

The Assembly Commission

Meeting Venue: Presiding Officer's office, 4th floor - Tŷ Hywel

Meeting date: Monday, 17 November 2014

Meeting time: 13.00 - 15.30

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Minutes: AC(4)2014(14)

Committee Members:

Dame Rosemary Butler AM (Chair)
Peter Black AM
Angela Burns AM
Sandy Mewies AM
Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM

Officials present:

Claire Clancy, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Assembly (Official)
Craig Stephenson, Interim Director of Commission Services (Official)
Dave Tosh, Director of Assembly Business and ICT (Official)
Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation (Official)
Siân Wilkins, Head of Chamber and Committee Service, Head of Chamber and Committee Service (Official)
Kathryn Potter, Head of Research Service (Official)
Christopher Warner, Head of Policy and Legislation Committee Service, Head of Policy and Legislation Committee Service (Official)
Sulafa Thomas, Head of Commission Secretariat (Official)

Others in attendance:

Helena Feltham, Independent Adviser, Independent Adviser

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and apologies

David Melding AM had sent his apologies.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the 3 November meeting were agreed.

2 Constitutional change

Commissioners considered an update on key constitutional issues and their implications for the Commission.

The Commission's objective is to ensure that the support provided to Members by Assembly services are prepared for the implications of constitutional change.

The work is focused around three strands:

- ensuring that legislation meets the needs of the Assembly (Wales Bill, any subsequent legislation to implement Silk II);
- readiness for change, including capacity planning and wider implications for the Assembly's ways of working; and
- awareness raising about the changes to ensure the possibilities are taken into account in planning for the Fifth Assembly.

The Commission recognised that there is a degree of certainty about some of the issues being faced, whilst others remain more speculative at present.

On the subject of the Member capacity at the Assembly, Commissioners considered the resourcing and service implications of increasing the number of Members. They also discussed the increasing challenges faced by Members while there are only 60 Assembly Members.

The Commission agreed to return to this subject early in the new year and asked for more detailed information be compiled. In the meantime, they agreed to write to the Remuneration Board to ask them to consider options for additional support for Assembly Members in the fifth Assembly.

3 Machine Translation - conclusions

The Commission discussed a paper which provided them with a summary of the achievements of the machine translation project. Commissioners considered how to sustain the benefits that had been achieved beyond the life of the project and meet increasing demands for translation.

Commissioners commented on capacity issues that had been highlighted and the importance of prioritising translation in the right way to deliver a service that enables Members to do their job. A key driver for the project was to enable the translation team (TRS) to translate more text more quickly.

Tests undertaken by TRS earlier this year suggested that the use of Machine Translation, coupled with translation memory, could increase the capacity to translate by around 20% – this has been borne out in practice. The increase in productivity has coincided with an upturn in demand for translation. It has therefore allowed us to provide bilingual documents and messages where we would otherwise not have been able to, and enabled the translation team to respond to requests to tighter deadlines, for example, Members' committee briefings.

The Commission agreed to continue to work with Microsoft and external organisations to gather data for the system to improve its quality, embed its use in the organisation further and to share our experiences of using machine translation.

4 Review of Reporting of Proceedings - update

The Commission received an update on progress of the review of the way in which we report our proceedings.

Commissioners discussed the importance of making appropriate linkages between projects and achieving benefits from the ways that technology can be used.

Commissioners also fed back on examples of good practice from their recent visit to Canada.

The intention is that the next steps will be to:

- focus on users' needs through workshops, focus groups and drop-in sessions;
- assess the success of the trials carried out over the autumn term that have not yet been quantified; and
- produce a more efficient process, with the aim of publishing the RoP more quickly in both languages.

5 Review of support for committees

Commissioners discussed the enhancements made to the support for committees since they considered the issue last December. They commented on the good progress that had been made, particularly with regard to the provision of increasingly concise background documents, provision of bilingual services and the innovative work done on the challenging issue of engagement, which had been acknowledged as exemplar by other legislatures.

They also talked about the importance of committee work being led by the committee, the role of the Chair in facilitating the operation of the committee and the significance of Chairs participating in CPD (for example the Leadership seminar in January 2015). They acknowledged that this would be useful in developing CPD for the Fifth Assembly.

The Commission considered how analysis and evaluation of outcomes could be undertaken to inform further improvements and felt that it could be useful for committees to be provided with data on their achievements to consider when thinking about their legacy reports.

6 Any other business

The next meeting will be held on 3 December.

Agenda items will include a discussion of European issues with Gregg Jones, and updates from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and on the ICT changes in the Siambur.

Secretariat

November 2014