



Summary Minutes of the Board Meeting, 27 January 2012

Present:

Permanent Secretary (Chair)
 Emyr Roberts
 David Sissling
 Michael Hearty
 Clive Bates
 Bernard Galton
 June Milligan
 James Price
 James Turner
 Elan Closs Stephens
 Adrian Webb
 Jeff Godfrey
 John Howells

In attendance:

Natalie Pearson
 Martin Sollis (Item 3)
 Sanjiv Vedi (Item 4)
 Sioned Evans (Item 5)

Apologies:

David Richards

Secretariat:

Emma Alexander
 Martyn Gunter

1. Permanent Secretary's Items [Oral]

- 1.1 The Permanent Secretary welcomed Sir Adrian Webb, who had recently been appointed to the Board as a Non-Executive Director.
- 1.2 The Permanent Secretary updated the Board on ongoing work related to the future of the civil service led by Sir Bob Kerslake and Sir Jeremy Heywood and how the Welsh Government would be engaged. The Board discussed the similar work the Welsh Government civil service was already carrying out through the People Strategy.
- 1.3 The Permanent Secretary updated the Board on the establishment of the Welsh Government's London office. The Board agreed that Director Generals (DGs) would hold a separate discussion about resourcing the office.
- 1.4 The Board agreed that individuals on the Fast Stream Scheme could observe future Board meetings if they were shadowing a member of the Board on that day. The DG, People, Places and Corporate Services (PPCS) also advised the Board that the Civil Service Fast Stream conference would be held in Cardiff in July and he would be looking to engage Board members in the event.

- 1.5 The Permanent Secretary updated the Board following her recent meeting with Meri Huws, Chair of Welsh Language Board (and Welsh Language Commissioner elect). The Board agreed that she would be invited to a future Board working lunch and that consideration should be given to involving her in the engagement on Welsh Language elements of the People Strategy.

The Board also suggested that other Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies could be invited to future working lunch meetings.

Director General Exception Reports

- 1.6 The Permanent Secretary invited DGs to share key issues from within their area with Board colleagues. Issues raised included updates on a meeting with the Information Commissioner; Tackling Poverty; Energy; the Works; Council Tax Benefits; Enterprise Zones; the Single Environmental Body and air services.
- 1.7 The Board agreed that:
- a more detailed briefing should be arranged for Sir Adrian Webb on the Tackling Poverty and Welfare Reform agendas;
 - there should be a separate meeting between the DG, Sustainable Futures (SF), Permanent Secretary and the DG, Business, Enterprise, Technology and Science (BETS) to discuss Energy;
 - the DGs for Local Government & Communities (LG&C) and Education & Skills (DfES) should be involved in work on Enterprise Zones;
 - the DG, BETS should draft and circulate a short brief on Enterprise Zones;
 - a paper on constitutional issues should be brought to a future Board meeting;
 - the DG, LG&C would liaise with the DG, Strategic Planning, Finance and Performance (SPF&P) regarding potential administrative costs for Council Tax Benefit data-flow;
 - early consideration should be given to the potential impact of the next Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 1.8 The Board thanked the DG, DfES and Alison Kitchener for their input on the Works.

Remuneration Committee

- 1.9 James Turner, Chair of the Remuneration Committee, give a brief update of the meeting held in November and advised that the next meeting would directly follow the Board.

Operations Group

- 1.10 John Howells, Chair of the Operations Group, gave a brief update on the recent Operations Group meeting which had included a discussion on workforce planning issues. He also updated the Board on next steps relating to Evaluation following a paper considered at the November meeting.

For decision**2. Minutes of 25 November and Matters Arising [Board(12)002]**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November were agreed as an accurate record.

For discussion**3. Monthly Finance Report [Board(12)003]**

- 3.1 The DG, SP&FP and Deputy Director, Finance introduced the Monthly Finance Report paper which reported on the Welsh Government's 2011-12 forecast outturn position as at Month 9 and covered the period 1 April 2011 to 31 December 2011. The Board noted the content of the paper and discussed implications arising from the forecast outturn for 2011-12.
- 3.2 The Deputy Director, Finance thanked DGs for their support in producing the report, advised on the Supplementary Budget and provided detail on Reserves and the Budget Exchange Mechanism.
- 3.3 The Permanent Secretary asked that a paper be brought to the Board in May outlining the position and risks associated with student loans.
- 3.4 Board members had a detailed discussion on EU exchange rates and the associated impact on Welsh Government funds. The Permanent Secretary asked that a short term handling plan be drafted as soon as possible with a more detailed paper in March.

4. Complaints and Learning [Board(12)004]

- 4.1 The Permanent Secretary introduced a paper on the Complaints and Learning inviting the Board to think of complaints in a more dynamic way and capitalise on the learning from them.
- 4.2 The Head of the Complaints Unit provided a short case study on best practice and a flavour of the pattern of complaints received by the organisation. He noted that the paper recorded complaints received directly by the Welsh Government and did not include complaints sent directly to the NHS etc.
- 4.3 The Board agreed that:
- there were positive learning opportunities presented through complaints;
 - it would be important to ensure improving levels of customer service throughout the organisation;
 - It would be important to appropriately define complaints and ensure good early consideration of complaints;
 - some of the issues could be picked up as part of work already in hand on learning lessons and by the People Strategy;

good record keeping was critical as well as appropriate language in email and other communications and the Permanent Secretary asked DGs members to cascade those messages to their teams; they would receive regular updates on complaints as well as consideration by Operations Group on a six-monthly basis.

5. Administrative Estate Departmental Location Plans [Board(12)005]

5.1 The DG, PPCS introduced a paper on Administrative Estate Departmental Location Plans. He noted that the Location Strategy had been endorsed by the Cabinet and reminded Board members that the issue had been discussed at the recent Workforce Planning session and asked them to endorse the decisions made there.

5.2 The Deputy Director, Property Division circulated an Estates Dashboard paper and reminded the Board of the key commitments of the Location Strategy.

5.3 The Board noted that the paper built on the Workforce Planning discussions and endorsed the default positions set out in the paper. The following points were also made in discussion:

- it would be important to effectively utilise resources within the existing estate;
- there could be potential for sharing buildings with external organisations;
- consideration needed to be given to recruitment and retention issues. The DG, BETS and DG, PPCS agreed to discuss specific issues separately;
- effective internal handling and communications would be important and would also link in with the People Strategy.

6. NHS in Wales [Board(12)006]

6.1 The DG, Health, Social Services and Children (HSS&C) introduced a paper on the key risks for the strategic ambitions of the NHS in Wales. He noted that the NHS in Wales had delivered improvements in most, if not all, of the key indicators in a tough economic climate.

6.2 The Board welcomed the paper and noted the content.

6.3 The Permanent Secretary asked that a further discussion be arranged for the end of April, to discuss issues to be faced by the NHS in Wales over the following six months.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 No other business was raised.

Board Secretariat, 1 February 2012