

Meeting of the Workforce Partnership Council (WPC)

Thursday 4 November 2021 – (14:00 – 15:30pm)

Microsoft Teams Meeting

1. Introduction and Opening Remarks

1. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (Chair) welcomed WPC members to the meeting, confirming apologies and substitutes would be noted in the minute. The Deputy Minister wished to place on record the Welsh Government's thanks to Mike Payne, GMB, for his work at the WPC and within other forums ahead of his imminent retirement in December. She welcomed his replacement Kelly Andrews, Senior Organiser, GMB to the WPC.
2. The Deputy Minister thanked members for their contributions in developing the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and confirmed work is progressing well. She explained that the policy and key elements of the Bill for the Social Partnership Council, social partnership and fair work duties and procurement provisions are broadly settled. The Bill remains on course to be introduced in the spring of next year, and the Welsh Government will be working closely with social partners in developing a communication plan and a range of engagement events moving forward.
3. The Deputy Minister also provided an update on the implications of the UK Government's funding settlement for Wales. She noted that the settlement represents only a modest increase in revenue and a reduction in capital funding over the spending period. Most of the additional funding will be provided in 2022-23 and it is likely that funding for the NHS and local government will need to reflect this pattern. The Deputy Minister added that between 2022 - 2025 the Welsh Government's resource funding would increase by less than half a percent in real terms.

2. 'Partnership and Managing Change' Principles on Digitalisation

4. The Deputy Minister outlined the agreement reached at the JEC on the 28 October regarding the principles on digitalisation. She explained that the principles would be submitted to the WPC for agreement to include them as an annex to the Partnership and Managing Change agreement. In addition, the principles would be reviewed after a six-month period, taking into account the issues raised by the trade unions regarding monitoring and implementation. The Deputy Minister then invited Shavanah Taj, Wales TUC, to present the paper on behalf of the JEC.
5. Shavanah Taj, Wales TUC, confirmed the principles had received the full support of all social partners at the JEC and represented a positive example of social partnership operating to produce work of national, strategic significance. Whilst acknowledging the benefits of innovative technology to

both public services and staff, the trade unions stressed the importance of ensuring the principles are introduced in a consensual way, outlining some of the dangers presented by new technology.

6. Moving forward, Shavanah Taj welcomed the fact the principles require that the trade unions and the employers work together in monitoring the effectiveness of risk and equality impact assessments. It was reiterated that the JEC agreed to review the principles after six months and that this would be important given the fast paced nature of technology. Shavanah Taj formally asked the WPC to adopt the principles as an annex to the Partnership and Managing Change agreement.
7. Karen Loughlin, Unison, emphasised that agreeing the principles was a first step. She stressed the importance of communicating effectively the principles to public service organisations and for employers to work closely with trade unions at an early stage in their implementation. Karen Loughlin also suggested the principles provided a good opportunity for employers and trade unions to work together in producing joint training.
8. The Deputy Minister asked members if they were content for the principles to be adopted as an annex to the Partnership and Managing Change document and that they should be reviewed after six months. This was agreed by members.

Action: The Joint Secretariat to provide a version of the Partnership and Managing Change agreement (including the Principles for Digitalisation as an annex) to the WPC for circulation amongst member's networks.

Action: The Joint Executive Committee (JEC) to review implementation of the Principles on Digitalisation after a 6 month period taking into account the issues raised by the trade unions.

3. Net Zero Wales Plan Update

9. The Deputy Minister introduced the item explaining that the Net Zero Wales plan represents a new phase in the Welsh Government's approach to tackling the climate emergency. She advised this is the first plan in which net zero has been the key characteristic based on the latest advice from the Climate Change Committee and thanked social partners for their involvement in its development. The Deputy Minister confirmed the plan was launched on the 28 October by the First Minister and the Minister for Climate Change and invited Jonathan Oates, Welsh Government Head of Clean Growth, to provide further details on the plan.
10. Jonathan Oates explained that the Net Zero Wales plan is the culmination of extensive work over the last couple of years and outlined some of the global discussions that had taken place to produce a renewed focus on achieving

net zero. He explained that under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Welsh Ministers must publish a report for each budgetary period which demonstrates how their policies will meet the specific requirements of the carbon budget. He confirmed the Net Zero Wales Plan sets out how the carbon budget for 2021-2025 will be met but also sets the foundations for future activity. He advised that the plan includes a 123 policies and proposals many of which are pre-existing. These will continue to be developed in order to meet the demands not only of the current carbon budget but also the next one which it is anticipated will provide even greater challenges.

11. He outlined the lack of consultation by the UK Government regarding their decarbonisation plan which places a strong emphasis on technology. In contrast, the Welsh Government's plan focuses on the importance of working in social partnership to address people's behaviours and to implement decarbonisation in a way that creates sustainable and fair employment. As part of this, a just transition has been embedded in the Welsh Government's approach and he confirmed support for Wales TUC's proposals for trade union members to act as green representatives in the workplace. To conclude, he outlined the extent of the activity that will need to take place going forward with social partners.
12. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership emphasised the differences between the Welsh and UK Government's approaches and outlined the importance of a just transition.
13. Dominic MacAskill, Unison, thanked officials for their engagement with trade unions so far but felt more was needed, emphasising the central role the trade unions can play in creating a just transition. He outlined the importance of agreeing facility time for trade union green representatives in the workplace and the need for public bodies to publish their carbon reduction plans so they can be collated centrally by the Welsh Government for analysis. To conclude, he raised concerns that setting a net zero target for public bodies might result in cuts to other public service areas.
14. Jonathan Oates confirmed officials will continue to work with the trade unions and other social partners and explained that public bodies now have to demonstrate how they are reducing carbon emissions across a range of measures. Referring to cuts in public services, he emphasised the importance of co-creating solutions with social partners to maximise the impact of funding.
15. The Deputy Minister noted that Wales' focus on working in social partnership will provide a strong basis for future activity.
16. Nicola Savage, GMB, emphasised the impact of the decarbonisation agenda on people with limited financial means and asked what plans the Welsh Government had to address this.

17. Jonathan Oates acknowledged the problem and outlined the different types of challenges that can face people with limited financial means as well as those living in remote locations. He confirmed the importance of the trade unions being involved in this issue and the need to develop flexible policies to address the problem.

18. The Deputy Minister thanked members for their contributions and emphasised the significance of the challenges that lay ahead.

4. Review of WPC Minutes/Matters Arising

19. The Deputy Minister asked members to note the minutes and actions arising from the previous meeting of the WPC held on the 15 March.

20. Dominic MacAskill, Unison, referred to the need to develop a WPC Work Programme at the JEC moving forward.

21. Karen Loughlin, Unison, explained that both Neil Butler, NASUWT and Helen Whyley, RCN would not form part of the trade unions future delegation to the WPC and thanked them for their work. She also acknowledged the contribution of Mike Payne, GMB, at the WPC and thanked him for his work ahead of his retirement in December.

22. The Deputy Minister thanked members for their contributions and confirmed the next meeting of the WPC was scheduled for the 30 March 2022.

Attendance List – WPC – 4 November 2021

Cabinet
Chair - Hannah Blythyn MS – Deputy Minister for Social Partnership
Trade unions
Shavanah Taj – Wales TUC Karen Loughlin - Unison Dominic MacAskill – Unison Kelly Andrews – GMB Nicola Savage – GMB Richard Munn – Unite Margaret Phelan – UCU Darren Williams – PCS Helen Whyley - RCN
Devolved Employers
Richard Tompkins - NHS Wales Employers Huw Jakeway – Fire and Rescue Service
Welsh Government
Reg Kilpatrick – Local Government Jo Salway – Social Partnership and Fair Work Neil Surman – Social Partnership Jonathan Oates – Clean Growth

Judith Cole – Local Government Rhiannon Ivens – Health and Social Services
Observers
Liam Perry – Wales TUC Nisreen Mansour – Wales TUC Ceri Williams – Wales TUC Bethan Thomas – Unison Karen Higgins – Social Partnership Policy, Welsh Government Martin Mansfield – Health, Welsh Government Natalie Priday – Local Government, Welsh Government Mark Lewis – Joint Secretariat, Welsh Government Gerwyn David – Joint Secretariat, Welsh Government Ashleigh Harper – Social Partnership, Welsh Government
Apologies
Mike Payne - GMB David Evans – NEU Chris Llewelyn - WLGA Councillor Philippa Marsden – WLGA Steve Moore – NHS Chief Executives David Michael – Devolved Sector Group Julie Rowles – NHS Workforce/OD Directors Group Michelle Morris – SOLACE Wales Peter Kennedy – Devolved Sector Group Helen Arthur - Health, Welsh Government Owain Lloyd – Education, Welsh Government Albert Heaney – Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government Sam Huckle – Employability Delivery, Welsh Government

WPC Actions

Action 4 November 2021		
No.	Action	Owner
1	The Joint Secretariat to provide a version of the Partnership and Managing Change agreement, including the Principles for Digitalisation as an annex, to the WPC for circulation amongst member's networks.	Joint Secretariat
2	The Joint Executive Committee (JEC) to review implementation of the Principles on Digitalisation after a 6 month period taking into account the issues raised by the trade unions.	JEC Members
Action 15 March 2021		
No.	Action	Owner
1	The Welsh Government agreed to explore whether a form of words could be agreed with FE and HE, to enable participation in the WPC.	Welsh Government