



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Cabinet meeting: 27 November 2023

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on 27 November 2023.

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Present

- Rt. Hon. Mark Drakeford MS (Chair)
- Rebecca Evans MS
- Vaughan Gething MS
- Lesley Griffiths MS
- Jane Hutt MS
- Julie James MS
- Jeremy Miles MS
- Eluned Morgan MS
- Mick Antoniw MS
- Hannah Blythyn MS
- Dawn Bowden MS
- Julie Morgan MS
- Lynne Neagle MS

Apologies

- Lee Waters MS

Officials

- Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary
- Des Clifford, Director Office of the First Minister
- Rebecca Dunn, Head of Cabinet Division
- Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications
- Rory Powell, Head of First Minister's Office
- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
- Madeleine Brindley, Special Adviser
- Alex Bevan, Special Adviser

- Daniel Butler, Special Adviser
- Ian Butler, Special Adviser
- Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
- Sara Faye, Special Adviser
- Sam Hadley, Special Adviser
- David Hooson, Special Adviser
- Clare Jenkins, Special Adviser
- Owen John, Special Adviser
- Phillipa Marsden, Special Adviser
- Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan, Head of Cabinet Secretariat (minutes)
- Damian Roche, Cabinet Secretariat
- Catrin Sully, Cabinet Office
- Kathryn Hallett, First Minister's Office
- Helena Bird, Permanent Secretary's Office
- Helen Lentle, Director Legal Services
- Tracey Burke, Director General Climate Change & Rural Affairs
- Jo-anne Daniels, Director General, Education Social Justice & Welsh Language
- Reg Kilpatrick, Director General, Covid Recovery and Local Government
- Tim Moss, Chief Operating Officer
- Judtih Paget, Director General Health and Social Services
- Andrew Slade, Director General, Economy, Treasury and Constitution
- Rachel Garside Jones, Director Co-operation Agreement Unit
- Andrew Jeffreys, Director Treasury (item 4)
- Emma Watkins, Deputy Director Budget and Government Business (item 4)
- Chris Jones, Coal Tip Safety Team (item 5)
- Laura Fox, Coal Tip Safety Bill Manager (item 5)

Item 1: Minutes of the previous meeting

1.1 Cymeradwyodd y Cabinet gofnodion y 20 Tachwedd / Cabinet approved the minutes of 20 November.

Item 2: First Minister's items

British Irish Council

2.1 The First Minister informed Cabinet that he had attended the British Irish Council in Dublin the previous week. In the margins of the Council he had meetings with the Taoiseach and Tánaiste and the First Minister of Scotland. He had also met the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations.

Item 3: Senedd business

3.1 Cabinet noted there had been one change to the Plenary Grid that had been circulated with the Cabinet papers. The Plant Health etc. (Miscellaneous Fees) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2023 had been withdrawn and would be re-laid, this was in response to a report by the Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee. Voting time was scheduled for 6:15pm on Tuesday and around 7.10pm on Wednesday.

Item 4: Oral Update on UK government Autumn Statement

4.1 The Minister for Finance and Local Government provided Cabinet with an update on the UK government's Autumn Statement, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had delivered to Parliament the previous Wednesday.

4.2 The Office of Budget Responsibility November's economic and fiscal outlook reported poor UK economic prospects with only lacklustre growth expected for almost 2 years. Inflation was expected to reduce more slowly than previously expected, with unemployment increasing. The UK remained on course to be one of the worst-performing advanced economies for this and next year, and despite the measures announced by the Chancellor, the UK would continue to experience the largest decline in living standards since records began in the mid-1950s.

4.3 Overall, the position for Wales was worse than expected. The Statement contained an additional £305 million for the Welsh Government for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. This consisted of an additional £133 million in resource budget in 2023-2024, and an additional £167 million in resource and £5.8 million in capital in 2024-2025.

4.4 The £133 million in-year funding, largely a result of the NHS pay offer in England, had already been factored into plans and did not provide any additional relief from the budget challenge. The £167 million funding next year largely related to Non-Domestic Rates relief.

4.5 The Welsh Government's settlement for 2024-2025 was now worth up to £1.3 billion less in real terms than expected at the time of the 2021 Spending Review.

4.6 The Chancellor's Statement did nothing to meet inflationary and other

pressures, with no additional funding for critical public services including the NHS. The prospect that inflation would not reduce as quickly next year as expected would mean public sector budgets would be less than originally envisaged. Furthermore, there was no additional funding provided to support the increase in the National Living Wage.

4.7 In relation to 2024-2025, the Chancellor did not baseline the NHS pay related consequential and the Budget completely lacked the capital stimulus needed to support economic growth. The capital budget remained severely reduced in 2024-2025.

4.8 In terms of prospects for further support, the Chancellor was expected to deliver his Spring Budget in March and the extent to which he would be moved to invest more in public services was unclear.

4.9 As highlighted, the Chancellor had announced 2 measures relating to non-domestic rates (NDR) for 2024-2025, which amounted to £155.9 million of the £167 million consequential.

4.10 The first was a freeze to the small business multiplier for England, applicable to properties with a rateable value below £51,000, and an increase to the standard multiplier in England in line with the September CPI rate of 6.7%. This decision would generate a recurring consequential of £18.8 million. The second measure was the extension of the temporary 75% relief for ratepayers in the retail, leisure and hospitality (RLH) sector. This decision would generate consequential funding of £137.1 million for 2024-2025 only.

4.11 The government could not exactly match the measure in England, as there was only one multiplier in Wales.

4.12 A range of options had been considered, seeking to balance the case for continuing relief, with the need to mitigate the very significant reductions facing most MEGs for the 2024-2025 Draft Budget.

4.13 Therefore, it was proposed to provide RLH relief with the current scope at 40% by using £60 million of the consequential, the multiplier would be increased by 5% with £18 million of the consequential and a £20 million capital grant fund would be established to support businesses to invest in cost reduction.

4.14 This would leave around £89 million from the Autumn Statement available to mitigate the budget reductions for other MEGs.

4.15 Ministers noted the update on the outcome of the Autumn Statement and agreed that the proposals to provide NDR relief in 2024-2025 and the establishment of a Capital Grant Fund was a fair balance.

4.16 Cabinet agreed with the proposals to provide NDR relief in 2024-2025.

Item 5: Update on Coal Tip Safety

5.1 The Minister for Climate Change introduced the paper, which provided an update on the Coal Tip Safety programme.

5.2 Since the previous update to Cabinet in June, a key objective of the coal tip safety programme had been delivered, with the publication of the location of 350 higher risk rated disused coal tips on 14 November. This had been a substantial undertaking, which had been supported by an extensive communications package for landowners, occupiers and communities living near tips.

5.3 However, some landowners were refusing the Coal Authority and relevant local authorities access for inspections, but this would be addressed in the forthcoming tip safety Bill, which was due to be introduced in 2024.

5.4 Cabinet welcomed the update and expressed concern that the UK government had failed to provide funding for the long-term remediation of disused tips in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement.

5.5 Cabinet noted the update.

Cabinet Secretariat
November 2023

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