

Comisiwn y Cynulliad Assembly Commission

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Cymru
National
Assembly for
Wales



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Management Board report to the Commission May 2012

Outline

1.0	Strategic goal – provide outstanding parliamentary support.....	2
2.0	Strategic goal – engage with the people of Wales	7
3.0	Strategic goal – promote Wales.....	8
4.0	Strategic goal – use resources wisely	10
5.0	Financial report.....	12
6.0	Other information	13

List of annexes

- Annex A: Freedom of information (January – March 2012)

**AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1
Management Board Report to the Commission**

Assembly Commission's strategic goals

1.0 Strategic goal – provide outstanding parliamentary support

1.1 Assembly business update

- a. Additional resource has been put in place the Research Service to strengthen services offered in terms of financial analysis and scrutiny. The key aims are to:
- Support and encourage more effective financial scrutiny of legislation and Government policy for Assembly committees;
 - Undertake briefings on key areas of topical interest and develop the capacity to carry out costings of alternative spending proposals;
 - Provide more resource for costing Assembly led Bills to ensure more robust methodology;
 - Improve the enquiry service in terms of coverage and depth of analyses available;
 - Provide briefings analysing key areas of Government spend and more economic/labour market information and analyses.

1.2 Committees

- a. Committees have also increased the amount of external expertise they have drawn on, with more expert advisers being appointed last term than in any previous year. These advisors are drawn from a range of fields, including academia and specialist organisations:
- Environment and Sustainability Committee appointed two advisers to assist them in their inquiry into a single environmental Body;
 - Children and Young People Committee appointed an expert in order to assist their engagement activity for the Adoption inquiry;
 - Three advisors are being used by the Health and Social Care Committee for their large inquiry into residential care. They are providing specialist knowledge and analysis and facilitation with expertise to link into

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

- people who would not normally engage with committee activity;
- Finance Committee have appointed an expert adviser for the inquiry into Devolved Funding: Borrowing powers and capital.
- b. The Business Committee has recently reviewed the Oral Assembly Questions ballot procedure. They were concerned that on a fairly regular basis 15 questions are not being tabled from the 20 Members selected in the ballot. This has been the case for all Ministers, the Counsel General and the Assembly Commission. They agreed not to change the procedure for Ministers at this stage, but to discuss with Members in their groups and to keep this under review.
- c. They did, however, agree to revise the procedure for tabling questions to the Counsel General and the Assembly Commission. They agreed to remove the requirement for an initial ballot for questions and to revert to the former procedure which would allow any Member to table a question (with 15 being selected by random means). This should remove the perceived need to table a question by those Members who are successful in the ballot and allow greater access to oral questions for Members.
- d. The Business Committee will propose a change to Standing Orders, in plenary, before the next round of questions to the Counsel General and Assembly Commission.

1.3 Remuneration Board

Residential accommodation

- a. The Remuneration Board met on 23 March. The Board discussed the adequacy of the current arrangements for overnight stays for Assembly Members whose main residences are within the inner area and concluded that the evidence pointed to a significantly greater number of overnight stays being required by Members whose main homes lie within the constituencies of Gower, Swansea West, Swansea East and Neath. The evidence also indicated that the take up from Members based in South Wales Central and East

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1
Management Board Report to the Commission

was very low with the majority of Members residing in these regions having not taken any overnight stays whatsoever.

- b. The Board has written to all Members to invite their views the following proposed changes:
- An increase in the numbers of overnight stays available to those Members whose main homes are based in the constituencies of Gower, Swansea West, Swansea East and Neath. The number would be increased to around 36 overnight stays per annum, which will allow for at least one per week during the Assembly's sitting time.
 - In line with the lower demand, a decrease to 15 overnight stays in Cardiff for Members whose main homes are in all other constituencies within the inner area.
 - In line with other accommodation budgets, the budget available to all Members in the inner area for overnight stays in Cardiff will be expressed as a financial sum rather than by the number of overnight stays available. This would allow Members to use the sum flexibly to meet their needs on any type of accommodation up to a maximum of £95 per night. The overnight subsistence allowance of £20 would remain in addition to this budget. The proposed annual sum for Members whose main homes are in the constituencies of Gower, Swansea West, Swansea East and Neath would be £3,420, and for Members whose main homes are in other constituencies in the inner area, the sum would be £1,425.
- c. It was also agreed, in light of concerns raised relating to contingency in the event of extreme weather, to allow the Chief Executive to consider requests for additional stays when such circumstances arise.
- d. The deadline for responses is 17 May. The Board will come to a final view on this matter at its meeting on 22 June.

Arrangements for Assembly Members' support staff

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

- a. The Board is committed to reviewing pay and arrangements for AMSS by April 2013. Following discussions at its meeting in March, the Board agreed that this work is likely to involve a more comprehensive evaluation of job descriptions and the responsibilities of support staff, and the appropriateness of the pay bands and spine points.
- b. The Board agreed that Assembly Members' Support Staff remuneration should reflect the value of the work they undertake, and that this be in line with other suitable comparators across the public and private sectors in Wales.
- c. The Board recognised that support staff salaries play a significant part in enabling Members to attract a suitable calibre of applicants to vacant posts in order to ensure the quality of the service provide to them, and thereby to enhance the strategic capacity of the Assembly.
- d. The Board also agreed that its review should take the wider political and economic context into account.
- e. The Chair of the Board has written to Party Leaders, representatives of AMSS and Angela Burns AM (as the relevant Assembly Commissioner) to indicate the Board's intentions to consult and engage with those affected by its decisions.

AM Pensions

- a. In preparation for its review of AM pensions, the Board has appointed Pricewaterhouse Coopers to deliver a pensions seminar and produce a report, which will form the basis of the Board's consultation in Autumn of 2012.
- b. The seminar will be held on 21 June. Representatives of the Pension Scheme Trustees will be invited to attend.

1.4 ICT service improvements

Continual Service Improvement Programme (CSIP)

- a. The ICT continual service improvement programme (CSIP) has now been running for three months and significant improvements have already been made, although many of

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1
Management Board Report to the Commission

these relate to changes behind the scenes to the way Atos provide our service. The service improvements include:

- All constituency offices have been moved to either the new BT network, or where that has not been possible(usually because the local BT Exchange is not 21CN compatible), to an improved infrastructure. This work was completed six weeks ahead of schedule.
- All constituency offices have been moved to BT's VIP service, which provides a higher level of response in the event of problems.
- Visits have been made to 62 constituency offices, to undertake 'health checks' of the ICT installation, making improvements where possible and gathering information on outstanding issues where more in-depth work is required.
- ICT staff have met with most Assembly Members to identify the major issues, the output is being collated and will help to inform the planning of future works, such as wireless connectivity, a wider range of end user devices and BYOD.

Casework

a. The latest position on the upgrade to the Assembly provided Casework system is as follows:

- The necessary patching has now been applied to the Assembly test environment and system testing was underway leading up to the Bank Holiday week-end.
- User testing will begin the week after the Bank Holiday and will continue for two weeks and, if successful, implementation will be completed for the end of May.
- Early indications from system testing are positive in terms of problem fixes and improved functionality.

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

Future ICT Service Provision and ICT Strategy

- a. The work to prepare fully evaluated options for the future provision of ICT Services is underway. A project team is being assembled to undertake the evaluation and business case preparation work, with the aim of having the options analysis finished by the end of 2012. As a reminder, the Commission needs to give notice of its intentions, to Atos, by 30 April 2013.
- b. The Welsh Government has formally announced that it will extend the Merlin Agreement, having agreed significant changes for future service delivery, with Atos. A number of these changes will deliver benefits to the Commission, including a reduced project rate card cost, separate invoicing for project work and improvements to core services. The extension provides the option for WG to extend service provision to 2019.
- c. In parallel with the future services analysis, a piece of work to develop an ICT and Information strategy for the Assembly is getting under way. This strategic visioning piece needs to be in place in time for the decision-making around future service delivery.

2.0 Strategic goal – engage with the people of Wales

2.1 Events

- a. 01 March – To mark St David’s day the Presiding Officer hosted a lunchtime reception in the Senedd. The theme for this year was showcasing Welsh produce. Guests enjoyed food demonstrations by members of the Welsh Culinary Team, a performance by the Caldicot Male Voice Choir, and music background provided by a young harpist from the RWCMD. The guest list included Welsh producers and food specialist media.
- b. 8 March – International Women’s Day this year was marked in partnership with the Institute of Welsh Affairs, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Women’s Institute and

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

the British Council. The day began in the Pierhead with a breakfast round table meeting, hosted by the Presiding Officer, followed by discussion groups and workshops in the Pierhead hosted by the Women's Institute and a lunchtime lecture delivered by Tori James, the youngest British and the first Welsh female to climb Mount Everest. The programme of events was open to the public and specifically aimed at women with an interest in public life.

- c. 15 March – The Assembly ran a CPD event for the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy in Wales, which was opened by Angela Burns as Commissioner for Assembly Resources. Around 50 finance professionals from across Wales attended and heard about the work of the Assembly, the Finance and PAC Committees, linkages with the work of the Wales Audit Office, and the innovative plans for the Wales Governance Centre and its move to the Pierhead. Feedback was very good, one comment being, “we all know what the Assembly does generally, but it was really helpful to understand in greater detail what that means in practice”.
- d. 26 March – The Archbishop of Canterbury visited as part of his annual tour of Wales in March. The programme started with an event in Siambr Hywel organised in partnership with CEWC Cymru where young people were engaged in a debate on several topics; this was followed by a lecture delivered by the Archbishop and chaired by Betsan Powys on *For the Common Good: what is it that turns a society into a community?* The event was open to the public.
- e. 11 April – Helen Clark, Administrator to the United Nations' Development Programme and former Prime Minister of New Zealand, visited the National Assembly for Wales and delivered a lecture in the Pierhead as part of the Pierhead Sessions. Mrs Clark shared views on the role that empowerment of women plays in building new and successful democratic societies, before taking part in a question and answer session. The event was open to the public.

3.0 Strategic goal – promote Wales

- 3.1 In March, Steven O'Donoghue, Head of Assembly Resources, facilitated a strategic planning workshop with Derby University's

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

Department for Accounting and Financial Markets. As well as using it as an opportunity to form a positive image of Wales and the Assembly, it was similarly beneficial in gaining an understanding of the strategic issues facing other organisations, in this case, a University.

3.2 International activities update

- a. 22 February – a delegation from Sinn Féin, led by Raymond McCartney MLA held a private meeting with the Presiding Officer.
- b. 1 March – a delegation from the Flemish Parliament, led by the Speaker Jan Peumans visited the Assembly to learn more about the devolution process in the UK and the priorities of the Assembly.
- c. 6 March Sir Alan Haselhurst MP, CPA Chair visited the Assembly for a series of meeting with the CPA Branch Chair, Executive committee and a private meeting with the Presiding Officer.
- d. 21 March – The Presiding Officer welcomed Welsh and international students to the Assembly for a debate on this year's Commonwealth theme of 'Connecting Cultures' to celebrate Commonwealth Day.
- e. The following held a private meeting with the Presiding Officer on their first visit to Wales:
- f. 15 March – HE Mr T Jasudasen Singapore High Commissioner
- g. 21 March – HE Volodymyr Khandogiy Ukraine Ambassador
- h. 26 March – HE Mr Daniel Taub Israeli Ambassador
- i. 27 March – HE Mr Roberto Jaguaribe Brazilian Ambassador
- j. 25 April – HE Werner Matías Romero Ambassador to El Salvador

3.3 European Office

- a. Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM, in his role as Assembly representative on the Committee of the Regions, participated

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

in: the plenary session of the Committee 15–16 February; a seminar on 22 March on the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014–2020 aimed at national parliamentarians across the EU; and on 22–23 March, with Christine Chapman AM, in the EU Summit of Cities and Regions held in Copenhagen as part of the Danish EU Presidency.

- b. 23 April – Ken Skates AM visited Brussels for a background visit on EU policy and funding. He had meetings with European Commission officials (DG Regional Policy and DG Research), UK Permanent Representation the EU (UKREP), Wales House representations, EU networks (for business and research), and with Welsh MEP Derek Vaughan.

3.4 Others

- a. 12–13 February – Christine Chapman AM, Julie Morgan AM and Keith Davies AM travelled to Helsinki for a fact-finding visit looking at how the ban on corporal punishment of children is being enforced in Finland.

4.0 Strategic goal – use resources wisely

4.1 Staffing update

- a. Dave Tosh has now taken up his post as Director of ICT, joining the Assembly from the City and County of Swansea. Connie Cockburn now becomes the Head of Estates and Front of House.

4.2 Pierhead Renovation work

- a. The next phase of the Pierhead terracotta renovation is under way, scaffolding will be up on the side facing the oval basin for several weeks. We are obliged to do the work partly to preserve the building but also because of safety issues. The cost of this phase is expected to be about £75k. The last two elevations of Pierhead will be completed together, currently planned for 2013 but we are considering whether they can be brought forward to this year. The first phase of the restoration work disclosed a problem with a beam over the front entrance of the Pierhead, which will need to be fixed and

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

requires a small scaffold for a short period of time. This work will take place as soon as is convenient.

4.3 Senedd Café and Shop

- a. The opening of the new facility has seen much increased takings at both the shop and café, almost double compared to the same time last year, despite the wet weather. Geraint Huxtable and Miranda Parker will be working to continually improve the stock and presentation. Miranda is seeking out and implementing new ideas from Members and other organisations.

4.4 National Assembly for Wales People Strategy

- a. A people strategy for the Fourth Assembly has been finalised. The strategy provides a focus to our people policies and procedures and is designed to support the delivery of outstanding parliamentary support. Copies of the strategy will be circulated to Commissioners shortly, prior to a launch to staff to coincide with Learning at Work Day in May.

4.5 Severance scheme

- a. A Voluntary Exit Scheme was launched in January 2012. The aim of the scheme was to ensure that the Commission's staffing complement and structure is capable of supporting the delivery of outstanding parliamentary support during the Fourth Assembly by:
 - Allowing the organisation to respond to shifts in our skill requirements;
 - Improving workforce efficiency;
 - Facilitating organisational change; and
 - Delivering long-term savings where possible and/or avoiding additional costs in meeting skill shortages.
- b. Assembly staff were invited to apply for the Scheme and applications were considered by the relevant Head of Service and the Director of Assembly Business. Each application was

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1 Management Board Report to the Commission

assessed against an agreed set of criteria that had been shared with TUS and publicised on the staff intranet.

- c. Applications were subjected to a robust and objective assessment that involved assessment against the agreed criteria together with detailed costings. The decision panel comprised Claire Clancy, Ian Summers (Finance and Governance Advisor) and Mair Barnes (Independent Advisor to the Commission). Staff were given the right to appeal with appeals being considered by an Appeals Panel consisting of Keith Bush (Director of Legal Services and Chief Legal Adviser) and Tony Morgan (Chair of the NAW Commission's Remuneration Committee).
- d. In total, 19 members of staff applied and 16 were approved. The process is now complete and each member of staff has been informed and they are making preparations for their departure, which for many will be at the end of their notice period, which is 30th June 2012.
- e. The total cost for the approved applications is £ 622,688, with on-going annual savings of £ 304,734, delivering a payback period of c.25 months. Over the next few months we will be considering how we can capitalise on the outcomes of the scheme to ensure our staffing resources are aligned with the needs of the Commission and the Fourth Assembly.

4.3 Remuneration Committee

- a. In line with its role of providing independent oversight of the performance management arrangements for senior staff, at its 19 April meeting the Remuneration Committee considered reports from the Presiding Officer concerning the performance of the Chief Executive and from the Chief Executive concerning the performance of Directors. The Committee also endorsed a draft annual report to the Commission summarising its work in the last year. In addition the Committee reviewed its terms of reference to ensure they remain fit for purpose. These papers will be coming to the June meeting of the Commission.

5.0 Financial report

AC(4)2012(4) Paper 6 part 1

Management Board Report to the Commission

- 5.1 The 2011–12 year has ended with a £1.6m under spend against a total budget of £47.022m. As forecast, the Assembly Services under spend (£567k) is within the 2% corporate target. The final adjustments for the year end are underway and we anticipate the final position to fall to 1.5%, an under spend less than £500k. The £14.694m budget for the Assembly Members' claims and salaries is showing an under spend of £1m. We are on target to deliver both the Commission's and the Pension Scheme Annual Accounts for WAO audits.
- 5.2 The next update for Commissioners will include the first financial update for the 2012–13 financial year.
- 5.3 Work on the 2013–14 budget is underway following the Commissioners agreement to deliver the strategy within the £49.45m financial envelope. This is the figure published in the 2012–13 Budget. It reflects the Finance Committee's advice to deliver service improvements over two to three years.

6.0 Other information

- 6.1 A list of information disclosed since the last report under the Freedom of Information Act is attached at Annex A. As agreed, the list includes details of information withheld due to FOI exemptions. Future reports will include time taken to handle requests. The full disclosure can be provided to Commissioners on request.

Annex A

Information released following access to information requests (January – March 2012)

- Information and costs which relate to consultancies used by the Assembly
- Information relating to the use of the engagement fund
- The cost of the Translation Service
- Staff and costs per Assembly service area
- Information relating to Welsh speakers at the Assembly
- Information about and costs relating to the nursery
- Costs relating to the Remuneration Board
- Information about Assembly Members offices and the furniture provided
- Costs and details of training courses attended by Assembly staff
- Information about the Assembly's use of agency staff and contracts
- Information relating to Assembly staff and the minimum wage
- Details of correspondence between the Assembly and AWEMA
- No information held – previous employment of an individual
- No information held – information about bonus payments to Commission staff
- No information held – details of contracts to provide cosmetic objects on the Assembly estate
- No information held – details of meetings between Assembly Members and Ministers

Information withheld following access to information requests (January – March 2012)

- Details of Assembly Member expenses claims rejected by the Assembly **Section 36 – Effective conduct of public affairs exemption**
- Correspondence containing sensitive personal data of an Assembly Member **Section 40 – Personal data exemption**

