

Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 4 – Ty Hywel

Meeting date:
27 February 2013

Meeting time:
10:50

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

Sian Phipps
Committee Clerk
029 2089 8582
FM.Scrutiny@Wales.gov.uk

Agenda

Informal pre-meeting (10:50 – 11:00)

1. Introductions, apologies and substitutions (11:00 – 11:05)

2. The First Minister's Delivery Unit (11:05 – 12:00) (Pages 1 – 3)

CSFM(4) 01–13 – Paper 1

Carwyn Jones, First Minister, Welsh Government

Derek Jones, Permanent Secretary, Welsh Government

Marion Stapleton, Head of the First Minister's Delivery Unit

3. Child poverty – Ministerial Scrutiny (12:00 – 13:00) (Pages 4 – 7)

CSFM(4) 01–13 – Paper 2

Carwyn Jones, First Minister, Welsh Government

Kate Cassidy, Director for Communities and Social Justice, Welsh Government

Eleanor Marks, Deputy Director, Communities Division, Welsh Government

4. Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:

Item 5.

5. Consideration of evidence (13:00 – 13:10)

Agenda Item 2

Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister CSFM(4) 01-13 – Paper 1

WRITTEN EVIDENCE TO THE COMMITTEE FOR THE SCRUTINY OF THE FIRST MINISTER: THE ROLE OF THE DELIVERY UNIT

Introduction

1. This paper is intended as written evidence to inform the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister on the role of the First Minister's Delivery Unit.

The role of the Delivery Unit

2. The Delivery Unit was established on 1 September 2011, to sit at the heart of the Welsh Government to focus on the Government's core agenda and to ensure integrated and streamlined delivery of its strategic priorities - supporting the organisation to deliver to the required level and satisfaction of Ministers.

3. The Delivery Unit is a small team, comprising 6 members, reporting to a Deputy Director. It is staffed by existing civil servants brought in from other parts of the organisation. Each member of the Delivery Unit has responsibility for a particular area of policy e.g. one member of the Unit will be responsible for providing independent briefing on the Local Government and Communities portfolio area. They provide me with early warning of potential difficulties that warrant the attention of Ministers. The Unit was not established to do other people's jobs for them or to deliver the policies and outcomes themselves; rather it is there to help Departments to deliver - helping people to affect a greater pace of change.

4. The Unit is an internal process that I put in place to enable me to monitor delivery as part of the machinery of government. It is primarily an inward facing unit intended to add value and rigour and the Unit reports directly on the progress and effectiveness of each department towards delivering the government's priorities. It advises me on the policies being formulated as part of the programme for government to assure me that they are being planned and implemented in the best way.

5. The main thrust of the Delivery Unit is to influence behaviours behind the scenes, helping to design new and more effective approaches to the delivery of the government's key objectives. The role of the Unit is to identify levers for change; challenge and test the robustness and delivery of key activities; identify opportunities to align policy programmes in order to deliver greater and more effective outcomes and to provide constructive challenge to policy ideas and processes and where necessary an alternative perspective for officials to consider when taking forward their work. It does not micro-manage or create a bureaucratic process which hampers departments' efforts to deliver.

The Delivery Unit's operating methods

6. The unit gathers the necessary information that is required to effectively monitor the Programme for Government. In order to advise me each member of the Delivery Unit must be fully familiar with the policies, programmes, and sensitivities and potential and/or actual issues relating to the portfolio area they are covering.

7. Delivery Unit members have access to briefings and documents relevant to their area of responsibility. The Unit's members sit on programme boards and steering groups and engage with officials on key elements of the various departmental strategies. They meet regularly with the Departmental Senior Management teams and have access to all submissions and papers for Ministerial policy boards and internal policy boards. In these meetings they provide constructive challenge to policy ideas and processes, and offer advice for officials to consider when taking forward their work, helping to explore the full range of policy options that ought to be considered in order to deliver the best policy outcomes in the relevant policy area.

8. The Unit provides me with a candid view of how policies are being taken forward. It briefs me on progress of key deliverables, as well as identifying immediate issues that warrant my attention. It also informs my bi-monthly delivery bi-laterals with Ministers and their Directors' General. The briefing reports are intended to open a dialogue about performance between me, Ministers and their senior civil servants.

9. The briefings are based on the author's assessment of the progress and performance of Departments towards delivering the Programme for Government to ensure policies remain consistent with Ministerial priorities. This analysis will typically identify the current issues and any potential concerns for my attention.

10. Where the Unit has identified a potential delivery risk or where an issue is negatively impacting on delivery they will speak in the first instance to the relevant senior official so that timely and appropriate action can be taken. If the department fails to act or respond to this early intervention, they will escalate their concerns to me.

The performance and effectiveness of the Delivery Unit

11. I believe that the Unit has developed a balanced perspective of the organisation and is able to identify practices or behaviours which could be potential barriers to the delivery of our core priorities. It is working alongside departments identifying risks to the delivery of our key manifesto commitments and to ensure that delivery matches expectations.

12. The Unit has encouraged officials to readjust their thinking to suit changing needs, circumstances and priorities e.g. in light of economic uncertainty or societal change. It has sought to encourage those parts of the organisation that are not fully joined-up to make the connections and to see the full integration of our policies; breaking down perceived barriers to achieve outcomes in the most cost-effective way and to adopt a results-based approach to the development of policies.

13. It has considered and offered challenge to resource allocation and workforce planning within DG areas and also whether we have the people with the right skills in certain areas. It has sought to challenge bureaucracy to ensure that our processes are not getting in the way of delivery.

14. We have good working relationships across the Civil Service. On the ground, teams are open to engagement and have been frank about the delivery challenges they face, including where those are corporately and/or politically created. They have been open in meetings about their work concerns, where they think improvements could be made and have flagged up areas where cross departmental working could be improved. The Unit has helped to test whether our core policies are sufficiently robust and/or responsive to meet the new emerging challenges and have helped to develop a shared understanding of what we want to deliver and what the outcome should be.

Conclusion

15. The First Minister's Delivery Unit was established to provide me with an independent assessment of each portfolio area so that I can personally monitor the Programme for Government; allowing assumptions to be challenged and pertinent issues to be raised in order to test whether the Government's policies are sufficiently robust and/or responsive to meet the new emerging challenges in light of the economic climate and reduced resources.

16. The Unit has provided me with an impartial and fair perspective of departments. It has given me a private discussion space and has provided me with free and frank opinion, advice and information to enable me to monitor progress and hold Ministers and their Departments to account. The Unit has brought a fresh perspective and works constructively with colleagues to influence behind the scenes. I believe that it will not be possible to determine what impact the Delivery Unit has had on the organisation until the end of this Assembly term when it can be judged by wider outcomes across the medium term.

Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM
First Minister for Wales

Committee of the Scrutiny of the First Minister

CSFM(4) 01-13 – Paper 2

The Welsh Government's approach to Tackling Poverty and Child Poverty

1. Cross-Departmental working and how tackling child poverty is mainstreamed across Welsh Government policy areas

In June last year we launched our *Tackling Poverty Action Plan*. This is an absolute priority for us and we will tackle poverty through everything we do as a government.

The *Plan* drew together contributions provided by all Departments and describes what the Welsh Government is doing to prevent poverty; to help people into work and to mitigate the impact of poverty.

The plan will be updated and refreshed this June and the Minister for Local Government and Communities and the Deputy Minister for Children jointly chair a cross-government programme board to take this work forward.

Tackling poverty remains a collective Cabinet responsibility across Government and I asked each Directorate to appoint a poverty champion or champions to work to their Director General to maintain momentum across all portfolios and to develop synergy in their work.

The Minister for Local Government and Communities has also written to Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executive Officers seeking local authority anti-poverty champions at a senior official and at member level. I see the anti-poverty champions being able to learn from each other as a group and also being able make a difference in Local Authorities by reinforcing the need to reflect tackling poverty in all the Authority's work. Single Integrated Plans at local level are an opportunity for more strategic thinking as well as simplification. Local Authority Champions at a senior and political level are one way of ensuring that the Child Poverty Duty is continually reinforced within local authorities and in Single Integrated Plans.

I also welcome the establishment of the Third Sector Anti-Poverty Programmes Taskforce, formed last year as a result of joint conference hosted by WCVA and the Bevan Foundation on meeting the growing challenge of poverty.

2. The inclusion of child poverty within the broader Welsh Government anti-poverty strategy;

Action to prevent child poverty lies at the heart of our *Tackling Poverty Action Plan*. Some of the main areas where we can have the biggest impact on poverty are educational attainment, childcare, teams which work with families and employment.

Our efforts to prevent child poverty start with targeting investment to give children the best possible start in life. From early in pregnancy through to early adulthood, our aim is to reduce inequality at the earliest possible stage and break the link between socio-economic disadvantage, educational under-achievement and the impaired life chances that flow from these.

3. How Welsh Government targets are being met

In the programme for Government we committed to tracking the progress the Welsh Government has made against big long-term challenges we face such as giving every child the best start in life, working with families to tackle health and educational inequalities and addressing worklessness.

I made clear when I launched the Programme for Government that I would not be setting new targets against the indicators of these long-term challenges. This reflects the nature of these challenges as complex and subject to policy levers which are not devolved to Wales, such as welfare benefits policy. I regard the approach we have taken as allowing a more mature understanding of performance by allowing comparisons with other jurisdictions and our progress over time. That is why I will continue to publish a rich set of information on these indicators in the annual report of the Programme this year.

In conjunction we will track performance annually on progress in the Tackling Poverty Action Plan. The Plan sets out in greater detail the key performance indicators of our programmes and activities which collectively contribute to these high level outcomes.

For example, Jobs Growth Wales aims to create 4000 six-month job opportunities every year for the next three years for unemployed 16-24 year olds and to see as many of those jobs as possible translated into sustained employment.

The programme is nearing the end of its first year of delivery and has already created well over 5000 job opportunities for young people in every area of Wales. Over 3000 people are now employed in jobs created through Jobs Growth Wales. The programme is on track to fill 4000 jobs by the end of March 2013.

We are also working on the expansion of Flying Start in order to double this number by the end of this Assembly term. We continue to work closely with local authorities to plan the delivery of Flying Start, and to ensure that the funding continues to be targeted at those areas which need it most. 145 projects have been agreed to date worth a total spend of almost £21 million. This will result in the delivery of additional services to approx 4,500 children aged 2-3.

The ability of our programmes to positively impact on our long-term outcomes will clearly be affected by other factors which are outside of our control. For example, the UK Government's tax and benefit reforms announced up until summer 2011 are estimated to increase relative child poverty in Wales by about 6,000 in 2012-13. Recently announced benefit changes in the Autumn Statement 2012 will mean more bad news for families in Wales. It is even more important therefore that we optimise what we can do and set out how we are measuring the impact of our actions in our Plan.

As a result of the Statutory Duty set out in the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 the Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services will in the autumn term 2013 lay a report before the National Assembly on the objectives and measures contained in the Child Poverty Strategy 2011. The report will demonstrate and evidence progress made towards achieving those objectives.

4. The role of the Welsh Government in relation to the UK Government

We will continue to work with the UK Government to reduce child poverty across the United Kingdom and we welcome the UK Government's continued commitment to maintain the targets set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 ¹.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 required the UK Government to achieve the following poverty targets by 2020.

- Relative poverty: less than 10 per cent of children living in relative low-income poverty.
- Material deprivation: less than 5 per cent of children living in combined material deprivation and low income.
- Absolute low income: reduce the proportion of children who live in absolute low income to less than 5 per cent.
- Persistent poverty: percentage of children living in relative poverty for three out of four years (target level to be set by 2015).

We have also worked with the UK Government to establish the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission and to appoint an independent Welsh Member to the Commission.

5. The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011

Our approach to tackling poverty prioritises the needs of children and is based on our overall approach to implementation of the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Since its inception, the Welsh Government has consistently made it clear that reducing child poverty is a fundamental element of its social justice agenda and also part of its key priorities to implement the CRC. Given this long standing commitment we would expect to see a continuity and a deepening of a rights-based approach over time rather than the development of new or different initiatives.

The practical ways this due regard duty is to be carried out can be found in the children's scheme

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/publications/rights/;jsessionid=36895688253DED60630F8A656BB096A6?lang=en>.

¹ Section 8B of the Child Poverty Act 2010 requires the UK Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission to publish its annual report (which includes a description of the measures taken by the Welsh Ministers) before each anniversary of the coming into force of this section, ie before 8 May 2013.

The children's scheme sets out 6 steps to the due regard process which include the UNCRC impact assessment tool.