



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

MEETING

# Welsh Revenue Authority Board minutes: February 2019

Minutes from the Welsh Revenue Authority Board (WRA) meeting held on 20 February 2019 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)

- Joanna Ryder, Chief of Staff

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- Georgina Haarhoff, Head of Tax Policy

## **Attendee**

- Head of Tax Administrative Policy and WRA Partnership
- Senior Communications Manager
- Lawyer

## **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 everybody to the first meeting of the year. No conflicts of interest were raised. The Chair noted that a list of WRA suppliers had been sent to the Non-Executives (Non-Execs) virtually but no conflicts had been declared.
2. Apologies had been received from Andrew Jeffreys. Georgina Haarhoff would present his update on his behalf.
3. The Chair noted that as a result of recent feedback from the Board evaluation, some changes would be made to the format of Board meetings. This included a trial period of three meetings with ymgynghorwyr attending only and specifically for relevant items. The exception to this would be the Director, Welsh Treasury and the Chief of Staff who would continue to attend throughout the Board meeting.
4. The Board agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were an accurate

account of what was discussed. Members agreed the redacted minute for publication and the recorded decisions of the last meeting.

5. The outstanding actions were discussed, and it was agreed that three actions would remain open.

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

6. The Chair noted that since the last Board meeting, members had received a useful and informative briefing from Welsh Government's (WG) Deputy Chief Security Officer on information security and her role as the WRA's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO). At this session an update was also received about the recent digital security governance review.

## Board discussion

### 2. WRA objectives and measures

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

### 3. WRA culture and people survey results

1. The Chair noted that the outcome of the people survey had been shared with the Board some time ago and it had been discussed offline. The Board congratulated the team on the outcome of the survey and the strong results it contains. Potential areas for improvement were discussed as part of the next steps, and the Board was informed that the People Committee was due to look at the results in greater detail.
2. The Board was informed that since the completion of the WRA's language and cultural analysis project, the team had been carrying out work to develop the WRA's culture model. Discussions across a number of areas of the organisation had resulted in the creation of the following six workstreams:

1. Engagement Drivers and Blockers
  2. Internal Communications and Engagement
  3. Reviewing 'Our Approach'
  4. Customer
  5. Language and Brand Identity
  6. Stakeholder Research
3. An overview of the purpose and aim of these 6 work streams was presented and discussed. Members were informed that they would receive the full report on the language and culture analysis at the April meeting.

## 4. Organisation HR update

1. Public Sector Equality Duty - The Board was informed that the Public Sector Equality Duty requires that the WRA comply with both the 'general duty' and also 14 'specific duties'. The team had recently met with the Equality & Human Rights Commission and were advised that it would not be practical for the WRA to publish a full 4-year strategic equality plan (SEP) and set of objectives before 1 April 2019. This is because the organisation is still developing, and because the period would not align with other public sector bodies who were due to develop their next SEP and set objectives for April 2020.
2. The team would instead work to develop a SEP that would meet the minimum requirements for 1 April 2019. The Board was informed that the SEP would require sign off from them over the coming weeks.
3. Staff Diversity Data - An update was provided on the arrangements for collecting and reporting on employee and job applicants' diversity, as well as the current trends. There were issues of confidentiality around reporting on employee diversity given the size of the organisation. An overview of the available data was provided and the Board was informed that HR would recalculate the diversity statistics at the end of March and share with the Board as part of the Public Sector Equality Duty plan. Members were also assured that any significant trends that emerge would be brought back to them for consideration and discussion.

## 5. Risk register

1. It was noted that the Risk Appetite statement was formally agreed by the Board at their last meeting. The corporate risk register had been updated in light of the statement and was being presented to the Board for the first time for their consideration.
2. The overall responsibility of managing corporate risk lie with the WRA Accounting Officer but it is that Board's role to assist him in those duties. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) would manage the register but it would be shared with the Board for consideration on a regular basis.
3. The Chair noted that individual objectives for Non-Execs and for the Staff Elected Member would be agreed over the coming weeks and that it was important as they work with the teams on those specific areas that they encourage everyone to consider the specific risk analysis as it relates to that area of work.
4. It was suggested that in addition to the risk register, it would be useful to have a section within Board papers outlining any associated risks to ensure the they are considered when discussing each items.

## 6. Annual report and accounts

1. An overview of progress to date on the development of the Annual Report and Accounts was provided. The timetable for the work was presented and the Board was informed of what was required of them in reviewing and approving specific parts of the document.
2. It was noted that the WRA was in a very different position to other organisations given this was its first Annual report and it did not have an existing WRA model to follow. Members agreed that it was important they focus on the narrative of the report. The Board was informed that it would be sent to them for consideration and approval in June.

## 7. Board evaluation (next steps)

1. The Chair thanked the Board for participating in the self-evaluation workshop which took place early January. A summary of the next steps and the timetable for the remaining stages of the evaluation process was provided.

## Reports, approval and discussions

### 8. Report from the Chair

1. The Chair provided an overview of recent activity which included a Partnership Group meeting with the Permanent Secretary and Director, Welsh Treasury. They discussed progress on the corporate plan, particularly the measures, the Tax Policy Workplan and the People Survey results.
2. The WRA had received its second internal audit report on the protection of tax payer data. The audit results were positive, with 2 significant and 4 merits attention observations. The ARAC would consider the report at their next meeting later that week.
3. The Framework document was due to be reviewed by WRA and Welsh Treasury in April, the process for which still needed to be finalised but there would be an opportunity for Board members to submit their views on what the Framework agreement may have helped or prevented the organisation from doing over the last year.
4. The Chair had met with a number of the Board members for their appraisals, and more would take place over the coming weeks. The Chair's performance appraisal with the Permanent Secretary was due to take place early March. Board members were reminded that they had been asked to provide contributions to the Board's appraisal of the Chair's performance by the 1 March.

## 9. Report from the CEO (operational performance)

1. The Chair noted that this item would usually cover a discussion about operational performance data. However, this had been covered under the corporate plan item earlier in the meeting.
2. The CEO provided an update on recent activity. He noted that celebrations were often of milestones or a piece of work that had been completed but he wanted to recognise consistent good performance within the organisation too.

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

## 10. Financial performance

Information redacted ([Footnote 1](#))

## 11. Report from Director, Welsh Treasury

1. An update was provided on recent activity within Welsh Treasury (WT). Work was continuing on Vacant Land Tax and Social Care Levy. Welsh tax rates were consistent with the rest of the UK and would remain that way for the remainder of the term, as set out in the manifesto.
2. The WT were looking at ways they could improve tax administration policies. There would be a Ministerial Tax Advisory group meeting in March where there would be an item on tax administration, which the CEO was interested in discussing. They had also been considering possible tax measures if there was a no deal Brexit.
3. The Board was informed that WG were establishing a panel to consider individual cases where public sector bodies want to share data under the Digital Economy Act.

# Meeting closing

## 12. Any other business

1. The Federation of Small Businesses had commissioned a report on how devolved taxes were affecting Small Medium Enterprises; the report will be published soon and would be presented to the Tax Advisory Group on 14 March.
2. The team had recently met with the National Cyber Security Centre. It was a very positive and useful meeting and it was agreed that the WRA would keep in regular contact with the centre.
3. Cardiff University is setting up a Tax Research Group which would look at Social Care Levy.

## 13. Forward look

1. The Board was informed that the forward look would need to be reviewed following approval of the corporate plan.
2. In response to an action from an earlier meeting, the CEO provided an overview of the complaints received to date. The Information Commissioner's Office had been notified of a data breach that they had advised was not sufficiently serious for escalation. They also provided some advice on measures the WRA may want to put in place.

## 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

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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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