

## Manon Antoniazzi

Prif Weithredwr a Chlerc y Senedd  
Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd

17 February 2025

Mark Isherwood MS  
Chair of Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee  
Senedd Cymru

Dear Mark,

### **Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2023-24.**

I am writing in response to the **Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2023-24.** I would like to thank the Committee for its scrutiny.

The Commission notes the views and comments of the Committee along with your recommendations concerning the Commission. We have addressed these in the attached Annex. If you would like any further information on any matter covered in the Annex, please do not hesitate to let me know.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Committee that we remain as committed as ever to providing greater clarity and assurance through external scrutiny and audit as well as through our internal governance framework. The Commission's approach is always to try to operate with openness, transparency and clarity.

Yours sincerely,



**Manon Antoniazzi**

**Prif Weithredwr a Chlerc y Senedd / Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



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## Annex 1

### Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2023-24

**Recommendation 1.** The Commission should set out clearly in future Accounts where in-year savings have been identified, as well as setting out the impact of these efficiency savings on processes and efficiency.

#### Accepted

The Commission will clearly set out and publish in-year savings and the impact of any efficiency savings in the Annual Report (which forms part of the Annual Report & Accounts document).

**Recommendation 2.** The Commission, in their next Accounts, should set out how delayed projects associated with the Carbon Neutral Strategy have been reprioritised during the year and set out a plan for future years if projects remain uncompleted in 2024-25 that were originally anticipated to be concluded.

#### Accepted

The Commission will include information on the works to support the Carbon Neutral Strategy, including any reprioritisation, in its next Annual Report (which forms part of the Annual Report & Accounts document). Additionally, the Committee will receive a copy of the next annual Sustainability report before its review of the Commission's 2024-25 accounts.

As of January 2025, the short-term targets in the Carbon Neutral Strategy have been met, and the medium-term targets are on track to be achieved by the end of 2026.

**Recommendation 3.** The Commission should ensure that staff voices are reflected in all of the projects associated with Senedd reform. It should ensure that there is staff representation as part of the process of both implementing and devising the change programmes associated with Senedd reform.

#### Accepted

Staff engagement has been a central tenet of Senedd Reform activity. Staff were extensively and consulted on the changes to Ty Hywel and Commission workspace through a series of workshops from which several changes emerged – including to floorplans / layouts in response to staff feedback. Staff have also been engaged through the production of FAQs on Senedd Reform projects published on the intranet, alongside vlogs. Furthermore all-staff meetings have been used to ensure staff are aware of progress.



Through its work on supporting Leadership Team's business preparedness for the Seventh Senedd, the 7th Senedd Board will review further opportunities for staff engagement, to complement the engagement channels above and the engagement undertaken by Heads of Service with their teams. The 7th Senedd Board is also in the process of redesigning its intranet presence to ensure that staff receive the most up-to-date information on the progress being made in delivering the objectives of the programme.

The Trade Union Side (TUS) is actively represented on the Siambwr 26 project board, the Tŷ Hywel project board and the Ways of Working Board (which oversees the preceding two projects), ensuring that staff perspectives are incorporated into these initiatives. TUS has also been invited to join the 7th Senedd programme board. Additionally, TUS participated in all focus group sessions conducted for the Tŷ Hywel project regarding the relocation of Commission teams. TUS also plays a vital role on the Commission's Workforce Steering Group, contributing to the development of the People Strategy and Workforce Plan in anticipation of Senedd Reform. These projects are consistently reviewed and discussed between TUS and senior officials during our formal Partnership Forum with TUS.

**Recommendation 4. The Commission should review how the work of the Independent Remuneration Board is scrutinised; and set out in writing to the Committee any new ways that assurance can be provided to the public and Members about how the Board operates. This scrutiny should occur regularly and be robust and transparent.**

**Noted. We are unable to accept the recommendation due to the legislative framework which underpins the Independent Remuneration Board's operation and functions.**

The Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd ("the Board") was established by the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 ("the Measure"). The Measure establishes the Board's independence from any influence by the Senedd or the Senedd Commission when exercising its functions and does not provide a mechanism for Members to hold it to account. The then Senedd Commissioner, Ken Skates, wrote to you as Chair of the Committee in March 2023 and set out the governance relating to the Board's accountability. An overview of the statutory framework and how the Board operates is provided in Annex 2.

Direct support for the Board is provided by the Commission as required by the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010. Since 2022-23 the cost of this support has been ring-fenced within the total Senedd Commission budget to improve transparency. The budget allocated for the Board for 2025-26 provides for the commissioning of external expertise, including an end of term effectiveness review. The Commission agrees the budget available to the Remuneration Board to discharge its functions through its regular budget processes, which are subject to scrutiny by the Finance Committee before being agreed by the Senedd.

In terms of value for money assurances, the Chief Executive and Clerk is responsible as Accounting Officer for providing assurance that its resources are being used effectively. The Accounting Officer considers any new requests for additional funding on the basis of information provided by the Board and advice from the Chief Finance Officer. In ensuring the effective use of resources, the



Accounting Officer places reliance on assurance regarding the framework of internal controls, independent scrutiny from Audit Wales and on advice from members of the Executive Board. As part of your usual process or as part of a distinct session, you may hold the Commission to account on any aspect of the budget spend, including that used to enable the Board to discharge its functions.

The Board holds regular meetings with the Member Representative Group and Support Staff Representative Group. It is an avenue for the Representatives to raise any Member concerns directly with the Board, on behalf of Members of their groups. The Board is also undertaking workstream specific engagement with Members and Support Staff.

The Board and Commission are undertaking a structured dialogue which will help address some of the recommendations which relate to both the Commission and Remuneration Board's remit, including engagement on simplification of the Determination which provides an additional avenue for establishing an understanding of the Board's work.

**Recommendation 5. The Commission should write to the Committee to update us on the work being done to mitigate the risks posed by these large reform projects and set out how their risk profile is changing, as those programmes develop, ahead of the Committee's scrutiny of their 2024-25 Accounts.**

#### **Accepted**

The Commission attaches the current summarised SENEDD RESTRICTED versions of the 7<sup>th</sup> Senedd and Ways of Working risk registers (Annexes 3 and 4). Ahead of the Committee's scrutiny of its accounts the Commission will also send the newest version of the same risk registers to allow the Committee to understand how the risk profile has evolved.

The Commission also manages a Corporate level risk regarding Senedd Reform. This risk is reviewed quarterly by Executive Board, and has been the subject of ARAC scrutiny and an audit. Further assurance on its effective management will be provided to the Commission (and to the Committee) in the Accounting Officer's Annual Governance Statement.

**Recommendation 6. The Commission should send the Committee a copy of its new long-term sickness policy, once it's available, with a summary of its contents and aims alongside it.**

#### **Accepted**

The Commission will share the new long term sickness absence policy once the internal consultation process is concluded. This is expected to be within the Spring Term.



## Annex 2

### Related to recommendation 4: an overview of how the Board requests Commission resources and accounts for their use

The Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd ("the Board") was established by the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 ("the Measure"). The Measure affords a great deal of autonomy to the Board and does not provide a mechanism for Members to hold it to account.

The Measure establishes the Board's independence from any influence by the Senedd or the Senedd Commission when exercising its functions. In terms of the Board's accountability for its decisions and their effectiveness, the Measure:

- a. requires the Board to generally act in an open and transparent manner and publish on the website such information as will enable the public to be kept informed as to its activities;
- b. requires the Board to consult those who are likely to be affected, before making its decisions (except where it would be inappropriate); the Determination also specifically requires the Accounting Officer to be consulted on matters such as exceptional expenses; the Board may seek or receive advice from the Accounting Officer on issues relevant to her Accounting Officer duties.
- c. requires the Board to lay before the Senedd an annual report on its activities, including its use of resources, during that financial year;
- d. enables the Senedd to remove a member of the Board if a motion in the Senedd is supported by two thirds of the Members voting. A motion must be brought by a Commissioner on behalf of the Commission. This is the ultimate accountability mechanism and would serve as an expression by the Senedd of no confidence in the Board.

The Board meets its duty to act in an open and transparent way. It does this through a variety of publications - letter updates to Members and Support Staff (which are also published), minutes of its meetings, producing a strategy for its term in office; all its Determinations are published on the website, and consultation proposals, including research papers which set out relevant data, international and comparative analysis which the Board has taken into account (the publication of research papers was in response to a recommendation of its 2023 Mid-term Effectiveness Review).

The Board publishes an Annual Report of its activities including its use of resources. The Board has also invited Members and Support Staff to meetings to discuss its Annual Report. The Remuneration Board has periodically commissioned its own effectiveness reviews. Its mid-term effectiveness review was undertaken by the Commission's Head of Internal Audit and was received by the Board in March 2023. The Board published the review on its website, including the recommendations made to the Board in April 2023 alongside the Board's response. The Board wrote to all Members to inform them of this. The Board has agreed an action plan which was implemented from May 2023. Updates on delivery of the action plan were published by the Board for 2022-23 and 2023-24. [Corporate and](#)



**Strategic (remunerationboard.wales)** The Board's budget for 2025-26 includes resources to commission an external end of term effectiveness review.

