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National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
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Deu Nick

**PAC INQUIRY: WIDER ISSUES EMANATING FROM THE GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF
BETSI CADWALADR UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD (BCUHB)**

The Deputy Committee Clerk has asked for my advice on the Welsh Government's response to the previous Committee's recommendations arising from the above inquiry. I note that the Welsh Government's correspondence also includes responses to specific recommendations from Healthcare Inspectorate Wales and BCUHB.

My overall view is that the responses to the recommendations from all the relevant parties are reasonable and provide the Committee with assurance that actions are either underway or planned in most of the areas where the Committee raised concerns. I note that three recommendations have not been accepted and a further four have been partially accepted. In examining the responses to these particular recommendations, the reasons for the non or partial acceptance appear to be reasonable and appropriately considered, although it is of course a matter for the Committee if it wishes to press Welsh Government and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales further on the particular issues covered in those recommendations.

The previous Committee's legacy report recommended that the new Committee should follow up at regular intervals on the action being taken in response to the issues raised by the above inquiry. While I consider the overall response to the recommendations to be a reasonable one, there are some particular areas in which the Committee may wish to be kept updated on progress:

- the extent to which NHS bodies' annual reports, and annual governance statements disclose details of board members' attendance at board (and committee) meetings [Recommendation 2];

- work with Academi Wales to review and refresh the induction programme for independent board members [Recommendation 3];
- the review of Putting Things Right guidance [Recommendation 4];
- improvements to the search and tracking capability within the government wide CABS database [Recommendation 6];
- the new Welsh Government's plans for responding to the consultation on the Green Paper, specifically in relation to the visible independence of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales [Recommendation 23];
- the new Welsh Government's plans to consider the range of responsibilities of Healthcare Inspectorate Wales [Recommendation 24]; and
- the position across NHS bodies in Wales in respect of approval of their Integrated Medium Term Plans for 2016-17 [Recommendation 26].

The previous Committee's legacy report also recommended that the new Committee should monitor the progress made by BCUHB during the period of special measures, including GP Out of Hours services, and suggested taking further oral evidence from the Health Board in Spring 2017. Currently, I plan to undertake work jointly with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales in early 2017 which will aim to review the progress BCUHB is making against the recommendations we have previously made to strengthen governance arrangements within the Health Board. I am anticipating that the Committee will wish to receive a briefing from me on this work when it is published in spring 2017, and possibly to take further evidence from witnesses. An update from Welsh Government on the areas identified above (and other aspects of their response to Committee recommendations) could therefore be taken as part of that evidence gathering exercise. I would also be in a position to provide the Committee with an update on the findings from local audit work I am undertaking across Wales on GP Out of Hours services. I consider that there would be merit in the Committee discussing any plans for further scrutiny of all of these areas with the new Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

With reference to the Welsh Government's response to Recommendation 3, the Committee may find it helpful to be aware that as part of my structured assessment work in NHS bodies this year I shall be undertaking some comparative assessments of board assurance frameworks and also the mechanisms in place to monitor delivery of medium term plans. This work provides me with a mechanism to identify and share any good practice identified in relation to these aspects of governance. With regard to Recommendation 27 in the Committee's report, members may have noted from the memorandum updating on my work plan that I plan to have published my report on the implementation of the NHS Finances (Wales) Act 2014 by the end of March 2017.

I trust the above is helpful.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'H' followed by a 'V' and a 'T', representing Huw Vaughan Thomas.

HUW VAUGHAN THOMAS
AUDITOR GENERAL FOR WALES