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## Summary Minutes of the Board Meeting, 28 March 2014

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### Present:

Permanent Secretary (Chair)  
James Turner  
David Richards  
Gareth Jones  
Michael Hearty  
June Milligan  
Jeff Godfrey  
David Sissling  
James Price  
Owen Evans  
Elan Closs Stephens  
Adrian Webb

### In attendance:

Natalie Pearson  
Matthew Denham-Jones (item 1)  
Rachel Heath-Davies (item 4)  
Peter Kennedy (item 5 & 6)  
James Owen (item 5 & 6)  
Katie Antippas (item 6)

### Apologies:

John Howells

### Secretariat:

Emma Alexander  
Catherine Evans

The Permanent Secretary noted that it was David Sissling, Chief Executive of the NHS and DG for Health & Social Services' last Board meeting before he left the organisation at the end of the month to take up a new position. He thanked David for the valuable contribution he had made and, on behalf of the Board, wished him every success for the future.

## 1. Financial Management Performance Report [Board(14)012]

- 1.1 Matthew Denham-Jones, Head of Budgetary Control and Reporting, introduced the paper which reported on the Welsh Government's 2013-14 forecast outturn and reserves position as at 28 February 2014 (month 11).
- 1.2 The Board were asked to note and discuss the implications arising from the forecast outturn for 2013-14, the main risks and opportunities identified by departments and the impacts on central reserves.
- 1.3 The Permanent Secretary said that the length of the paper could detract from the main issues and suggested that shorter reports might be better. The Board agreed that shorter reports should be produced in future.
- 1.4 Following a full discussion, the Permanent Secretary thanked Matthew and his team for all their hard work.

## **2. Permanent Secretary's Items [Oral]**

- 2.1 The Permanent Secretary referred to the Chancellor's 2014 Budget statement. He also said that he had attended the recent Joint Ministerial Committee meeting with the First Minister, where the forthcoming NATO summit had been discussed. It was agreed that a further discussion on the summit should be scheduled at a future Board meeting.
- 2.2 *Director General (DG) Exception Reports*  
The Permanent Secretary invited DGs to share key issues from within their areas with Board colleagues. Issues raised included jobs and inward investment, GCSEs, the Education Bill, Apprenticeships, the Common Agricultural Policy, housing, the Arts and Culture review, the Social Services and Wellbeing Bill, NHS Service Change, publication of the Wales Bill, the ICT rapid review team set up to focus on governance arrangements, affordability and service delivery, the award won by the Communities First team, launch of the Lift programme, the internal review of Legal Services and the recent Programme Board meeting to discuss the Permanent Secretary's Reviews.

### **For decision**

## **3 Minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> February and Matters Arising [Board(14)013]**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February were agreed as an accurate record.

## **4. Welsh Language Standards [Board(14)014]**

- 4.1 Rachel Heath-Davies, Head of the Improvement Programme, introduced the paper, which outlined the progress made during the Standards Investigation stage of the proposed Welsh Language Standards. The Board was asked to note the key issues, agree the approach to take regarding responsibility for reception of visitors in local sites; and note the approach being considered to develop bilingual working and agree to this being taken forward at Operations Group.
- 4.2 It was noted that a Welsh Government response to the Standards Investigation—where any proposed Standards that were not reasonable and proportionate should be noted and evidence provided—was due to be sent to the Welsh Language Commissioner by 18<sup>th</sup> April.
- 4.3 It was agreed that work around reception of visitors should be taken forward by the relevant Directors General. It was also agreed that the Operations Group should take forward work to develop bilingual working.

4.4 The Permanent Secretary thanked Rachel for her work and for the way in which she had engaged with DG areas across the organisation. He would consider and sign off the final response and it was agreed that it should be circulated to the Board for information.

## **5. Reducing Sickness Absence in the Welsh Government [Board(14)015]**

5.1 Peter Kennedy, HR Director, introduced the paper which presented potential interventions for reducing sickness absence in the Welsh Government. The Board was asked to agree the recommendations and consider the further options detailed in the paper.

5.2 James Owen, Deputy Director, Expert Services and People, said that the Operations Group had discussed this issue and supported a renewed focus on tackling sickness absence through engaging line managers and highlighting the policies already in place.

5.3 The Board agreed the recommendations in the paper, namely that the robust policies and support tools already in place should be used more effectively by engaging with line management and staff to make them aware of their responsibilities and the support available. As part of this work, a communications plan would be drawn up at a corporate level.

5.4 It was agreed that separate conversations should be held with other Government departments to find out what they were doing to tackle sickness absence.

5.5 It was agreed that a further discussion should be held on the promotion of healthy lifestyles/workforces at a future Board meeting.

## **6. Partnership Working (Oral)**

6.1 James Owen, Deputy Director, Expert Services and People and Katie Antippas, Trade Union Side Chair, gave a joint presentation on partnership working.

6.2 The Workforce Partnership Council had been created in 2006 to look at developing a partnership approach across Wales. The work was still evolving but the Council wanted to promote best practice and its approach was unique. It wanted to develop a more collaborative rather than adversarial approach to create more effective employer/union relationships where solutions to complex problems were sought together. A training package had been developed to be deployed across the public sector, which had senior level buy-in.

6.3 There were partnership fora in place across the Directorates General and the Board was asked to support the roll out of this joint training across the organisation over the following 12 months. It was noted that Ministers were fully behind this proposal.

- 6.4 It was agreed that the Permanent Secretary should be given an opportunity to test out the training.
- 6.5 The Board endorsed the proposal to roll out the training but noted that there was a difference between partnership fora in the centre and in DG areas and the training should be tailored accordingly. It was agreed that a further update should be given to the Board in 6 months' time.

**7. Any other Business**

- 7.1 No other items of business were raised.

**Board Secretariat, 1 April 2014**