



Minutes of the Welsh Government Board Meeting, 17 December 2021

Present:

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

In attendance:

Catrin Sully
Rachel Garside-Jones
Claire Bennett
Amy Jones

Secretariat:

Charmain Watts

Apologies:

Reg Kilpatrick

1. Welcome

- 1.1 The Permanent Secretary welcomed all and congratulated Bekah Cioffi, who was successful in securing the role of the Shadow Board co-chair along with Zakhyia Begum. He explained that this will be the first Welsh Government Board meeting where the co-chair of the new Shadow Board will feedback on the papers. Bekah introduced herself and informed Board of her background. Members of the Board also welcomed Bekah.
- 1.2 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.

Budget planning update

- 1.3 Andrew Jeffreys explained that on Monday 13th December, Cabinet met to discuss the revenue and capital allocations for the 2022-23 Draft Budget and allocations to 2025 as part of a multiyear spending review. Work is ongoing to finalise the Draft Budget package ahead of publication on Monday 20th December. Andrew advised that the budget reflects financial principles and funding support in a public health emergency. The draft budget will be scrutinised by Senedd Cymru in January.
- 1.4 The Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) advised that the Governance around this work was important to ensure it supports colleagues who will have to prepare over the festive period for scrutiny sessions in January.

ACTION 1: A summary budget update paper to be circulated to Non-Executive Directors.

2. Programme for Government Delivery (PfG).

- 2.1 Catrin Sully presented a paper which provided an update on the progress made on the Programme for Government. Catrin explained that good progress has been made against the original Programme for Government commitments, delivering practical change which will create a more equal, more prosperous and greener Wales.
- 2.2 Catrin also advised that the First Minister has established a Programme for Government Cabinet Sub Committee which will provide strategic oversight on the delivery of the Programme for Government.
- 2.3 Rachel Garside-Jones provided an update on the Cooperation agreement and explained that to maintain a single set of government priorities, an updated Programme for Government was published on 7 December.
- 2.4 Rachel advised that the extended Programme for Government contains 284 commitments, which include 70 commitments that cover the areas in the Co-operation Agreement on the delivery of which the Government has committed to working with Plaid Cymru.
- 2.5 The Board noted that the extended Programme for Government will be monitored using information from the Business Information Reporting Tool (BIRT) which is currently being updated to reflect the updated Programme for Government. Access to Plaid Cymru Designated Members for all areas in the Programme for Government covered by the Agreement will be facilitated by the new Co-operation Agreement Unit within the Welsh

Government. Board noted that the Co-operation Agreement: mechanisms document sets out the arrangements for joint working.

- 2.6 The Board noted the NEDs feedback which focused on potential scope creep within the Programme for Government, the way that the Co-operation Agreement Unit will conduct its internal business in Welsh and the importance of consistent information being recoded in BIRT.
- 2.7 The NEDs thanked Catrin and Rachel, and welcomed this positive progress update which felt it was being taken forward as a one system approach.

ACTION 2: Meetings to be held with the NEDs and Shadow Board to discuss further the Welsh Government Strategy on the internal use of the Welsh language.

ACTION 3: Include onto the forward look an agenda item on Welsh Government Strategy on the internal use of the Welsh language.

- 2.8 Bekah Cioffi provided feedback from discussions held at the Shadow Board meeting which focused on:
- the Cooperation Agreement Unit's Welsh Language Requirements.
 - proposals to introduce Integrated Impact Assessments.
 - the alignment of the Code of Conduct for Plaid Members.
 - the level of detail captured in BIRT.

3. Current Issues

- 3.1 The Permanent Secretary outlined the current issues and data around Covid-19 and the emergence of the new Omicron variant. The Permanent Secretary further explained that the best defense against this new variant continues to be vaccination - the role out of the booster campaign is a significant part in preventing the variant spreading.
- 3.2 The Board acknowledged that the number of confirmed cases of Omicron infections is rising daily in Wales, and although we are still learning about this new form of coronavirus, all the information we have tells us we are facing a very serious situation.
- 3.3 The Board noted that a high number of infection rates in Wales will put pressure on our NHS and there is a significant concern around staff shortages, due to infection rates within staff in our emergency services.

- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 The Board noted that the Cabinet is closely monitoring this rapidly changing public health situation and has moved to a weekly review cycle. Plans for Covid rules after Christmas are currently being considered.
- 3.6 Bekah Cioffi asked about take up of the booster within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community. Judith advised that National and Health Board levels are being looked at and data will continue to be analysed and action taken to respond to vaccination inequity.
- 3.7 Discussion focused on resourcing within Welsh Government and the Permanent Secretary advised that plans are in place to shift resourcing to support teams carrying out essential work around the pandemic.
- 3.8 The Board noted that Baroness Hallett has been appointed to lead the UK-wide Covid-19 public inquiry, a panel has also been established to support her.

4. Race Equality Action Plan update

- 4.1 Claire Bennett provided an update on the development of revised actions in the Race Equality Action Plan with a focus on the leadership actions.
- 4.2 Claire advised the Board of the next steps and Board acknowledged that revised goals and actions will be submitted by the end of December. A period of review and further development will then follow to ensure the revised goals and actions respond to the feedback from the consultation. The revised Plan will be considered by the Race Equality Action Plan Steering Group in January and early February.
- 2.1 The Board noted that across the Plan as a whole, addressing challenges to our current approaches requires us to bring to the surface systems and processes that have a negative impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people and doing something active, bold and different to tackle it.
- 2.2 The Board acknowledged that for leaders, it should stimulate an active process and seeking the cause behind the challenges. Structural and systemic racism can only be addressed by changing the systems and structures which perpetuate it. Support for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people will remain important but fixing the system rather than perceived deficits should be the focus.

- 2.3 The Board welcomed an external review / audit of processes and systems, in partnership with Black, Asian and Minority staff, to identify what needs to be changed to embed anti-racist practice.
- 2.4 The Board agreed that it was key to have the right amount of resource with ‘lived in’ experience to take forward this work and achieve meaningful change.
- 2.5 The Board noted the NEDs feedback which included:
- Congratulating Claire and the team on progress so far in what was a very complex piece of work.
 - Proposing that questions should to be asked in a safe environment to understand any barriers.
 - The importance of understanding what needs to be done practically to allow meaningful change.
- 2.6 The Board agreed that whilst HR policies, structural adjustments and leadership are absolutely key to creating an anti-racist organisation, we also need to be much more active in telling our colleagues, including leaders what sort of organisation we aim to be.
- 2.7 The Board highlighted the importance of this work and agreed that Welsh Government should be an exemplar organisation when it came to an anti-racist organisation.
- 2.8 Bekah Cioffi provided feedback from discussions held at the Shadow Board and advised that the Board:
- welcomed the REAP and are pleased to note that progress is going in the right direction, however the Shadow Board also recognise the scale of the task.
 - highlighted that the success of this Plan could pave the way for further work supporting disabled and neuro-diverse individuals gain equality.
 - flagged the nature of intersectionality in the organisation and society, with individuals identifying with or displaying multiple protected characteristics that cumulatively impact their equality of treatment.
 - welcomed the external audit of Welsh Government systems and processes.

5. Finance update

- 5.1 Gawain Evans provided an update to the Board on the current Finance and status.

5.2 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

5.3 Bekah Cioffi provided feedback on the views of the Shadow Board which focused on the funding for the Rural Affairs and Social Justice Directorate and the budget planning process.

6. Any other business

6.1 The Permanent Secretary thanked member and in particular Bekah Cioffi for her feedback from the Shadow Board.

ACTION 4: The Permanent Secretary asked for a meeting to be arranged with the Shadow Board co-chairs to reflect on the first Shadow Board feedback at the Welsh Government Board.