



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

MEETING

Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: December 2018

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority Board (WRA) meeting held on 20 December 2018 at Treforest.

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Present

Members

- Kathryn Bishop, Chair
- Dyfed Edwards, Deputy Chair
- David Jones, Non-Executive
- Jocelyn Davies, Non-Executive
- Lakshmi Narain, Non-Executive
- Martin Warren, Non-Executive
- Dyfed Alsop, Chief Executive Officer
- Sean Bradley, Chief Legal and Policy Officer
- Rebecca Godfrey, Chief Strategy Officer
- Lucy Robinson, Customer Insight and Strategy

Ymgynghorwyr (advisors)

- Catrin Millar, Head of Communications
- Melissa Quignon-Finch, Head of HR
- Teresa Platt, Chief Finance Officer

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- Jo Ryder, Chief of Staff
- Sam Cairns, Head of Operations
- Dave Matthews, Head of Policy

Secretariat

- Ceri Sullivan, Board Secretariat

Meeting opening

1. Welcome and introductions, conflicts of interest and apologies, minutes of the last meeting, matters arising

1. The Chair welcomed Board members and ymgynghorwyr to the last meeting of the year. No conflicts of interest were raised. The Chair reminded members that a list of WRA suppliers had been sent to them virtually and that they were required to identify and declare any conflicts of interest.
2. Apologies had been received from Andrew Jeffreys. The Chair would present his update on his behalf.
3. The Board agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were an accurate account of what was discussed. The Chair noted that the minutes had also been cleared with the Cabinet Secretary. Members agreed the redacted minute for publication and the recorded decisions of the last meeting.
4. The outstanding actions were discussed, and it was agreed that 7 actions would remain open.

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

5. The Chair noted that a final draft of the Risk Appetite statement had been circulated to the Board for consideration ahead of the meeting. Members had been given the opportunity to provide comments prior to circulation. For the

purpose of the minute, the Board agreed the Risk Appetite statement and to its publication. Members acknowledged the good work that had been done and noted that the outcome was innovative and that the process was both useful and welcomed by the Executive.

Reports, approval and decisions

2. Report from CEO (operational performance)

1. The Chief Executive (CEO) provided an update on recent activity. The Board were informed that much strategic engagement had taken place, including a recent meeting with the Finance Committee regarding future objectives. Discussions with its members had gone well and they appeared to be content with how things were going. It was noted that the Finance Committee were also very receptive of 'Our Approach' and the proposed performance measures for 2019-20.
2. The CEO had recently met with a number of Cabinet Secretaries who had expressed an interest in the WRA's work. 2 tax forums had been hosted, one in North Wales and one in South Wales. The team continued to visit and engage with local authorities across Wales. The Wales Audit Office (WAO) report had been released, the outcome of which was very positive and a reflection of where the WRA wanted to be.
3. The team had continued to recruit but on a smaller scale as the organisation was now close to full complement. Staff had begun undertaking some change activity, specifically to back office systems on which the Board would receive briefing at a later date.
4. The Board expressed an interest in the work being taken forward by the Tîm Arwain (TA). The CEO informed the Non-Executives (Non-Execs) that he would invite each of them to observe a TA meeting in the new year. He assured members that all Board papers were considered by the TA before they were tabled and any comments from the TA would be reflected in the papers or shared at Board meetings.

5. Organisational performance data was presented by the Head of Data and Data Analysis Apprentice. Some examples of how data would be broken down and presented in the future were shared. The organisation's headline operational stats were discussed and an extensive discussion took place which included but was not limited to the following:
 - the latest month's data for the amount of tax collected would always look relatively low as some payment would not have cleared in time for the meeting
 - there was a 4% increase in the number of transactions
 - the number of payments made by cheque was decreasing. This was due to work undertaken by the engagement team working with particular organisations
 - the number of outbound calls is almost as many as inbound now. This reflects that the WRA is increasingly proactive in the way it works with users
 - a small number of paper returns had been received.
 - there will no doubt be seasonal variations in the data but it is still too early to forecast such variances with the limited amount of data we have to date

6. Members acknowledged that the data was a good start and could be built on. They welcomed more performance data that showed where particular pieces of work were having an impact on performance. A discussion took place about the performance measures being developed. It was suggested that the organisation wanted to do more to understand the nature of the calls received, but the data for this was just not available from the current case management system. This along with other key information that we needed would be designed into the new CRM system.

7. The Non-Execs requested information on the nature and number of complaints received to date. They were informed that this could be shared with them. Members were assured that complaints were monitored and discussed by the TA on a regular basis and any significant complaints would be brought to the Board. The number received to date was low.

3. Report from Chair

1. The Chair provided an update of recent activity. Since the Board last met, the WRA People Survey results had been received. The Chair noted that the results were very positive.
2. The Chair had recently written to the former Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Mark Drakeford to thank him for visiting the Board in October and to ask that he write to his Cabinet colleagues, giving them and their officials the opportunity to meet members of the WRA's senior leadership team to discuss the WRA's unique approach to tax administration, the purpose statement and to start conversations about how they could work together in the future. As mentioned under the CEO report, he had already met with a number of Cabinet Secretaries and more meetings were scheduled for the new year. The Board were informed that this would also form part of the consultation and engagement on the 2019-22 Corporate Plan.
3. The Chair and CEO would give evidence at the Finance Committee on WRA's role in devolution of fiscal powers to Wales in early January.
4. The Board performance appraisal process would take place in the new year including the Chair's appraisal with the Permanent Secretary early March. Following that, a new set of objectives would be agreed with each Board member for the subsequent year. The review of the Framework Document would also take place around this time.
5. Work to develop the WRA's first annual report had begun and would be brought to the Board in stages, initially for consideration and comment and then for sign off. The report would include a summary of the Non-Execs fees and expenses. The Chair requested a session with the Non-Execs at the end of the financial year to discuss fees and expenses to date.
6. The Chair had attended a British Isles Tax Authority Forum event which was a useful source of interesting insight and information. The next event would be held in Cardiff in May and hosted by the WRA, Board members were invited to attend.

7. The Chair further reflected on the WAO report stating that it was a very positive report and thanked staff who had contributed. Its key areas of focus included digital systems, recruitment and retention, joint governance arrangements with Welsh Treasury and the next corporate plan.
8. The new Minister for Finance and Trefnydd, Rebecca Evans, had been appointed and would oversee the work of the WRA in place of Mark Drakeford, former Cabinet Secretary for Finance. The WRA had submitted a 'Day 1 briefing' the previous week that contained essential information as an initial introduction. The Chair was scheduled to meet with the Minister on the 10 January as the first of their quarterly meetings.
9. The Board's Committees had recently discussed whether the minutes of their meetings should be published. Although both Committees had come to the conclusion that it would not be appropriate, this was a decision for the Board. The Board agreed not to publish committee meeting minutes.

4. Financial performance report

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

5. Report from Committees

1. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) provided an update on recent activity. Helen Morris (WG) had taken up the role of Data Protection Officer (DPO), although this arrangement was a suitable solution for the short term. It would be reviewed when necessary.
2. The WRA had received its first internal audit report from WG. The Board were content with ARAC managing these reports on their behalf, and any issues that require escalating would be shared by the ARAC Chair at Board meetings.
3. Now that the Risk Appetite was approved, the risk register would be updated

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as necessary and brought to the Board for consideration. It would be managed by ARAC but shared with the Board for consideration on a regular basis.

4. The Chair of the People Committee provided an update on recent activity. The committee met for the second time in November and discussed a number of items including the people survey results, the principle of adopting living wage (which they agreed) and SCS pay. The location review for WRA headquarters was discussed; the item would be brought back to the committee for further discussion in the new year. The committee would meet again in March.

6. Report from Director, Welsh Treasury

1. The Chair provided an update on behalf of the Director, Welsh Treasury. The WG's final budget was published that day, the content of which was as expected. The UK Budget published on 29 October had no significant impacts on devolved taxes. However, it was worth noting that the Scottish Government budget, published on 12 December, increased the LBTT 'Additional Dwellings Supplement' (from 3% to 4%) and brought their non-residential rates closer to LTT's.
2. The new LDT rates were due to be debated on 8 January with the WRIT rates on 15 January in the context of the final budget debate. The Welsh Treasury Tax Work Plan was due to be published in February.
3. The Director, Welsh Treasury would meet with the new Minister the following day.

Board discussion

7. Relationship with NRW

1. The purpose of the item was to provide the Board with an update on the

relationship with NRW. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) sets out the requirements and expected standards for that relationship. The CEOs for both organisations meet regularly and have a good relationship, and any significant issues are escalated via that route.

2. The Chair asked that the Board's recognition of NRW's work and valuable contribution be shared. The Board noted that it can be a difficult task to get 2 organisations to work together successfully. The culture of both organisations appeared to be aligned and strong relationships had been formed, and the work to achieve this shouldn't be underestimated.
3. The Board were informed that there was an external communications protocol in place and the team were currently looking at internal communications with the both CEOs to strengthen the relationship of the 2 organisations further.
4. The WRA Chair would meet with the interim Chair of NRW in the new year.

8. Unauthorised disposals

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

9. Criminal powers

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

10. Digital target operating model

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

11. WRA People Survey

1. Because of the length of the agenda, it was agreed that the People Survey

would be discussed at the next meeting alongside the results of the organisation's culture analysis.

12. Any other business

1. The Board were informed that a version of the corporate plan would be circulated over Christmas for consideration and comments ahead of the January Board briefing session.

13. Forward look

1. The Board were content with the agenda for its next meeting.

14. Meeting review

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#)).

[1] There are certain circumstances where it is not appropriate to share all of the information contained within the Board minutes, for example, where it contains personal or commercial data or relates to the formulation of government policy etc. or the effective conduct of public affairs. In such circumstances, the information has been redacted and the text is marked clearly that this has been the case.

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