

5 October 2023

Annwyl Dawn

I refer to your letter of September 8th 2023 addressed to Pedr and myself.

I can confirm that the Board of Trustees made their decision to explore changing pension arrangements and consulting with staff and unions on this matter at our latest Board meeting on Friday 29 September. Union representatives were informed of this decision immediately - in the regular meeting that I hold with all of the unions at the Library after each full Board meeting. The consultation papers are currently being prepared and will be shared with staff at the start of the statutory consultation period, which I hope will commence very soon. Unions were told that the current scheme is not affordable and that the Library has to reduce its operating costs significantly, as it tries to deal with an unplanned reduction in our Grant in Aid.

As regards to allowing staff and unions to attend open meetings, as you will be aware, these arrangements vary across public bodies including at those within your portfolio and the Library is not the exception. Although the unions are not present at the meetings, along with others who had begun attending virtually during the pandemic, I regularly meet with them to share information of relevance. In addition, Pedr and other senior staff meet local and national union representatives formally each month. I believe that the frequency of these meetings is higher than it is at many similar public bodies.

As regards to closed meetings, there will always be issues where trustees alone will be privy to private and contentious issues. Therefore, it is important for us to have the ability to convene such meetings from time to time, particularly during a period where we are discussing a very sensitive issue pertaining to an asbestos claim. The only exception we would make is always to bring these issues to the attention of Welsh Government colleagues, in absolute confidence.

The agenda of each Board meeting is made public and includes items to be discussed at both the closed and open sessions. Minutes of closed or extraordinary meetings, however, are not made public, for the reason already outlined above.

I can assure you all of us at the Library appreciate our positive working relationships with both yourself and your officials. I believe the observations that may have been brought to your attention arose in our longer two-day board meeting in July. That meeting involved some

deeper, open and honest conversations. If any criticism of Welsh Government was noticed, I do not recall it being anything that I felt merited raising separately with your officials, or yourself.

Cofion

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ashok Ahir', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ashok Ahir, President
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