



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Welsh Government Board Meeting: 10 May 2024

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 10 May 2024.

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Contents

Present

Welcome

**Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement
Plan 2023-2025**

Board Review 2023 and refresh of the Terms of Reference

AOB

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Present

- Permanent Secretary (Chair for Items 1 and 2)
- Carys Williams
- Mutale Merrill
- Aled Edwards
- Mike Usher
- Tim Moss (Chair for Item 3)
- Sioned Evans
- Tracey Burke
- Andrew Slade
- Dom Houlihan
- Nia James
- Gawain Evans
- Rhiannon Lloyd-Williams

In attendance

- Kath Jenkins (Item 1)
- Simon Brindle (Item 2)
- Andrew Charles (Item 2)
- Angharad Reakes (Item 3)
- Elizabeth Fernandez Navarta

Secretariat

- Alison Rees

Apologies

- Jessica Ward
- Amelia John
- Judith Paget
- David Richards

1. Welcome/ Current Issues

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted the apologies received. The minutes of 08 March were approved.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Mutale Merril to her first Board meeting since joining the Board as a Non-Executive Director.

1.3 **Cyber security incident** - Kath Jenkins Chief Security Officer updated Board on a recent cyber incident on the Welsh Government network. The incident resulted from a global vulnerability despite Welsh Government having applied the manufacturer's recommended settings. Independent forensic teams were engaged to investigate the incident and they confirmed that there is no evidence that any information held on the Welsh Government network was compromised. Rhiannon Lloyd-Williams thanked Kath for attending Shadow Board on 08 May and reassuring members that no personal data had been lost. Tim Moss offered his thanks to colleagues in the IT Services Division for their outstanding efforts in responding to the incident. Tim highlighted the need for a medium to long term plan for investment in cyber security. The Chair agreed and noted that ExCo would discuss further.

1.4 **Networks Day 2024** – the Chair noted the all-staff event held on 09 May to discuss wellbeing, making connections, and building communities in a hybrid

environment and offered his thanks to all those involved in organising and hosting the event. Aled Edwards and Mutale Merrill welcomed the event and suggested promoting the work of the staff networks outside of Welsh Government to raise awareness of Welsh Government as an employer.

1.5 **WG2025 Phase 2 - ReSize** – Dom Houlihan provided an update on the outcomes of the Voluntary Exit Scheme and overview of the characteristics of applicants. Successful applicants will exit the organisation by 31 August and Dom thanked Shadow Board for their suggestions on holding exit interviews. A Lessons Learned report is being prepared by HR colleagues and will be submitted to the People and Remuneration Committee within 6 months. The Chair noted the robust assessment process overseen by the Group and Corporate panels that had assisted ExCo in reaching a decision and offered his thanks to all those involved in the assessment panels and to Carys Williams for chairing the Corporate panel. Aled Edwards noted the need to monitor the impact of VES on equalities issues and Welsh language capabilities within the organisation. Mutale Merrill highlighted the need to ensure staff who were not accepted for VES feel valued and that they still have an important role to play in the organisation.

2. Progress update of the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan 2023-2025 (WFG CLIP)

2.1 The Chair welcomed Simon Brindle and Andrew Charles to the meeting and invited them to provide Board with a progress update of the Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations Continuous Learning and Improvement Plan 2023-2025 (WFG CLIP).

2.2 The Chair invited Board members to comment on the update.

2.3 Tim Moss queried whether the 'Cymru Can' strategy adequately reflects the current Future Generations Commissioner's views. Tim reflected on the challenge of applying the Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) at pace and scale.

2.4 Tracey Burke considered whether Directors General could take further steps to actively promote the WFG Act across their Groups.

2.5 Aled Edwards welcomed the alliances Welsh Government is building with the third sector but noted the level of toxicity in conversations around sustainability and the impact this could have on those working on the ground with stakeholders.

2.6 Mike Usher welcomed the level of granularity in the update and offered comments on the presentation of the RAG ratings. Mike noted the soft power the Welsh Government exercises in influencing those organisations not captured by the act. Mike suggested developing a toolkit to help organisations embed the WFG Act.

2.7 Mutale Merrill reminded the Board that the WFG Act is world leading and noted the responsibilities that the WFG places on all and noted that while Welsh Government may be viewed as leading it does not dilute others' responsibility. Sioned Evans and Andrew Slade echoed these points and noted the similarity with other cross-government responsibilities.

2.8 Dom Houlihan noted the number of actions and suggested that not all carry the same weight. Dom noted the challenge in embedding the WFG Act if the leadership ask is continually expanding. Dom queried whether more could be done to disseminate the benefits of the WFG Act and raise awareness of the consequences of not complying.

2.9 On behalf of the Shadow Board Rhiannon Lloyd-Williams noted the enthusiasm for the WFG Act amongst colleagues across Welsh Government but suggested that guidelines on ways of working and case studies highlighting innovative and successful applications of the act would be welcome. The Shadow Board noted the challenge of embedding the WFG in long-term planning given the pressure on budgets.

2.10 Carys Williams supported the comments made by Board members and queried how best to measure the extent to which the act is being embedded.

2.11 The Chair invited Andrew and Simon to respond to the points raised. On measuring the impact Andrew noted that while there is no single metric the People Survey and other staff surveys will include questions to measure embedding the WFG Act. Andrew added that the new commissioner is broadly happy with the progress update.

2.12 The Chair thanked Simon and Andrew for the paper and presentation. The Board noted the annual update on the progress made under the WFG CLIP covering the period February 2023 to February 2024.

3. Discussion on the findings of the Board Review 2023 and refresh of the Terms of Reference

3.1 Tim Moss took the Chair during Item 4 on behalf of the Permanent Secretary.

3.2 The Chair welcomed Angharad Reakes to the meeting and invited her to provide an overview of the findings from the 2023 Welsh Government Board Review. The Review captures the views of all those serving on the Board in the period 12 December 2022 – 26 January 2023. Overall, Board members were

positive about their role on, and experience of, the Board, which generally echoed the sentiments of the 2022 review. The review highlighted several areas for improvement including reducing overlap and duplication between items brought to Board and ExCo and better alignment of Board agendas with key operational challenges and strategic risks to ensure that the Board remains focused on high priority areas.

3.3 The Chair invited Board members to comment on the findings of the review.

3.4 Dom Houlihan suggested building in reflective time at the end of Board meetings to support continuous learning and development.

3.5 Sioned Evans welcomed the report's findings and highlighted the importance of continuing with hybrid meetings. Sioned was encouraged by the frequent use of incidental Welsh in Board meetings and looked forward to having the opportunity to contribute in Welsh to the discussion on substantive items.

3.6 Aled Edwards noted the contribution the Shadow Board make to the work of the Board and queried if there is more the Non-Executive Directors could do to support the Shadow Board. The Chair echoed the feedback on the Shadow Board's contribution.

3.7 Rhiannon Lloyd-Williams welcomed the positive feedback on behalf of the Shadow Board and suggested looking at ways to raise awareness of the Board and its work across Welsh Government.

3.8 Mutale Merrill noted that all members bring their own individual lived experiences to the Board.

3.9 Carys Williams suggested taking a seminar approach to Board meetings to focus discussions on key strategic issues and capitalise on the time Board has together. Carys asked that a forward plan for Board agendas be circulated with the Board papers for each meeting.

3.10 Mike Usher suggested enhancing the clarity of the ask of Board in the Board papers and queried how Non-Executive Directors could support the work of the Board outside of scheduled meetings.

3.11 Owing to time pressures Board members are invited to forward comments on the terms of reference to the secretariat following the meeting.

4. AOB and Close

4.1 No items of any other business were raised. Board will next meet on 07 June.

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