

Assembly Commission

Venue: **Conference Room 4B - Tŷ Hywel**

Date: **Monday, 5 November 2018**

Time: **12.30 - 14.20**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(5)2018(8)

Commission
Members:

Elin Jones AM (Chair)
Suzy Davies AM
Adam Price AM
Joyce Watson AM

Officials present:

Manon Antoniazzi, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly
Dave Tosh, Director of Resources
Craig Stephenson, Director of Engagement
Nia Morgan, Director of Finance
Non Gwilym, Head of Communications
Jan Koziel, Head of Procurement
Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation
Huw Gapper, Senior Constitutional Change Officer
Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission and Member Support
Elin Roberts, Policy Adviser to the Llywydd
Gwion Evans, Head of the Llywydd's Private Office

Others in
attendance:

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and apologies

No apologies were received.

1.2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of 24 September were agreed.

Commissioners had agreed that the implementation of Electoral Commission recommendations on electoral expenses should be dealt with through subordinate legislation subject to appropriate assurance on timing being received. That assurance was received from WG, and shared with Commissioners, meaning the decision taken is therefore confirmed.

2 Update on the Commission 18/19 Budget

Commissioners were updated on various aspects of the Commission's budget for the current year.

Commissioners considered a forecast underspend in relation to the utilisation of the Determination budget and the estimate of Members' Pension Finance costs, received from the Government Actuary's Department, which is lower than the budget that was set before the start of the financial year.

Commissioners agreed to submit a Supplementary Budget, for inclusion in the Welsh Government's budget motion, to decrease the AME budget by £500k and decrease the Remuneration Board's Determination Budget line (Members' salaries and related costs) by £500k.

The Commission agreed to offer a Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES), anticipated to be in late November 2018 to ensure that it can continue to provide the necessary skills, expertise and capacity to support the Assembly through the particular challenges brought by Brexit and Constitutional Change. The possibility of a VES had been identified to both PAC and the Finance Committee during the recent round of budget and accounts scrutiny.

Commissioners agreed that the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer should write to both PAC and the Finance Committee to inform them of these decisions.

3 Commission Budget 2019-20 response to Finance Committee report recommendations

Commissioners were updated on the progress of the Assembly Commission Budget for 2019-20 through its scrutiny process. The Finance Committee had reported and Commissioners agreed a Commission response to the recommendations raised in the Finance Committee Report. Commissioners agreed the final budget document for 2019-20 will be laid on 7 November 2018. This will be debated in Plenary on 14 November.

4 Public Engagement Strategy

Commissioners considered a paper which provided an update on the public engagement activities delivered by Commission staff on behalf of the Assembly since 2016. They discussed highlights of the main achievements to date and noted progress made on key

engagement initiatives since May 2016. Commissioners talked about giving greater profile to areas where the Assembly has led the way on particular legislative issues. They also discussed the opportunity to increase Member awareness of the amount of outreach activity undertaken by Commission staff.

Commissioners confirmed that the strategy reflected their engagement priorities from now until the end of this Assembly, and endorsed the key milestones and completion dates.

5 Welsh procurement

Commissioners had requested information about ways to increase the proportion of Commission procurement spend with Welsh and Wales-based suppliers. They considered a paper which set out a strategy for increasing the proportion of procurement spend with Welsh and Wales-based suppliers. The detail also encompassed a new corporate KPI on Welsh supplier spend to give focus to formally monitoring progress.

Commissioners noted the information provided and supported the direction of travel.

6 Electoral reform update

Commissioners considered a number of issues relating to the progression of their electoral reform activity:

Commissioners considered aspects of the work relating to public information and awareness-raising amongst young people in terms of being able to reflect this in the Explanatory Memorandum which will accompany the Bill on introduction. They discussed the importance of ensuring young people are encouraged and supported to exercise their right to vote. Commissioners agreed that officials should work with the Welsh Government and external stakeholders to develop a plan for raising awareness amongst young people ahead of the 2021 elections, and in particular addressing it in schools. They asked to be updated as this work progresses.

As a result of the devolution of powers in the Wales Act 2017, the Electoral Commission (EC) has approached the Llywydd and Welsh Government to propose that the Assembly legislates to make the EC accountable to the Assembly and financed by the Assembly Commission, in relation to devolved elections in Wales (local government and Assembly elections). Commissioners discussed some of the complex issues about how and by when legislative changes could be made. Commissioners felt that there seems to be value in the EC being accountable to the Assembly for its work in Wales. They agreed to take soundings on the principle from their groups on this proposal from the EC, to take changes through in the reform Bill, which is supported by WG.

The Llywydd provided an oral update on feedback she had received about future descriptors for Members and the institution, and proposals she intended to make as a result.

Commissioners discussed the options and agreed that it was necessary for a decision to be reached for the purpose of the introduction of the Bill. The Commission agreed the Llywydd determine this, as the Member in Charge, the Llywydd said that she was looking to take forward the name change that seemed to reflect the majority view of Assembly groups at

this time. It was confirmed that should other options subsequently emerge, these could be considered at Stage 2. The plan was therefore that the name change introduced in the Bill should be a monolingual name "Senedd"; and that Members will be referred to as "Aelodau'r Senedd (AS) / Members of the Senedd (MS)" and in the singular as "Aelod o'r Senedd"/Member of the Senedd". The associated short title of the Bill would be "Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill". The Commission would be known as "Senedd Commission".

7 Rhodri Morgan Statue

Commissioners considered a request that had been received seeking agreement in principle, for a statue to commemorate the life and work of the late First Minister Rhodri Morgan, to be installed on the Assembly estate.

Commissioners requested that a policy be developed to provide a process for decision making on future requests for the installation of memorials and statues. In the meantime they were content, in principle, that a statue of Rhodri Morgan, as the first First Minister of Wales could be installed on Assembly land, subject to receiving suitable assurances, such as that a third party should hold the statue in trust and be responsible for it.

8 Star Walk Wales

Commissioners were provided with an update on recent developments around the long-standing proposals for a 'Star Walk Wales'. Commissioners concluded that they did not feel able to support the development of a 'Star Walk' on the Assembly estate.

9 Papers to note:

9.1 Assembly on a page

Commissioners noted a short document that had been produced to summarise the updated purpose, vision, goals, priorities and values of the Assembly Commission.

9.2 Executive Board update (RAD decisions)

Commissioners noted the routine update.

10 Any other business

- Standards Commissioner's office – Commissioners were updated about changes being made to improve the staffing structure that supports the Commissioner for Standards. This was in view of the increasing volume of work in relation to enquiries to the Standards Commissioner's office over the course of this year, and in response to recommendations made by the Standards of Conduct Committee.

In the period since the previous meeting Commissioners had agreed the appointment of independent advisers to the Commission, following an open and transparent recruitment process.