

## Manon Antoniazzi

Prif Weithredwr a Chlerc y Senedd  
Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd

Nick Ramsay MS  
Chair of Public Accounts Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

20 January 2021

Dear Nick

### **Public Accounts Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2019-20.**

I am writing in response to the Public Accounts Committee report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2019-20. I would like to thank the Committee for its scrutiny.

I'd like to thank the Committee for noting the efforts of Commission staff in facilitating Senedd business during COVID-19 and ensuring a safe working environment for all. Thank you also for your congratulations both for a successful audit and our staff related achievements including Investors in People Platinum status.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure the Committee that we remain as committed as ever to providing assurance through external scrutiny and audit as well as our internal governance framework. This work is vital in underpinning our confidence that we use resources efficiently, economically and effectively in delivering our services to the Senedd.

Your Committee's recommendations concerning the Commission are addressed in full in the attached Annex. If you would like any further information on any matter covered in the Annex, please do not hesitate to let me know.

As ever, if there is any further information your Committee would like, please let me know.



Yours sincerely





cc Senedd Commissioners, Nia Morgan



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## Annex 1

### Public Accounts Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2019-20

**Recommendation 1.** The Senedd Commission should remove any future KPIs that set to minimise under expenditure, and focus instead on using financial resources as efficiently as possible.

#### Noted

The indicator on minimising under expenditure is useful to the Senedd Commission and it will be retained internally. However, we will review the corporate performance indicators during 2021-22 and consider whether any additional indicators would provide additional clarity on efficiency. These will be put in place during 2022-23.

**Recommendation 2.** The Senedd Commission should lead by example by setting ambitious financial management KPIs that strive for more than just an unqualified audit opinion. The targets should consider the effectiveness, economy and efficiency with which the Commission uses its resources, and should be put in place no later than the 2022-23 financial year.

#### Noted

As noted in our response to Recommendation 1, we will review the corporate performance indicators during 2021-22 and consider whether any additional indicators would provide additional clarity on the effectiveness, economy and efficiency with which the Commission uses its resources. These will be put in place during 2022-23.

**Recommendation 3.** The Commission should ensure that future staff surveys are:

- ✦ consistent from year to year to ensure that meaningful conclusions about long-term trends can be drawn from their findings; and
- ✦ ask similar questions to the staff surveys of other legislatures and public bodies to allow for the results to be benchmarked.

#### Accepted

The 2020 staff survey provides a new approach, and has been procured in partnership with the Scottish Parliament and will ask largely the same questions. The



questions asked will enable continued benchmarking across the Civil Service and the wider public sector.

**Recommendation 4.** The Commission should undertake a review of the experiences of candidates of BAME backgrounds, throughout the recruitment process, with a view to removing any barriers to appointment that the review uncovers. The review should be carried out within the first year of the Sixth Senedd. The findings of the review should be made available to our successor Committee, alongside any remedial action the Commission intends to take.

#### **Accepted**

Following a review of recruitment effectiveness, we have worked closely with community partners, candidates and Business in the Community Wales to understand the barriers to recruitment faced by candidates of BAME background.

We will continue with our commitment in this area by engaging a review of candidate experiences in the first year of the Sixth Senedd and return with findings, together with any remedial actions proposed, to PAC ahead of the September 2022 meeting.

**Recommendation 5.** The Commission should ensure that its new recruitment portal collects data about the socio-economic diversity of its workforce and of its recruitment candidates. This data should be included in the Commission's annual diversity data reporting in the same format as the Commission has provided for BAME candidates (i.e. with data relating to each stage of the recruitment process).

#### **Accepted**

The Commission is committed to better understanding the socio-economic diversity of our workforce and we will engage with the Social Mobility Commission and use its Employer Index during 2021 to support this commitment and hopefully aid continued improvements in our data collection.

**Recommendation 6.** The Commission should ensure that clear, measurable objectives are set for all engagement activities, that the impact of those activities is tracked and their outcomes are evaluated against objectives to determine whether they represented good value for money. This information should be published on an annual basis as part of the Commission's Annual Report.

#### **Accepted**



We will continue to ensure that all our engagement activities have clear, measurable objectives and are evaluated robustly. The evidence of this is available in our Annual Report and Accounts.

Over the past year the Commission has developed a new engagement strategy with an additional emphasis on reaching more difficult-to-reach parts of the population. In order to achieve this during Covid restrictions we have increased the number of virtual engagement activities, which has led to progress against our objectives.

**Recommendation 7. At the start of the Sixth Senedd, the Commission should prioritise identifying its hard-to-reach groups, set out ways to engage with them, and take action to do so as soon as practicably possible. This engagement strategy should be made publicly available.**

### **Accepted**

In advance of the Sixth Senedd, we have already identified hard-to-reach groups and taken steps to improve how we engage with them. The Commission's Communication and Engagement strategy places a greater emphasis on building relationships with groups who are more difficult to reach; the "politically apathetic".

Since our appearance in front of your Committee, we've held a series of events targeting "not the usual suspects" by attracting new audiences to Senedd engagement activities. We concentrated on mainstream subjects which were Covid-related and worked with other organisations.

This allowed us to make use of the contact lists of a wide variety of institutions such as the FAW, the WRU and Young Black Professionals and of individuals with a large social media following, such as Michael Sheen, to raise awareness of events and to offer tickets. Our initial analysis of the events show that this approach paid dividends when looking at attracting new audiences.

We've also, since the scrutiny session, launched our new Commission website. The Site has been designed with hard-to-reach audiences at the forefront of our thinking. The improved search function makes it easier for people to find what they are looking for, and the expanded glossary – with an emphasis on explaining parliamentary terms and language – will make more of our information accessible to those who aren't political.

In addition, we've updated our social media strategy to make it more user-friendly. This has included using a warmer and friendlier tone of voice. We will continue to focus on enhancing our social media provision over the coming months.



**Recommendation 8. The Commission should increase procurement from Welsh suppliers of goods and products that are of Welsh origin, unless not available or not at a reasonable cost. It should take steps to enable more Welsh companies to bid for contracts, such as by breaking up large contracts into smaller ones. Any steps that the Commission takes in this area should be published in its Annual Report as year on year percentage increases.**

### **Accepted**

We are working hard to increase spend with Welsh suppliers. Prior to the Covid pandemic we were making progress in this area.

Before we issue tenders we explore the Welsh market and where Welsh suppliers exist, they are encouraged to bid. Additional staff resource has been provided to help conduct preliminary market consultations. For every contract with a value that is greater than £25,000 we agree a procurement strategy, which sets out our approach.

This includes an examination of whether it is feasible to break the contract down into smaller lots. A recent example of success is the print room and multifunctional devices contract, which was split into two lots after traditionally being let as one contract. Both lots were subsequently awarded to Welsh based suppliers.

For some of our larger contracts, which rely on subcontracting, we have contractual obligations in these contracts to use local supply chains. For example, our largest contract by value is our facilities management contract with CBRE, 69 per cent of our spend on this contract is subcontracted and delivered by Welsh based suppliers.

We will continue to report our procurement performance in our Annual Report.

**Recommendation 9. The Commission should work alongside other public bodies, such as the Welsh Government, to maximise the proportion of its procurement with Welsh suppliers. The Commission should write to this or the successor Committee no later than September 2021 to set out what engagement it has carried out with other public bodies, and the steps it intends to take to improve expenditure with Welsh suppliers as a result.**

### **Accepted**

We regularly collaborate with colleagues from Welsh Government and the wider public sector across Wales on procurement matters. Our Head of Procurement has a regular meeting with the Head of Category Management at Welsh Government, where discussions around Welsh spend have already taken place.



We will continue to work alongside procurement colleagues from the sector to ensure that we maintain best practice and are joined up on increasing Welsh spend. We will update the Committee no later than 30 September 2021.

**Recommendation 10. Once the Business Committee, Remuneration Board, Commission and others have determined Senedd business arrangements for the Sixth Senedd, the Commission should carry out a wholesale review of its sustainability targets in light of COVID-19 and its impact on working patterns. These new targets should be bolder and more ambitious than the last, and be published no later than September 2021.**

### **Accepted**

Following the successful conclusion of the Carbon Reduction Strategy to 2021, the Commission has agreed a set of principles and targets and actions to form the basis of its Carbon Neutral Strategy from 2021 to 2030.

The Carbon Neutral Strategy is being finalised for consideration by the Commission in March 2021. Following final approval the Strategy will be published.

Annual Sustainability Reports will be produced and published to highlight the actions taken and our progress against targets. The current targets and ambitions to work towards carbon neutrality by 2030 are significantly bolder and challenging than our previous targets.

The Strategy recognises that the pandemic will change the way people work within our offices to include more flexible working patterns and that this will enable opportunities to realise further efficiency savings to contribute to our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

In response to the pandemic, the Commission has established a programme to cover all aspects of our work during the current pandemic and the return to working on the estate. This includes a Futures workstream which is capturing lessons learnt and opportunities and innovation to consider the long term strategic value to the Senedd and Commission to enable more flexible, responsive and sustainable future ways of working.

The Committee's support and commitment to our continuing work and our strategic goal to work sustainably is welcomed and we look forward to providing future updates to confirm our progress.

