

Assembly Commission

Venue: **Presiding Officer's office, 4th floor – Tŷ Hywel**

Date: **Thursday, 23 April 2015**

Time: **13.00 – 14.30**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2015(6)

Commission

Members:

Dame Rosemary Butler AM (Chair)

Peter Black AM

Sandy Mewies AM

Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM

Officials present:

Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly

Craig Stephenson, Director of Commission Services

Dave Tosh, Director of Resources

Nicola Callow, Director of Finance

Kevin Tumelty, Head of Security

Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission Secretariat

**Others in
attendance:**

David Melding AM, Deputy Presiding Officer

Helena Feltham, Independent Adviser

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and apologies

Angela Burns AM had sent her apologies.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 5 March meeting were agreed.

2 Draft Budget Strategy 2016–17

Commissioners considered a paper which outlined the suggested approach and budget options for the Commission's 2016–17 Budget.

They agreed to take a balanced approach in which: the Commission's operating budget for Assembly services will reflect the changes in the Welsh Block; the financial impact of decisions made by the Remuneration Board will be fully funded; and significant exceptional costs will continue to be treated separately, so for 2016–17 there will be funds for election related expenditure and the costs of dissolution.

2016–17 will be the first year of the Fifth Assembly, and Commissioners felt that the approach to the budget strategy needed to provide sufficient flexibility to ensure the new Commissioners have the financial scope to pursue their own goals and priorities when they take office.

The approach that Commissioners agreed included a focus for the Commission's funds in 2016–17 on the following areas:

- Programme of legislative work – the momentum behind the current legislative work load is not expected to diminish after the election. The volume of legislative activity is expected to remain high or even grow further as Assembly Member led legislation is introduced. This is a change compared to the early stages of the Fourth Assembly and will require support to be maintained.
- Members' professional development programme to meet the needs of new and changing membership. This builds on the previous programme providing appropriate induction and access to continuous professional development training for Members.
- The planning to support the anticipated scale of constitutional change, particularly stemming from the Wales Bill and the St David's Day announcements.
- Value for money – the Commission has a strong track record in delivering value for money in pursuit of its wider goals and priorities and we will want to build on this from the outset of the Fifth Assembly.

3 Security Service review briefing

Commissioners had asked for a full review of existing security arrangements. They considered the security strategy, the progress of current work, outstanding issues and future plans.

Commissioners sought assurance that the security arrangements are appropriate, effective and responsive to changing needs. Commissioners emphasised the importance of our security arrangements being deployed sensitively, given the status of the Assembly estate as open and welcoming public buildings.

Commissioners highlighted the significance of the role individuals need to take in their own security and stressed the importance of all AMs, AMSS and Commission staff attending a 'Stay safe' presentation.

4 Audit Committee oral update 20/4/15

David Melding updated Commissioners on the most recent meeting of ACARAC. Three audit reports had been presented:

- Review of the appointment of Expert Advisers to Committees. Recommendations focused on updating guidance, clear mechanism to identify and deal with conflicts of interest and clear evaluation of performance;
- Value for Money. The audit identified that the Assembly Commission had a well-developed VfM culture that is embedded throughout the organisation. Further work was necessary around identifying and recording non-financial VfM activities.
- Review of the Assembly Commission's Project Management Arrangements. The committee supported the approach being taken.
- ACARAC approved the Internal Audit Charter for 2015-16 which formally defines the purpose, authority and responsibility of Internal Audit.

Gareth Watts (Head of Internal Audit) had reported that he had successfully completed all planned activity for the 2014-15 Internal Audit programme, and the Committee approved the annual report. It will be presented to the Commission by Eric Gregory, the Chair of the Committee, at the July meeting.

The Committee had reviewed the Corporate Risk Register and discussed constitutional change, particularly to ensure that everything possible is being done to influence and be prepared for future changes. The Committee praised the

Commission's approach and the quality of work. They suggested further sources of independent challenge which Anna Daniel will explore.

5 Any other business

David Melding reported back to the Commission on the recent visit to Bosnia Herzegovina, which had been to mark the 20 year anniversary of events in Srebrenica. He highlighted that there will be an event held in the Senedd on 8 July.

The Presiding Officer indicated that the Assembly week events in Wrexham had been successful.

The Commission's next meeting will be on 21 May, when Commissioners will be holding one of their regular meetings to focus on performance.