



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

MEETING, DOCUMENT

# Social Partnership Council meeting, 4 June 2024: minutes

17:00 to 18:30 4 June 2024, virtual meeting.

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## Item 1: Welcome/Opening Remarks

1. The First Minister (FM) welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the Social Partnership Council (SPC). He explained that he would chair the first three items before handing over chairing of the meeting to the Minister for Social Partnership. The First Minister referenced the effective working relationships which had been established during the pandemic through the Shadow Social Partnership Council and looked forward to future discussions at the SPC being conducted with the same level of trust. He noted apologies from Janis Richards (Make UK Ltd).

## Item 2: Welsh Government Legislative Programme

2. The First Minister confirmed that he would briefly cover the Welsh Government's Legislative Programme before asking Charlie Thomas, the Head of the Welsh Government's Legislation Division to provide more detail on the legislative process. He explained that this item would complement the next item where he would outline the Welsh Government's current legislative priorities.
3. The First Minister explained that whilst legislation was not always the solution to policy issues it was one of the main levers the Welsh Government had for effecting change. He stressed the importance of using the SPC to discuss the legislative programme as part of fulfilling the Welsh Government's duties under the Social Partnership Act. The First Minister confirmed that he would make his annual statement on the legislative programme at the Senedd in July, and that this was an opportune moment to discuss legislative priorities with the Council. Before doing so, he explained

that it would be useful to outline the administrative process underpinning the programme's delivery.

4. The First Minister asked members to be mindful of the position of the current 5-year legislative programme which was just over the 3-year stage. He stressed that the Welsh Government was now focussed on ensuring the delivery of legislative priorities which were already under development. The First Minister confirmed there would be opportunities for broader discussions closer to the next Senedd election about potential legislation for the next term. He emphasised the importance of discussing the Legislative Programme at this meeting and looked forward to further discussions under the next item.

The First Minister then asked Charlie Thomas to present to the SPC on the legislative process.

5. Charlie Thomas briefly covered her role within Welsh Government as the Head of Legislation Division. She provided a presentation outlining the different aspects of the Legislative Programme including the types of Bills and subordinate legislation brought before the Senedd. She explained how the Programme was developed through Cabinet and the Cabinet Subcommittee for the Legislative Programme, culminating in the First Minister's annual statement in the Senedd. Charlie provided an outline of the Bills announced in the annual statement for 2023 to 2024 and how the programme was planned throughout a Senedd term. She concluded the presentation by highlighting the timeline for engagement on Bills set against the different stages of policy development, Senedd scrutiny and commencement.
6. Charlie outlined the work involved in developing policy, the technical expertise required, the importance of using finite Welsh Government and Senedd resources appropriately, and the need to comply with timeframes set out in the Senedd's Standing Orders. She explained some of the alternatives

to using primary legislation and the important role the Cabinet Subcommittee for the Legislative Programme played in considering Bill priorities. Charlie confirmed that at the year 3 stage of the legislative programme, the focus was now on delivering the most significant items within the time remaining.

7. Shavanah Taj (Wales TUC) asked if members could receive a regular update paper on the legislative programme. Referencing potential alternatives to developing primary legislation, Shavanah felt it would be useful for members to better understand what non-primary legislative options were available to Cabinet.
8. The First Minister supported the proposal to provide a paper to note to the SPC on the progress of the legislative programme. He stressed the complexity of providing further information on non-legislative options, explaining this would depend on the specific policy objectives being sought. The First Minister asked members to write to the SPC Secretariat with their comments on the legislative priorities for the remainder of the current legislative programme by the 21 June.
9. Ian Price (CBI) asked under what circumstances Emergency Bills would be used and the timescales involved in their development.
10. Charlie emphasised that Emergency Bills were only used in exceptional circumstances, such as to respond to rapidly emerging threats and briefly outlined the process involved. She explained that in some cases, Bills which would not meet the criteria to be scrutinised under an Emergency procedure could nevertheless be considered by the Senedd under a fast-track/ expedited scrutiny, if for example they were short/single issue Bills or had already been the subject of detailed consultation and scrutiny.
11. The First Minister emphasised the complexity of delivering legislation,

reiterating the tight timelines and the specialist resources involved.

**Action: SPC Secretariat to provide a paper to note to the SPC on the progress of the Legislative Programme.**

**Action: SPC members to provide comments on the Welsh Government's legislative priorities by the 21 June to the Secretariat.**

### **Item 3: Confidential: Members only – Consultation on Welsh Ministers Legislative Priorities**

12. The purpose of this item was to consult the SPC early in the process of agreeing the Welsh Government's legislative programme. Therefore, the information provided to members was not in the public domain and so could not be disclosed.
13. The First Minister consulted the SPC on the Welsh Government's legislative priorities for the remainder of the Senedd term. The discussion focussed on what would have the greatest impact on citizens. The comments raised would be fed back to Cabinet in finalising the programme but it was agreed these would not be recorded in the minute.
14. Neil Butler (NASUWT) raised matters related to the Education sector not being covered by the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act and the difficulties this was continuing to cause.
15. Gareth Lloyd (UCU) raised concerns about HE participation levels.

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**Action: SPC Secretariat to make members aware when Stage 1 consultation on one of the Bills discussed is launched.**

## **Item 4: Confidential: Members only - Reviewing the Welsh Government's Well-being Objectives**

16. The purpose of this item was to consult the SPC early in the process of reviewing the Welsh Government's well-being objectives. Therefore, the information provided to members was not in the public domain and so could not be disclosed.
17. Following the departure of the First Minister, the Minister for Social Partnership took over chairing the meeting. The Minister introduced herself to members. She explained Section 12 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act placed a duty on Welsh Ministers to annually review their well-being objectives and publish, in respect of each financial year, a report on the progress made towards meeting them. The Minister emphasised that publication of the Welsh Government Annual Report in July would fulfil the duty on Welsh Government to report on progress and would include the outcome of the review.
18. On behalf of the union affiliates in Wales, Shavanah Taj thanked Hannah Blythyn MS for her work on social partnership including taking the legislation through the Senedd. She welcomed the new Minister for Social Partnership, Sarah Murphy MS to the role, noting that she had already attended TUC Cymru's Congress the previous month.
19. Jessica Turner (Unison) welcomed the chance to feed in and raised the importance of being more ambitious and clearer in relation to the sort of

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labour market, economy and public services Wales needed. This included the prioritisation of trade unionism as the route to make work fairer, protecting industry in Wales, a clearer commitment to seeking to end poverty, and an ambition to insource public services so that they were delivered by people employed directly by the public sector. She stressed that this should have a longer-term focus on reducing the risk of later life poverty as any 'savings' from outsourcing would come at a cost to workers prosperity in the form of pensions.

20. The Minister asked the SPC to consider whether it agreed that the objectives should remain as the areas the Welsh Government, in discharging its functions, could maximise its contribution to each of the well-being goals. If this was not the case, the Minister asked members to indicate which of the objectives should change, what they should change to and the reasons why.
21. SPC members provided views on the annual review of the well-being objectives. As this was a confidential item the detailed suggestions raised by members were not recorded in the minute.
22. The Minister asked members to provide responses by the 21 June so that the views of the SPC could be considered by Cabinet as part of this year's review of the well-being objectives.

**Action: SPC members to provide comments on the Welsh Government's annual review of the Well-being objectives by the 21 June to the Secretariat.**

## **Item 5: Next meeting – date and venue**

23. The Minister offered apologies that the SPC Secretariat had been unable

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to confirm the date for this meeting within the 4 weeks that would normally be provided and that the final agenda had not been issued 2 weeks in advance.

24. The Minister informed members that regulations to extend the Well-being duties and therefore the social partnership duties to 8 additional public bodies had been laid before the Senedd. The Minister added that in August the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) would also become subject to the well-being duties and therefore the social partnership duties due to the dissolution of the Higher Education Funding Council Wales (HEFCW).
25. The Minister confirmed the next meeting of the SPC would be held on the 10 July between 10:30am to 12:00pm and that the draft agenda would be provided for comment later in the week. She suggested the meeting could be used to discuss the potential for the SPC to support equality and diversity, AI in the workplace and the use of Welsh Government funding to encourage fair work practices.
26. Shavanah Taj (Wales TUC) on behalf of the union affiliates in Wales, stressed the importance of the SPC regularly discussing the Social Partnership Duty. Shavanah suggested it would be helpful for the First Minister to consider holding an additional meeting in September given that the General Election would likely result in a change of government at a UK level. She explained this would have implications for Wales including areas within the SPC's scope and devolved policy.
27. The Minister emphasised the importance of members submitting their views to the SPC Secretariat on both items 3 and 4 covering the Welsh Government's legislative priorities and the review of the well-being objectives by the 21 June.

## **Item 6: Minutes of last meeting / matters arising**

28. The Minister for Social Partnership asked members if there were any issues with the matters arising provided in the paper for this item.
29. The SPC agreed the matters arising and the minutes of the previous meeting.
30. The Minister for Social Partnership closed the meeting.

## **Social Partnership Council (SPC) attendance: 4 June 2024**

### **Welsh Government**

Vaughan Gething MS, First Minister

Sarah Murphy MS, Minister for Social Partnership

Andrew Goodall, Permanent Secretary

Jo Salway, Director, Social Partnership Employability and Fair Work

Catrin Sully, Deputy Head of Cabinet Office

Charlie Thomas, Deputy Director, Legislation Division

### **Worker Representatives**

Ruth Brady, GMB

Neil Butler, National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers

Peter Hughes, Unite the Union

Gareth Lloyd, University and College Union

Shavanah Taj, Wales TUC Cymru

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Jess Turner, UNISON

Mike Walker, Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers

Helen Whyley, Royal College of Nursing

Darren Williams, Public and Commercial Services Union

## **Employer Representatives**

Pippa Britton, Third Sector

Dame Elan Closs-Stephens, Public Leaders Forum

Ben Cottam, Federation of Small Businesses

Councillor Anthony Hunt, Welsh Local Government Association

Professor Wendy Lerner, Cardiff University

Ian Price, Confederation of British Industry Wales

Nicola Prygodzicz, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Kathryn Robson, Adult Learning Wales

## **Secretariat Support/Observers**

Alex Bevan, Welsh Government (Special Advisor)

Rachel Garside-Jones, Welsh Government

David Hagendyk, Welsh Government (Special Advisor)

Zoe Holland, Welsh Government

Mark Lewis, Welsh Government

Harvey McCabe, Make UK Ltd (observing for Janis Richards)

## **Apologies**

Janis Richards, Make UK Ltd

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