Critical care activities,
 - Plans around longer term pandemic and immediate lessons learnt.
- 2.4** The Board discussed the current situation with the pandemic and the possibility of a second peak in winter, a winter plan for health and social services is being published next week. They further discussed the plans to

manage this alongside other pressures such as Brexit and the delivery of the Programme for Government.

- 2.5** The NEDs asked about lessons learnt from the first peak and Caerphilly lockdown, Andrew Goodall provided assurance that lessons learnt are being captured across the organisation.

3. Director General Updates

- 3.1** The Director Generals (DGs) provided an update on key areas of work within their areas, Des Clifford on the Office of the First Minister (OFM), Tracey Burke covered Education and Public Services (EPS) and Andrew Slade gave an update on Economy, Skills and Natural Resources (ESNR)

- Des' update focused on the work around the Recovery Strategy, 21 day review cycle, which included an update on the First Ministers announcement today around introducing further restrictions. Des also updated the Board on the Brexit work and the UK Governments draft internal market report, he emphasised the importance of planning for major changes that will take effect on 1 January 2021 whether or not a trade deal is agreed.
- Tracey's update focused on education and the work around re-opening of schools this month, childcare offer, homelessness, housing, work with Local Authorities and the ECC(W) response. Tracey advised that a review was taking place of the roles and structure of ECC(W).
- Andrew's update focused on current key areas of work and the importance of prioritising to be able to deliver around Covid-19, Brexit and the Programme for Government Commitments. Andrew's update also focused on the impact of higher education and students moving around Wales, the restart around the transport industry, our economic response and Brexit work within ESNR.
- The Permanent Secretary thanked the DGs and their teams for all of their hard work throughout the year.

4. Finance Update

- 4.1** Gawain Evans provided an update on month 4 in year management which focused on:
- Revenue forecast
 - Capital forecast
 - Position of current reserves
- 4.2** Gawain explained that the agreed revised approach to reporting on in year budgets has now been implemented using a new management information dashboard.
- 4.3** Andrew Jeffreys explained that a process was underway to allocate the remaining Covid-19 funding and advised that Cabinet will agree a set of priorities for Covid-19 recovery period next week.
- 4.4** Gawain Evans further explained that the Welsh Government is part of HM Treasury's cash management scheme. Each month Government departments and devolved administrations are ranked by how accurate their cash forecasts are against the actual outturn, Welsh Government had been ranked second. The Board were pleased with this outcome and congratulated the work of Gawain and his team.

5. Key Performance Framework

- 5.1** The Permanent Secretary introduced this item and explained that this work had been introduced following a recommendation from the Public Accounts Committee.
- 5.2** Sharon Cross provided an update and explained that the aim of the framework is to drive improvements in the organisational effectiveness of the Welsh Civil Service by focusing on operational performance.
- 5.3** Sharon further explained that it is based on the International Civil Service Effectiveness Index (InCiSE) and adapted to take a Welsh perspective through consultation with the Board, senior managers and researchers.

5.4 The Board welcomed this and agreed that the framework should be implemented gradually and sustainably. They discussed how the framework should be used and feedback from Board members included:

- This is a big step forward for the Welsh Government as no other Department is taking forward a framework like this.
- It is important to separate performance measurement and management.
- Caution should be taken in using the Red Amber Green (RAG) rating system.
- The activities will need to be priorities and buy in from teams within the organisation is essential to its success.
- Consideration must be taken on whether some or all of the indicators should be used.
- It is important how it's developed and disseminated into the organisation, the Board agreed this was key and asked David Richards to explore the right approach to embedding the framework within the organisation.

Action 1: The Board agreed that the RAG ratings on the attributes should be removed.

Action 2: David Richards to explore the right approach to embedding the framework within the organisation.

5.5 The NEDs sought further information regarding the Equality and Diversity measures, Andrew Jeffreys advised that the Equality and Diversity Inclusion plan would shortly be presented to ExCo who will monitor its process.

5.6 The Permanent Secretary thanked all for this work and asked that Board members feed any further comments on next steps to David Richards.

Action 3: Board members to feed any further comments on next steps to David Richards.

6. NED-led Challenge Session

6.1 Gareth Lynn presented a paper following the Legislation Programme Challenge Session. Gareth explained the facilitation session framework, which included:

- Reviewing pre-session material including governance structures and schematic diagram of responsibility and accountability across Welsh Government Teams and Departments. In addition, obtaining a briefing on key matters arising and current status of planned activity.

- Carrying out a detailed challenge / facilitation session with a broad range of Welsh Government Officials at all levels involved in the area of activity under consideration. All feedback and discussion were captured on an anonymous basis thus enabling frank, transparent and full commentary.
- Preparing a post challenge/facilitation session paper for presentation to the Permanent Secretary and wider distribution as deemed appropriate.

6.2 Gareth advised that having NED-led Challenge Sessions were beneficial as an external and independent chair would see things through a different lens and would be free from Organisational bias. The Permanent Secretary thought it would be useful to seek feedback from officials following each session.

Action 4: Seek feedback from officials following each session.

6.3 The NEDs challenged whether the process in place for implementing new programmes was robust enough to ensure that officials understood the scope and resources required from the start. The Board welcomed this challenge and will explore the information and tools available to officials.

6.4 The Board welcomed Gareth’s paper and update, and agreed that the paper should be shared with the First Minister. They also agreed that the next step was for the Legislative Programme Board to develop a set of actions from the recommendations in the paper.

Action 5: Legislative Programme Board to develop a set of actions from the recommendations in the paper and to share the paper with the First Minister.

6.5 The Board thanked the NEDs for all of their work and emphasised the value of their challenges and feedback.

ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	LATEST POSITION
Action 1: The Board agreed that the RAG ratings on the attributes should be removed.	Sharon Cross	Closed
Action 2: David Richards to explore the right approach to embedding the framework within the organisation.	David Richards	Closed

Action 3: Board members to feed any further comments on next steps to David Richards	All	Closed
Action 4: Seek feedback from officials following each NED-led challenge session.	Secretariat	Closed
Action 5: Legislative Programme Board to develop a set of actions from the recommendations in the paper produced by Gareth Lynn.	David Richards	Closed