

Remuneration Board

Meeting Venue: **Conference Room 4B - Tŷ Hywel**

Meeting date: **Friday, 16 January 2015**

Meeting time: **09.00 - 16.30**

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



Concise Minutes: WRB (30)

Assembly Members:

Sandy Blair CBE DL (Chair)
Mary Carter
Professor Monojit Chatterji
Professor Laura McAllister

Officials:

Richard Bettley
John Chick, National Assembly for Wales
Adrian Crompton, Director of Assembly Business
Anna Daniel, Head of Strategic Transformation
Matthew Richards

Clerking team:

Gareth Price (Clerk)
Daniel Collier (Deputy Clerk)

1 Chair's Introduction

1.1 The Chair welcomed Board members to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies had been received from Stuart Castledine.

1.3 Subject to minor amendments, the Board agreed the minutes of the meeting on 12 December 2014.

1.4 Mary Carter updated the Board on the meeting with HM Treasury to discuss the AM pension scheme. The Board agreed to write to the Trustees requesting that GAD be engaged to provide costs relating to strict compliance with PSPA over and above the board's preferred "light touch" approach.

2 Determination for the fifth year of the Fourth Assembly: Consultation

2.1 The Board noted and discussed the paper setting out the changes to the Determination for the final year of the Fourth Assembly.

2.2 The Board discussed the proposal to increase AMs office costs allowances by 25% by viring funds from their staffing costs allowance.

2.3 The Board emphasised that viring should not be permitted in the other direction – from office costs to staffing allowance costs.

Action point:

- Consult on the proposed changes to the Determination for fifth year of Fourth Assembly via the letter to Assembly Members & AMSS.

3 AM Allowances: Consider responses to consultation

3.1 The Board considered the summary of responses to the consultation on AM Allowances, in particular they noted the low number of responses.

3.2 Residential Accommodation: The Board emphasised that flexibility should be applied to managing business cases for residential accommodation, but that the zones were helpful in establishing a default position, and expectations. The Board agreed that guidelines should be provided to Assembly Members clearly stating the default position and when they would be required to make a business case for an exception/accommodation support for the Board's consideration.

3.3 Provision for carers: The Board considered evidence that AMs and Support staff were being required to work later in to the evenings. The Board did not want to provide incentives which might encourage more frequent later working.

3.4 Assembly Member and AMSS travel: The Board agreed that Assembly Members should continue to follow rules on travel costs set out by HMRC. The Board agreed that a move to extend the current 10,000 mile annual limit would not be in line with HMRC rules and could not be justified.

3.5 Office costs and virement of funds between budgets: The Board noted that there was broad support for the proposal in the consultation document. The Board noted that two responses had suggested allowing viring in the other direction – from office costs allowances into staffing allowance – as well. After further consideration, the Board agreed to stick with its proposal. Any requests to vire from the office costs

allowances should be directed to Members' Business Support in the first instance. The Board agreed that there should be flexibility where it is deemed appropriate by the Board and it should not happen automatically.

3.6 Members leaving office: The Board considered the only response, which had been sent by the Welsh Liberal Democrat Group. The Board agreed that its proposal should stand and be included in the consultation on the draft Determination for the Fifth Assembly.

3.7 Equality Impact Assessment and other issues: The Board agreed a clear message should be given to Assembly Members that whilst MBS ensures HMRC tax rules are adhered to, they are not responsible for setting (or negotiating) these rules.

Action point:

- Members leaving office: Members' Business Support to conduct research on the costs and what service would be available via an externally provided outplacement service.

4 Determination for the Fifth Assembly: Remaining issues for inclusion in Determination and the Equality Impact Assessment report

4.1 The Chair invited Charles Willie and Adele Goodwin from Diverse Cymru to the meeting.

4.2 The Chair thanked Diverse Cymru for awarding the Board runner up in the 'Excellence in Equality – public sector' category.

4.3 The Board considered in discussion with Diverse Cymru, a paper on the overview of the Determination for the Fifth Assembly and a 'work-in-progress' Equality Impact Assessment report.

4.4 The Board noted that the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment report would be mainstreamed throughout the Determination and the follow-up to 'Fit for Purpose'.

4.5 The Board discussed issues for inclusion in the Determination for the Fifth Assembly.

Action points:

- MBS to provide more data on the numbers of Assembly Members Support Staff attending party political conferences and the benefits of them attending the conferences.

5 Determination for the Fifth Assembly: Group Support

5.1 The Board considered a paper on Group Support for the Fifth Assembly.

5.2 The Board agreed that it should make a decision which ensures that all groups have sufficient support to effectively operate in the Assembly.

5.3 The Board agreed to state that it is considering the issue and will run an informal consultation shortly.

Action points:

- The Secretariat to arrange informal drop-in sessions with parties before the meeting on 20 February to receive soundings on initial thoughts.

6 Assembly Member salaries: Consider responses to consultation

6.1 The Board considered all responses to the consultation on AM Salaries for the Fifth Assembly.

6.2 The Board discussed the responses and agreed to finalise its deliberations at the meeting on 20 February.

6.3 The Board agreed to publish all responses to the consultation in March, in parallel with the consultation on the draft Determination for the Fifth Assembly.