



Minutes of the Welsh Government Board Meeting, 12 November 2021

Present:

Andrew Goodall
Meena Upadhyaya
Gareth Lynn
Ellen Donovan
Andrew Slade
Reg Kilpatrick
Tracey Burke
Des Clifford
Judith Paget
David Richards
Andrew Jeffreys
Peter Kennedy
Natalie Pearson
Gawain Evans
Helen Lentle
Charlotte Thomas

In attendance:

Catrin Sully
Claire Bushell
Claire Bennett
Usha Ladwa-Thomas
Gemma Humphreys
Amy Jones

Secretariat:

Charmain Watts

Apologies:

None

1. Welcome/ Current issues

1.1 The Permanent Secretary welcomed Judith Paget to her first Welsh Government Board. The Permanent Secretary also welcomed Charlie Thomas, this will be the current Shadow Board members last meeting as the new Shadow Board has been established and will meet on 15 December. An update will be provided under item 3.

1.2 The Permanent Secretary thanked the three Shadow Board members for their feedback and contribution over the last few years, the Board has found it very valuable.

- 1.3 The Permanent Secretary asked board members if they are content with the minutes from the last meeting. Any comments and or updates should be fed back to the secretariat before they are published next week.
- 1.4 The Permanent Secretary outlined the changes within the corporate reporting structures, which will include changes to the Executive Committee (ExCo) agenda, and to the Board with Programme for Government (PfG) progress becoming a routine item along with operational delivery.
- 1.5 The change in structures will also draw on the input of the Non-Executive Directors, building on recent Board conversations and their focus on a number of areas identified in discussion with the First Minister. The Board welcomed the new corporate reporting structures and cycle.
- 1.6 Judith Paget provided an update on latest developments of Covid-19, which focused on Covid-19 numbers in Wales, position in hospitals, intensive care and the vaccination and booster programmes. Reg Kilpatrick's update on the 21 day review cycle focused on the Covid-19 alert level and the review planned for the beginning of December focused on Christmas proceedings.

2. Programme for Government Delivery (PfG).

- 2.1 Catrin Sully presented a paper which provided an update on embedding the Programme for Government.
- 2.2 Catrin explained PfG has been embedded into the multi-year budget process and is also a priority in current considerations for year 2 and 3 of the Legislative Programme. The first Business Information Reporting Tool (BIRT) Report has been generated which has been populated by action owners, further development work is being taken forward to allow milestones to be reported via BIRT.
- 2.3 Catrin advised that next steps will be the establishment of the PfG Cabinet Sub Committee which will provide strategic oversight along with the introduction of a rigorous governance structure. The Permanent Secretary asked that Board be included in the governance structure to provide assurance and challenge to support delivery.
- 2.4 Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) highlighted the importance of BIRT being supported by the leaders in the organisation to encourage all staff to use it.

The NEDs also highlighted the importance of prioritisation to ensure the key areas are delivered.

- 2.5 The DGs also informed board of significant pieces of work within their areas which included Climate Change, Council Tax Reform, Electoral Reform, Resolving delayed treatments, re-establishing NHS Executive, homelessness and the Education Reform.
- 2.6 Board acknowledged subject to a potential emerging Plaid agreement we should set the principle of amending the PfG accordingly.

3. Diversity and Inclusion and Race Equality update

- 3.1 Claire Bennett and Usha Ladwa-Thomas provided an update on the Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) and asked Board to consider the scale of change required to embed an anti-racist approach in Welsh Government. Andrew Jeffreys provided Board with an update on progress of the 2021 Delivery Plan and sought views on the 2022 Plan.
- 3.2 The NEDs highlighted that tackling resistance to change is difficult and required multiple steps, education being the first. They also highlighted reverse mentoring which adds value and enables change to filter down through the organisation. Reverse mentoring has been in place for 5 years.
- 3.3 The Board noted that there is an opportunity with the planned refresh of policy frameworks and policy capability learning programme to embed anti-racism and inclusion more generally in the heart of our policy making standards.
- 3.4 The Board noted that whilst HR policies, structural adjustments and leadership are absolutely key to creating an anti-racist organisation, we need to be much more active in telling our colleagues in very clear terms what sort of organisation we aim to be.
- 3.5 The Board highlighted the seriousness and importance of this work and agreed that Welsh Government should be an exemplar organisation when it came to an anti-racist organisation.
- 3.6 An update was provided on the Shadow Board which was discussed at the last Board meeting. The Shadow Board is meeting for the first time on 15th December 2021 and Board members agreed to mentor members of the Shadow Board in a ‘mutual mentoring’ relationship.

The Board noted the following:

- The analysis of the socio-economic background of Welsh Government staff (annex 2)
- The latest diversity dashboard (annex 3)
- Challenging resourcing work potentially arising from the Race Equality Action Plan (paragraph 2.4).

ACTION 1: Race Equality update to be provided at the next Board meeting.

4. Finance/Budget Update

4.1 Andrew Jeffreys and Gawain Evans provided an update to the board on the current Finance and Budget status.

4.2 Gawain reported on the Welsh Government's 2021-22 forecast outturn and reserves position as at 31 October 2021 (month 7) which focused on:

- Revenue forecast
- Capital forecast
- Position of current reserves

4.1 Gawain provided an update on the Welsh Government Annual Accounts, he advised that the accounts will be signed at the end of November 2021.

4.2 Andrew Jeffreys provided a brief summary of the implications of the Spending Review for the Welsh Government, current position with the Budget process and next steps ahead of publication of the Budget on 20 December 2021. A Welsh Government Budget: Allocations and Next Steps Cabinet paper will be presented on Monday which will describe the settlement for the first time. The Permanent Secretary asked that the NEDs are informed of the outcome of the Cabinet.

ACTION 2: The NEDs to be kept informed of the outcome of the Welsh Government Budget: Allocations and Next Steps Cabinet paper being presented on Monday.

5. SmartWorking Learning Phases

5.1 Natalie Pearson presented a set of slides to Board on the implementation of the SmartWorking Learning Phase, the experience in the first six weeks and emerging findings. The slides focused on:

- Smartworking Statement
- Learning phase governance
- Insight from sprint one
- Current and intended ways of working by grade
- Emerging issues and risks
- Planned focus for next sprint.

5.2 The Board noted the ExCo sprint report on the SmartWorking Learning Phase, including the recent pulse survey research findings. The NEDs welcomed this approach and applauded the safe and professional working principles within the Welsh Government office.

5.4 The Board discussed timing of the Workplace Strategy and the Permanent Secretary advised that it will be discussed at the Executive Committee, along with how we can reduce office footprint.