



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Summary Minutes of the Board
Meeting, 27 March 2015**

AGENDA ITEM: 6

Present:

Permanent Secretary (Chair)
Gareth Jones
June Milligan
James Price
Owen Evans
Andrew Goodall
Adrian Webb
Peter Kennedy
Elan Closs Stephens
Michael Hearty
James Turner
Jeff Godfrey

In attendance:

Natalie Pearson
Hugh Rawlings (item 1)
Piers Bisson (item 1)
Sarah Morgan (item 2)
Jon Luxton (item 2)
Lynne Hamilton (item 3)
Claudia Guy (item 4)

Apologies:

David Richards

Secretariat:

Emma Alexander
Catherine Evans

For discussion

1. Devolution/Devolved Services Reform [Oral]

1.1 Hugh Rawlings, Director, Constitutional Affairs, provided an update on the Welsh Government's (WG) reform agenda for improving public services and strengthening the devolution settlement, informed by the reports of the Commission on Devolution in Wales and the Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery.

1.2 He highlighted the following points:

- A suite of documents had been published in July 2014 setting out the WG's agenda in terms of improving public services for people in Wales and included the 'Reforming Local Government White Paper'.
- The St David's Day process and subsequent announcement made by the UK Government on 27th February;
- The WG's response to the announcement;

- The Wales Act 2014 which would require the introduction of three Bills in relation to tax collection and management; land transaction tax; and landfill tax;
- The Well-being of Future Generations Bill which was part of the vision for public services in Wales;
- The Local Government 'Paving Bill' introduced on 26th January 2015; and
- The governance arrangements around taking forward this work.

1.3 The following points were made in discussion:

- There were three elements of challenge facing the organisation; firstly to deliver on the current Programme for Government; secondly to get to grips with new areas of work and thirdly, to do this with constrained financial resources;
- Work around Preparing for the Future needed to be more radical and the organisation needed to articulate clearly what it was trying to achieve and how everything fitted together;
- Workforce planning was key in moving forward and leadership and management skills would be important;
- It would be important to maintain the momentum internally and to communicate messages externally to ensure the wider public sector were aware of any developments;
- A Public Services Summit was planned to be held in Cardiff in November 2015.

1.4 The Permanent Secretary thanked Hugh for the update and agreed that another update should be scheduled in due course.

2. Quarterly Equality and Diversity Update [Board(15)012]

2.1 Sarah Morgan, Equality Adviser and Jon Luxton, Involvement Co-ordinator, presented the paper which provided the first quarterly update on Equality and Diversity issues and sought the Board's views on some proposed actions, which included:

- greater emphasis on staff undertaking unconscious bias training;
- joining the Business Disability Forum;
- reinstating working relations with UK Civil Service equality bodies and networks;
- setting up a Welsh Public Sector Network;
- testing candidates' knowledge of equality and diversity issues as part of the recruitment process; and
- introducing more diverse recruitment panels.

2.2 Sarah drew the Board's attention to the follow up work on the recent People Survey. She reported that alongside this work, a session had been held with women who had returned from maternity leave within the past year to learn of their experiences. The session had highlighted some areas for improvement.

2.3 The following points were raised in discussion:

- staff with particular IT requirements should be consulted early with any software changes;
- it was suggested that a structured framework with principles should be drawn up to take forward this work;
- it was agreed that a separate conversation would be held regarding feedback received from staff within the Department for Health and Social Services;
- the organisation should aim to be an exemplar in this area;
- communications to staff would be important in addressing these issues;
- there could be opportunities to learn from other departments and organisations.

2.4 As the Board Equality and Diversity Champion, June Milligan, Director General, Local Government and Communities, concluded the discussion by emphasising the need for managers to tackle unacceptable behaviour. It was agreed that:

- the issue of 'reasonable adjustments' should be addressed as soon as possible to enable Diversity Networks to work strategically;
- communications to staff about this work should be cascaded via senior management;
- a further paper should be brought to the Board outlining in more detail some of the immediate actions required and the associated timelines;
- SCS Equality and Diversity Champions in each DG area should assist in taking forward this work;
- DGs should inform June or Sarah if they wished them to attend a senior management team meeting to discuss this work further.

2.5 The Permanent Secretary thanked Sarah and Jon for the paper and noted that a further paper would be presented to the Board in due course.

3. Financial Management Performance Report [Board(15)013]

3.1 Lynne Hamilton, Director of Finance and Commercial, introduced the report on the Welsh Government's 2014-15 forecast outturn and reserves position as at 28 February 2015 (month 11).

3.2 Following a brief discussion about the implications arising from the forecast outturn, the Permanent Secretary thanked Lynne for the report. He also noted that this was her last Board meeting before she took up her new post in Whitehall. On behalf of the Board, and in his role as Principal Accounting Officer, he thanked her for all her work and wished her well in her new post.

4. New Programme of Learning [Board(15)014]

4.1 Claudia Guy, Head of Corporate Learning and Development, introduced the paper which asked the Board to agree the strategic direction for Corporate Learning and Development (L&D) and the development of a new L&D strategy; agree the new Programme of Learning for all staff and the reduction of Mandatory courses. She highlighted the following points:

- individual DGs could recommend that staff within their Directorate undertook particular training courses rather than make them mandatory for the whole organisation, which might have a greater impact;
- the proposed strategic direction was a more holistic one, which included coaching, mentoring, secondments etc.

4.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- the growth in online learning should not limit the opportunity for whole team learning;
- the work should include an element of horizon scanning in considering skills the organisation might need in the future;
- it was agreed that grants training should remain mandatory;
- rather than having individual mandatory training courses, there should be a package of professional development courses aimed at specific grades;
- Local Government and Communities were targeting a package of courses at a particular grade and would provide feedback to Claudia on the results of that pilot;
- there was a perception that there was poorer access to L&D opportunities for staff based outside of Cardiff;
- training should be described as an 'enabling tool' rather than a mandatory requirement;
- individual departments should be charged if staff who had reserved a training place did not attend on the day.

4.3 In summary, the Permanent Secretary said that the Board agreed the strategic direction for Learning & Development and the refresh of the L&D strategy, which should come back to the Board. He also asked that L&D opportunities be highlighted to staff.

4.4 It was also agreed that further consideration should be given to the language used around mandatory training courses with the suggestion that courses be corralled and targeted as a package at particular grades. It was agreed that the Leadership and Capability Workstream could be used to further this work as part of Preparing for the Future.

For decision

5. Draft Minutes of 27th February and Matters Arising [Board(15)015]

5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 27th February were agreed as an accurate record.

Regular Items

6. Permanent Secretary's Items [Oral]

- 6.1 The Permanent Secretary referred to the UK Government's 2015 budget which had been announced the previous week. He also referred to Sir Jeremy Heywood's recent visit to the Merthyr Office and the St David's Day Awards, which were now in their second year.
- 6.2 *Director General (DG) Exception Reports*
The Permanent Secretary invited DGs to share key issues from within their areas with Board colleagues. Issues raised included the Wellbeing and Future Generations and Planning Bills, Glyndŵr University, the Curriculum Review, Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board, the Welsh Language Standards, the Higher Education Bill and two infraction cases which had been referred by the European Commission.
- 6.3 Michael Hearty, DG for Finance & Corporate Services said he had chaired the recent meeting of the Oversight Group for the Preparing for the Future programme. It was agreed that the Board should receive regular written updates on this work.
- 6.4 *SCS Remuneration Committee*
James Turner, Non-Executive Director and Chair of the SCS Remuneration Committee briefly referred to the meeting held on 27th February. In addition to the regular items, the Committee had discussed some of the organisational consequences arising from Professor Graham Donaldson's Review of the National Curriculum.
- 6.5 *Operations Group*
Peter Kennedy, HR Director and Chair of the Operations Group, gave a brief update on the meeting held on 11th March. Items discussed had included carbon reduction, the Learning and Development programme and workforce planning. In terms of workforce planning, it was hoped that a Resource Plan would be presented to the Group for comment in May.

7. Any other Business

- 7.1 No other items of business were raised.

Board Secretariat, 31 March 2015