



**CYNGOR PARTNERIAETH Y GWEITHLU
WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL**

Draft Agenda

30 March 2022 – 10:30am – 12:00pm

Video Conference on MS Teams

Chair – Deputy Minister for Social Partnership

Item	Agenda Item	Lead		Style
1	Introduction	Welsh Government	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Verbal
2	Update on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and Programme for Government Engagement	Welsh Government	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Verbal
3	Update on the Review of Social Partnership Structures	Welsh Government	Senior Official	Verbal
4	WPC Objectives and Programme for Government Commitments	Welsh Government	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Paper
5	Net Zero Wales Plan Update	Welsh Government	Senior Official	Verbal
6	Review of WPC Minutes/Matters Arising	Welsh Government	Deputy Minister for Social Partnership	Paper

Next Meeting – 9 November 2022

Meeting of the Workforce Partnership Council (WPC)

Wednesday 30 March 2022 – (10:30am – 12:00pm)

Microsoft Teams Meeting

Item 1 - Introduction and Opening Remarks

1. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership (Chair) welcomed WPC members to the meeting. Before moving onto the agenda the Deputy Minister introduced new members Kelly Andrews (GMB), Nicola Savage (GMB), Paul Gage (GMB) and Dave Rees (Unison). In order to maximise time the Deputy Minister confirmed apologies and substitutes would be noted in the minute.

Item 2 - Update on the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill and Programme for Government Engagement

2. The Deputy Minister confirmed the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill remained on course for introduction before the summer recess. She thanked social partners for their involvement in developing this legislation and confirmed the broader scope of the Bill would reflect the key areas that had been consulted on. These were the establishment of a statutory Social Partnership Council, the creation of social partnership duties on public bodies and Welsh Ministers, fair work and socially responsible procurement.
3. The Deputy Minister confirmed the statutory Social Partnership Council would be based on a tripartite structure of trade unions, Welsh Government and employers from the public, private and voluntary sectors. She also confirmed that a review of social partnership working across the Welsh Government had begun in order to maximise the effectiveness of existing structures and stressed the importance of social partner's views in this process going forward.
4. The Deputy Minister explained that a comprehensive implementation plan was being developed to ensure the provisions of the Bill can be implemented seamlessly once introduced. She confirmed that the implementation plan would be supported by a communications and engagement programme to ensure social partners are kept informed of progress and involved appropriately at every stage. The Deputy Minister added that alongside the recommendations of the Fair Work Commission, the Bill represents one of the Welsh Government's key Programme for Government (PfG) commitments and that she looked forward to receiving member's views on the final version of the Bill once it was published.
5. Kelly Andrews (GMB) thanked Welsh Government for recent engagement on the changes that had been made to the Bill following the consultation period. She stressed the important role the WPC could play in monitoring the Social

Partnership Duty as well as the need for trade union representatives to be provided with facility time in order to support delivery of the well-being objectives and the green representatives commitments.

6. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership welcomed the opportunity to speak to different forums about the provisions contained in the Bill and to receive feedback on any implementation issues. Referencing facility time, the Deputy Minister stressed the importance of considering this holistically and the need for social partners to discuss further as part of the Bill's implementation process.

Item 3 - Update on the Review of Social Partnership Structures

7. Jo Salway, Welsh Government, explained that the review of social partnership structures was being conducted from a neutral position in order to best understand the current landscape. She emphasised the range of structures in place, their varying levels of effectiveness and the importance of ensuring there is a consistency in approach ahead of the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill being introduced. Jo Salway added that whilst the Social Partnership Council would be statutory, the way people both lead and work together moving forward will be fundamental in achieving the Bill's aims.
8. Jo Salway reiterated that the phased approach of the review reflected the fact that there were no preconceived ideas about what the outcome would be. She explained that Phase 1 would draw together the available evidence at a national level on social partnership structures so that an outline analysis could then be conducted. Once completed a summary report would be shared with the WPC.
9. Reflecting on timescales, Jo Salway felt work would need to progress on the review ahead of the next WPC in November. As such she suggested continued engagement would be necessary either through the WPC's Joint Executive Committee (JEC) or perhaps through another sub-group of the Council. To conclude, she emphasised the importance of understanding the lessons learnt from the review and the need to develop a set of principles to shape what social partnership would look like moving forward.
10. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership explained that she had spoken with a number of her Ministerial colleagues to better understand the extent of social partnership within their portfolio areas. The Deputy Minister reiterated the neutrality of the review, the need to ensure real social partnership structures are implemented for the future and the importance of WPC member's views in this work.
11. Dave Rees (Unison) welcomed the review of social partnership structures. He emphasised the need to better communicate the agreements reached at the WPC in order to avoid confusion and duplication of effort amongst the sectoral

partnership structures that are already in place. Referring to the statutory Social Partnership Council, Dave Rees explained that it should not sit above any public sector partnership arrangements since the private sector members of the Council would have no remit to discuss workforce matters relating to these.

12. Jo Salway (Welsh Government) recognised the central importance of better understanding how the WPC would link to the work of the sectoral groups, as well as the statutory Social Partnership Council to avoid duplication and confusion. Whilst acknowledging the legal status the Council would hold, she explained that how these groups work together to achieve a common set of objectives would be more important than trying to establish a hierarchy between them.
13. Dave Rees (Unison) emphasised the importance of bodies such as the WPC using the correct language in referencing the whole workforce of a specific sector. As an example he cited recent Welsh Government reports regarding schools which failed to acknowledge the important role of non-teaching staff in education settings during the pandemic.
14. Nicola Savage (GMB) reiterated the concerns raised by Dave Rees stressing the importance of using inclusive language.
15. David Evans (NEU) put on record the support of teachers regarding the issues raised by Unison and the GMB.
16. Paul Gage (GMB) also supported the points raised regarding language and specifically referenced the important role played by support staff in the NHS. He stressed the need for greater promotion of the role of support staff in general going forward.
17. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership acknowledged the importance of recognising the contributions made by all members of the workforce and capturing this accurately going forward.
18. Owain Lloyd (Welsh Government) supported the importance of using inclusive language in school settings. He confirmed this would be addressed in on-going dialogue with the trade unions and other social partners regarding education.
19. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership concluded the item by stressing the importance of working with social partners on the review going forward.

Action: The summary report of Phase 1 of the review of social partnership structures to be provided to the WPC once completed.

Action: Work to be progressed on the review of social partnership structures with members ahead of the next meeting of the WPC on the 9 November 2022.

Item 4 - WPC Objectives and Programme for Government Commitments

20. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership outlined the key points of the paper that had been provided to members for this item. She emphasised that the paper asked members to consider eight work themes and to then select three of these to form the basis of a short term WPC Work Plan for the next 6-9 months. The Deputy Minister emphasised that in considering the themes members had been asked to take into account previous discussions at the WPC regarding agile and flexible working, green workplace representatives, equality action plans and the social partnership short-term communication plan. She also referenced the advice provided by the trade unions on the paper which had been circulated to members ahead of the meeting.
21. Kelly Andrews (GMB) stressed the importance of the communication plan following concerns by the trade unions that some WPC agreements were not being implemented. She felt an evaluation of previous agreements should form part of the communication plan as should the review of social partnership structures in order to better understand the broader context within which the WPC sits.
22. Julie Cook (Wales TUC) stressed the important role of trade union representatives in implementing the different equality action plans. She expressed concerns that in some workforce settings facility time had been eroded, challenging the ability of trade union representatives to carry out their duties effectively. Moving forward she supported a review of facility time and the need to develop training on the action plans. She explained that training material for trade union representatives was currently being developed for this purpose. Julie Cook suggested the Period Dignity Action Strategy should be added to the equality section of the work plan, feeling the WPC could support a number of its objectives.
23. Nicola Savage (GMB) reiterated the importance of trade union green representatives in the workplace and ensuring that employers are engaged in this work. She suggested that a tripartite meeting be held between the Welsh Government, the WLGA and trade unions to discuss how the role of green representatives would be delivered.
24. Bethan Thomas (Unison) supported the proposed inclusion of agile and flexible working in the WPC's work plan. She outlined the problems of different terminology being used in this space and the confusion it can cause. As an example she cited the use of the term remote working in contrast to agile and flexible working. Bethan Thomas stressed the importance of clear and consistent language being used by Welsh Government going forward.

She confirmed that the work of the Agile and Flexible Working Task and Finish group was progressing well and that there should be some meaningful outcomes to report on by the autumn WPC.

25. Chris Llewelyn (WLGA) reiterated the progress of the Agile and Flexible Working Task and Finish Group as its chair. He suggested the trade unions proposed tripartite meeting to discuss delivery by green representatives in the workplace might duplicate work relating to the Local Government Decarbonisation Strategy Panel. Chris Llewelyn added that there is a strong feeling within local government that facility time remain a matter for local determination.
26. Richard Munn (Unite) explained that the trade union's written response to the paper for this item proposed that the cost of living crisis be added to the WPC work plan. He emphasised the critical extent of the challenge facing many people and felt including this would give the WPC a stronger profile amongst social partners. Linked to this, he stressed the impact of increased fuel prices on workers including those in health and social services and suggested the WPC could develop some practical ideas on how to address this.
27. Dave Rees (Unison) was critical of the employer's position regarding the local determination of facility time. He suggested that when this is decided at a local level it is often without proper consultation with the trade unions. Referring to the issue of decarbonisation and home working, Dave Rees emphasised the importance of ensuring people can work safely and effectively in this way. He recommended that the WPC could explore ways in which to make the home environment more affordable for workers in line with the cost of living crisis. As part of this he suggested a variety of practical measures such as the installation of affordable boilers and solar panels.
28. Kelly Andrews (GMB) reiterated the extent of the cost of living crisis and the failure to truly understand the environmental impact of moving workplaces to the home. She stressed the importance of accurately assessing the situation across Wales and the significant cost that can be incurred by staff having to work from home.
29. Karen Higgins (WLGA) explained that the Agile and Flexible Working Task and Finish Group had invited HM Revenue and Customs to attend and discuss mileage rates. She explained that most local authorities utilise their mileage rate system and that the Group was interested in seeing if HMRC are going to review this given the current cost of living crisis.
30. Nicola Savage (Unison) explained that she sits on the Decarbonisation Strategy Panel (recently renamed Local Government Climate Strategy Panel to include adaptation as well as decarbonisation) and this group had not considered the impact of home working. She explained that a lot of

decarbonisation assessments were based on a reduction in travel but emphasised this was a limited approach which ignored the detrimental impact of many issues within the home. She felt there was a general lack of understanding regarding the size of the environmental challenge of home working.

31. Paul Gage (GMB) added that homes are often not insured as workplaces presenting an additional cost to people and posing various concerns over how a person's mortgage is defined. He reiterated the concern that a limited view was being taken regarding decarbonisation and home working.
32. Bethan Thomas (Unison) explained that there was a misconception that the 30% target that had been referenced was in respect of working from home. The 30% target was actually for remote working. As such she explained that this target captured people operating from hubs who could potentially still need to travel to work and would have work related costs (both environmental and financial). She also reiterated earlier concerns over the importance of using the correct language in defining different types of working practices and trying to use consistent terms through all Government strategies and publications.
33. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership acknowledged the importance of using the correct language over working practices and explained that both she and officials would reflect this in their future engagement activity.
34. Jonathan Oates (Welsh Government) outlined the complexity of assessing carbon emissions in the home. He confirmed Welsh Government had published guidance for public bodies on how they should assess their carbon emissions and ran through the requirements of this.
35. Chris Llewelyn (WLGA) acknowledged the various points raised but stressed the importance of streamlining discussions to ensure there is not a duplication of effort across different groups.
36. Nicola Savage (GMB) asked trade union colleagues to provide their views on decarbonisation issues discussed under this item to her so she could better inform discussions at the Decarbonisation Strategy Panel. She provided her contact details in the side chat of the meeting for that purpose.
37. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership thanked members for their views which she felt addressed some of the practical implications of delivering a number of the Programme for Government commitments. She acknowledged the proposal to include the cost of living crisis in the WPC's work plan and to explore what areas the Council would most effectively add value to. The Deputy Minister also acknowledged the complexities of the decarbonisation

agenda and the importance of using the correct terminology in describing different working practices.

Action: That the WPC's Joint Executive Committee further develop the proposed WPC Work Plan based on discussions held at this meeting.

Item 5 - Net Zero Wales Plan Update

38. Jonathan Oates (Welsh Government) confirmed that following its publication in October the Net Zero Wales Plan was now in its delivery phase. He confirmed that on the 25 March all UK nations had published the Emissions Training Scheme for consultation which was designed to support industry in creating sustainable employment. He referenced various on-going decarbonisation work and confirmed Ministers were being regularly briefed on activity against the 123 actions contained in the Net Zero Wales Plan.
39. Jonathan Oates explained that Welsh Government focus was now moving towards the second part of the current decade, analysing activity to see what further work was needed across different sectors to ensure the longer term objectives of the Net Zero Wales Plan were delivered. Referring to green representatives in the workplace, he confirmed that an internal working group had been established to analyse the steps necessary in delivering the related Programme for Government commitment. He confirmed the group was developing an evidence base to mainstream climate justice issues across all Welsh Government policies and to raise awareness externally.
40. Paul Gage (GMB) asked to what extent public bodies had involved the trade unions in developing their decarbonisation plans. He also asked at what point the Welsh Government would provide further detail from the Net Zero Wales Plan on skills development, new employment opportunities and jobs at risk due to decarbonisation. In addition, Paul Gage asked to what extent the Welsh Government had assessed the impact of the Net Zero Wales Plan from an equalities perspective and the cost of decarbonisation on low income households.
41. Nicola Savage (GMB) asked whether a trade union representative had been involved in the activity of the internal Welsh Government working group referenced by Jonathan Oates. She emphasised the extent of the contribution that could be provided by the trade unions to this work.
42. Jonathan Oates (Welsh Government) confirmed the trade unions had been involved in developing the plans for public bodies. He added that whilst the Welsh Government had set expectations regarding the plans it did not police how these were implemented at a local level. Jonathan Oates explained that achieving the aims of the Net Zero Wales Plan would require leadership across different public bodies not from the Welsh Government centrally. He emphasised that public bodies had the autonomy to decide whom to consult

with but acknowledged the valuable contribution trade unions could make to this process.

43. Referring to requests for more detail regarding the Net Zero Wales Plan, Jonathan Oates explained that the consultation on the UK Emissions Training Scheme provided 180 pages of information. He explained that this provided details regarding timelines, risks and key delivery points. Referring to the impact of decarbonisation on job opportunities, he confirmed there were clear risks for some areas over others with some presenting more immediate challenges. Jonathan Oates confirmed that alongside the Net Zero Wales Plan a sustainability appraisal had been published which addressed issues relating to equalities. He provided a link in the side chat of the meeting to this work. To conclude, Jonathan Oates confirmed that once work is developed further trade union involvement would be sought in developing the evidence base to mainstream climate justice issues across all Welsh Government policies.

Item 6 - Review of WPC Minutes/Matters Arising

44. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership outlined matters arising from previous meetings of the WPC and asked members if they were content. No issues were raised.

45. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership confirmed the next meeting of the WPC would be on the 9 November 2022 and thanked members for their contributions.

Attendance List – WPC – 30 March 2022

Minister
Chair - Hannah Blythyn MS – Deputy Minister for Social Partnership
Trade unions
Julie Cook – Wales TUC
Bethan Thomas – Unison
Dave Rees – Unison
Dominic MacAskill – Unison
Kelly Andrews – GMB
Nicola Savage – GMB
Paul Gage - GMB
David Evans – NEU

Richard Munn – Unite
Darren Williams – PCS

Devolved Employers

Chris Llewelyn - WLGA
Richard Tompkins - NHS Wales Employers
Peter Kennedy – Devolved Sector Group
Huw Jakeway – Fire and Rescue Service
Damien McCann – SOLACE – (Deputising for Michelle Morris)

Welsh Government

Jo Salway – Social Partnership and Fair Work
Neil Surman – Social Partnership
Owain Lloyd – Education
Sam Huckle – Employability and Skills
Jonathan Oates – Clean Growth
Emma Coles - Health and Social Services (Deputising for Helen Arthur)

Observers

Sharon West – Welsh Government
Joanne Williams – Welsh Government
Joanne Snaith – Welsh Government
Amber Courtney – Welsh Government
Charlotte Cosserat – Welsh Government
Natalie Stewart – Welsh Government
Nisreen Mansour – Wales TUC
Ceri Williams – Wales TUC
Karen Higgins – WLGA

Mark Lewis – Joint Secretariat, Welsh Government
Gerwyn David – Joint Secretariat, Welsh Government

Apologies

Shavanah Taj – Wales TUC

Karen Loughlin – Unison

Margaret Phelan – UCU

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

Reg Kilpatrick – Local Government

Helen Arthur - Health, Welsh Government

Albert Heaney – Social Services and Integration, Welsh Government

Judith Cole – Local Government, Welsh Government

WPC Actions Arising

No.	Action	Owner
Action 30 March 2022		
1	The summary report of Phase 1 of the review of social partnership structures to be provided to the WPC once completed.	Welsh Government
2	Work to be progressed on the review of social partnership structures with members ahead of the next meeting of the WPC on the 9 November 2022.	Welsh Government and JEC Members
3	That the WPC's Joint Executive Committee further develop the proposed WPC Work Plan based on discussions held at this meeting.	JEC Members

Action 4 November 2021		
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		
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