



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Board meeting: 20 September 2024

Agenda and papers from the Board meeting held on 20
September 2024.

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Present

- Permanent Secretary
- Carys Williams
- Mutale Merrill
- Aled Edwards
- Mike Usher
- Tim Moss
- Judith Paget
- Tracey Burke
- Andrew Slade
- David Richards
- Nia James
- Dean Medcraft
- TUS Representative
- Co-Chair of the Shadow Board
- Future Generations Board Champion

In attendance

- Current and former Co-Chairs of the Minority Ethnic Staff Network
- Head of the Corporate Governance Centre of Excellence

Secretariat

- Permanent Secretary's Office

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Apologies

- Sioned Evans
- Amelia John

1. Welcome, discussion with Co-Chairs of the Minority Ethnic Staff Network (MESN) and current issues

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting noting the apologies received. The minutes of 02 August were approved subject to minor amendment.

1.2 The Chair welcomed the current and former Co-Chairs of the Minority Ethnic Staff Network (MESN) to the meeting and invited them to reflect on the experiences of their members and highlight for Board issues that ethnic minority colleagues experience.

1.3 Aled Edwards noted the concerns raised by MESN members and emphasised the need to take action to ensure staff feel safe and able to raise concerns.

1.4 Mike Usher thanked MESN members for their openness and honesty in raising concerns and for challenging the organisation to tackle unacceptable behaviours. Mike highlighted the need to embed anti-racism in everything that Welsh Government does.

1.5 Mutale Merrill suggested using the performance management system as a means of embedding anti-racism across Welsh Government.

1.6 The Lead Co-Chair of the Shadow Board endorsed calls to tackle racism,

noting the intersectionality of the work of the various staff networks and highlighting the need for more support for staff networks. Shadow Board noted the need for more data on the retention of staff with protected characteristics.

1.7 Judith Paget welcomed MESN's work and highlighted the importance of working with delivery partners and other public sector bodies to make a difference.

1.8 The TUS representative echoed the points raised and highlighted the need to ensure line managers are properly equipped to tackle unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.

1.9 Dean Medcraft noted earlier work undertaken to tackle bullying and harassment and suggested revisiting the recommendations made.

1.10 Dom Houlihan as Director of People and Places offered his reflections on the points raised. Dom endorsed the calls to better support colleagues, especially line managers, tackle unacceptable behaviours. Dom noted that all members of the Senior Civil Service have at least one objective linked to anti-racism and advised that additional guidance would be provided on how best to curate effective objectives. Dom noted the work RedQuadrant has been commissioned to undertake, an action plan will be developed in response to the findings.

1.11 The Chair noted the announcement of the new Cabinet and the statement by the First Minister on priorities for Welsh Government.

2. Welsh Government vision, principles and maturity matrix

2.1 The Chair invited Tim Moss to update Board on progress with developing a

vision statement and principles for the organisation.

2.2 Following discussion at Board on 2 August, and subsequent discussions including with TUs, Directors and ExCo, the vision statement and principles have been further developed, with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act's 5 ways of working used to frame the principles and Welsh Government's approach to internal change. A maturity matrix has been developed for completion by a small cross-section of the organisation, to develop a shared understanding of the current position of the organisation and help in understanding the gap to bridge to achieve the vision for the organisation. A workshop for Directors General and Non-Executive Directors to further discuss the maturity matrix returns will be held on 10 October. This will also draw on the outcomes of the work to assess the full gamut of change already planned or underway. It will also draw on the outcomes of the discussions with directors on the core functions of Welsh Government, to help prioritise within the change agenda.

2.3 Shadow Board welcomed the positive tone of the vision statement and principles and emphasized the need to embed equality into the foundations of the change programme. The Shadow Board suggested providing further clarity on what the change programme could reasonably be expected to achieve in the remainder of this Senedd term.

2.4 The Chair welcomed the use of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act's 5 ways of working and noted the input of the Board's Wellbeing of Future Generations Champion in advocating for this approach at the last Board meeting. The Chair noted that Board supported the vision statement and principles.

3. Welsh Government Risk Appetite Statement

3.1 The Chair welcomed the Head of the Corporate Governance Centre of

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Excellence to the meeting and invited her to take Board through the draft revised Welsh Government Risk Appetite Statement. The Risk Appetite Statement was considered at Board on 07 June, and it was agreed that further work would be done on revising the statement over the summer.

3.2 Mike Usher welcomed the revised document and commented that the Welsh Government Audit and Risk Committee would consider the risk appetite statement at its next meeting. Mike suggested being explicit about the risk appetite being applied in project proposal documents and queried whether there needs to be an additional category for de-prioritisation.

3.3 Carys Williams noted the importance of the risk appetite being owned by staff across the organisation and suggested using the risk appetite statement to empower staff in the organisation to make decision and meet the organisation's vision and First Minister's expectations of a delivery focussed organisation. David Richards agreed but emphasised the need to reassure staff that they would be supported when issues occur. Aled Edwards agreed, noting the need to support staff particularly at times when there is a lack of resources.

3.4 Nia James noted the complexity and contextual nature of risk, necessitating different approaches to risk management.

3.5 Andrew Slade welcomed the risk appetite statement noting the need for systems to manage risk appropriately where there is a high-risk appetite.

3.6 The Chair thanked colleagues in the Corporate Governance Centre of Excellence for their work on the risk appetite statement and noted the Boards support, ExCo will review and agree the risk appetite statement in due course.

4. Finance update period 4

4.1 The Chair invited Dean Medcraft to update Board on the Welsh Government's 2024-2025 forecast outturn and reserves position as of 31 July (period 4). Dean added that the provisional figures for period 5 suggest no material change in the overall position. The Board noted the update.

5. Board Development Day planning

5.1 The Board members reflected on the aim and objectives for the proposed Board Development Day. Secretariat would collaborate with Board members outside of the meeting to develop the aim and objectives for the day.

6. Any other business

6.1 No items of any other business were raised.

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