

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet on 14 November 2017

Present:

- Rt. Hon. Carwyn Jones AM, First Minister (Chair)
- Alun Davies AM
- Mark Drakeford AM
- Vaughan Gething AM
- Lesley Griffiths AM
- Julie James AM
- Ken Skates AM
- Kirsty Williams AM
- Jeremy Miles AM

- Huw Irranca-Davies (item 4)

- Shan Morgan, Permanent Secretary
- Des Clifford, Director Office of the First Minister
- Peter Greening, Head of Cabinet Division
- Jo Salway, Deputy Director Cabinet Office
- Toby Mason, Head of Strategic Communications
- Matt Greenough, Special Adviser
- David Costa, Special Adviser
- Kate Edmunds, Special Adviser
- Andrew Johnson, Special Adviser
- Huw Price, Special Adviser
- Alex Rawlin, Special Adviser
- Jane Runeckles, Special Adviser
- Tom Woodward, Special Adviser
- Christopher W Morgan Cabinet, Plenary and Committee Secretariat (minutes)
- Damian Roche, Cabinet, Plenary and Committee Secretariat
- Andrew Goodall, Director General Health and Social Services (item 4)
- Alistair Davey, Deputy Director Enabling People, Social Services and Integration (item 4)

Item 1: Minutes of the previous meeting.

1.1 Cabinet approved the minutes of the previous meeting.

Item 2: First Minister's Items

Carl Sargeant

2.1 The First Minister referred to the recent death of Carl Sargeant and highlighted that these were difficult times for everyone who knew him and there was much upset and grief. He indicated that his tribute in the Siambur that afternoon would focus on Carl as friend and colleague and recognise the fact that he had taken forward more legislation than any other Minister, including the complex Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, now highly regarded as ground-breaking throughout the World.

Item 3: Government Plenary Business

3.1 Ministers noted the contents of the Plenary grid.

3.2 In terms of the tributes to Carl Sargeant, the Assembly's Business Committee had agreed that morning that the Presiding Officer would open the session with some brief remarks of her own, which would be followed by a minute's silence. Party leaders would then be invited to contribute before other Members.

3.3 The Committee also discussed the timing of the scrutiny of the Budget and agreed that the date for Finance Committee to report should be extended to 1st December but the Draft Budget debate would remain on 5th December. It was recognised that given the circumstances the Government would do all it could to facilitate Committee scrutiny including substituting Ministers where necessary.

Item 4: Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children CAB(17-18)10

4.1 The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services introduced the paper, which asked Cabinet to note the work being carried out across Government on improving outcomes for looked after children.

4.2 The number of looked after children in Wales remained stubbornly high and was equivalent to 90 children in every 10,000 compared to a ratio of 60 per 10,000 in England. Furthermore, the rates of looked after children were higher than England at every point on the deprivation scale.

4.3 The Government had, in September 2016, established a Ministerial Advisory Group to develop a programme to reduce the number of children being taken into care. The Group was now taking forward a series of actions, including: the expansion of the Local Authority 'edge of care' services; the rolling out of the Reflect project, which supported mothers who had children taken into the care system, to prevent further instances; and the implementation of the National Fostering Framework. In addition, a national model of adoption support would be developed.

4.4 The vision was to ensure that the life chances of looked after children were the same for other children. A reduction in the numbers of children entering care, and improved life chances for care leavers could only be achieved by working differently and taking a collective approach.

4.5 Proposed Government action encompassed a whole system approach to early intervention and prevention, which included an integrated Early Years system for families and parents. The education attainment gap across all key stages between looked after children and their peers would need to be reduced. It would be important to address the impact of adverse childhood experiences on well-being and life chances by providing enhanced therapeutic support for care experienced children and better supported accommodation options and opportunities for employment, apprenticeships and traineeships for care leavers.

4.6 Delivering on this ambition would require continued engagement and activity across Ministerial portfolios and a targeted effort in order to achieve a step-change in outcomes for looked after children.

4.7 Therefore, there would be a need to provide a fresh impetus to the work already taking place and to help maximise opportunities through investments already made. It would also be important to examine the drivers behind the increased number of children entering care and to understand the reason behind the varying levels of reception rates across Wales. Such an approach should be evidence based, taking into account examples of international best practice. The Ministerial Advisory Group would be asked to take this forward as a matter of urgency.

4.8 The Minister for Children and Social Care indicated that there was a need for a step change to reduce the number of children in care and that good work being undertaken by certain Authorities, such as Caerphilly, should be repeated elsewhere.

4.9 Cabinet welcomed the paper and agreed that as this was a major public policy challenge there would be a need for further cross-Government action to improve outcomes for looked after children. It was reported that the Pupil Development Grant had been extended to Early Years and was being channelled through regional education consortia rather than individual schools. The recent reduction in the attainment gap demonstrated that the Government was making improvements.

4.10 It was noted that, at the request of the former Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, the Welsh Government was now offering a number of apprenticeships to those leaving the care system.

4.11 Cabinet approved the paper.

**Cabinet, Plenary and Committee Secretariat
November 2017**