



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cyfrifon Cyhoeddus **The Public Accounts Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 13 Ionawr 2015
Tuesday, 13 January 2015

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are recorded in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol **Committee members in attendance**

William Graham

Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
Welsh Conservatives

Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru (yn dirprwyo ar ran Alun Ffred Jones) The Party of Wales (substitute for Alun Ffred Jones)
Sandy Mewies	Llafur Labour
Darren Millar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur Labour
Aled Roberts	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Matthew Mortlock	Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru Wales Audit Office
Huw Vaughan Thomas	Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru Auditor General for Wales

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Michael Kay	Clerc Clerc
Leanne Hatcher	Ail Glerc Second Clerk
Joanest Varney-Jackson	Uwch-gynghorydd Cyfreithiol Senior Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:00.
The meeting began at 09:00.

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Darren Millar:** Good morning, everybody. Happy new year, and welcome to the first meeting in the new year of the Public Accounts Committee. Just a few housekeeping notices: of course, the National Assembly is a bilingual institution and Members should feel free to contribute to this meeting through either English or Welsh, as they see fit. There are, of course, the usual headsets provided for translation and sound amplification. If I could encourage Members to switch their mobile phones off or onto silent, so that they don't interfere with the broadcasting equipment, and just remind Members that it's a formal public meeting. In the event of a fire alarm, we should follow the instructions of the ushers. We've received apologies today from Alun Ffred Jones, but I'm delighted to be able to welcome home to this committee Jocelyn Davies, and I'm sure we'd want to thank Alun Ffred for his service to the committee over many months.

**Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note**

[2] **Darren Millar:** Item 2 on our agenda today then, moving on, is our papers to note. We've got the minutes of the meetings held on 2 and 9 December. I'll take it that those are noted. We've had a letter in from the Commissioner for Older People in Wales following the discussion we had with her on governance arrangements in the NHS, and there's a note also in the letter of her support for the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill. You'll see that there are some key issues, some key questions, which she's attached to the letter that she's asked that we might want to consider as part of our ongoing inquiry. We've also had a letter from Andrew Goodall in response to some of the questions that Mike Hedges raised in respect of GP prescribing. It seems that there's lots of guidance out there for health boards to follow. It doesn't speak much about the policing arrangements for those bits of guidance though, Mike.

[3] **Mike Hedges:** I just think that it is one of these pass the buck—. I think that we have problems with prescribing, in my opinion—it's not necessarily one that is held by everybody, but certainly it's my opinion—and GPs are under a lot of pressure on prescribing, and having guidance that is written in Cardiff, it reminds me very much of the auditor general's report on meals. My mother-in-law was in hospital over Christmas and, on the ward, it said, 'No entry for visitors during mealtimes'. A lot of these things are really good up there, but by the time they make their way down to the people actually doing it, it seems to lose a bit in translation.

[4] **Darren Millar:** Well, the Wales Audit Office is undertaking a piece of work on GP prescribing, aren't you?

[5] **Mr Thomas:** On the primary care prescribing, we've planned to issue a national summary of some local work that we've done, during February this year, and, later in the year, we'll be looking at secondary care prescribing.

[6] **Darren Millar:** Okay, so we'll pick up some of those issues then, if that's okay, Mike. We've also had a letter from Gareth Jones, providing some additional information following the evidence session we had on Glastir, and we're going to discuss that in a bit more detail next week. So, I'll take it that those items of correspondence are noted.

09:03

**Cyflogau Uwch Reolwyr—Ystyried Ymateb Llywodraeth Cymru
Senior Management Pay—Consideration of Welsh Government Response**

[7] **Darren Millar:** Moving on then, item 3, senior management pay. We have received now a response from the Welsh Government to our report. I think the response is quite encouraging. All of our recommendations have been accepted in full, although of course we have received also some advice from the auditor general in the form of a letter referring to some specific recommendations in terms of timescale and how they might be actually implemented. Auditor general, do you want to just fill us in a little bit more in terms of the background to your advice to us?

[8] **Mr Thomas:** As you say, the Welsh Government has accepted nearly all the recommendations of your report. The issue that I'm raising in my letter is that there's a very helpful timetable that the Welsh Government has attached in terms of the wider work that is providing the context against which they intend taking forward the recommendations, but there are just a couple of issues that I think you might wish to reflect on now. One is the extent to which that work is going to encompass all the sectors. You were at particular pains

in the report to say that it needed to be the wider public sector in Wales that the recommendations related to. Also, they're intending, particularly on the accounting directions, to review this in the late autumn. It might be touch and go if you review it in the late autumn and issue accounting directions as to whether, in fact, they will apply in the financial year, or whether they will have to wait until the following year before they actually kick in. So, there is an issue there on timescale. But, I think, generally, it would be useful if the committee returns to the whole issue of report following the decisions that the Welsh Government will take on its consultation on the staff commission.

[9] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Sandy, you want to come in.

[10] **Sandy Mewies:** Can I say I agree with that? I thought this was a very good response in actual fact. I mean, I suppose that if it was the lottery, we would have had all the numbers, wouldn't we, really? I really thought it was a well-thought-out response, but the one thing that I noted straight away was that the detail of the timetabling could have been better. One of the main things that I found difficult—and I know we mentioned part of it—was the lack of consistency across the wider framework of the public sector. I think anything that could be done sooner rather than later to ensure that that consistency is there should be done.

[11] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Any other comments on this? Jenny.

[12] **Jenny Rathbone:** In the absence of this detailed timetable, would it be appropriate for us as a committee to send the report to the chair of scrutiny in Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Caerphilly, where we have had considerable concerns?

[13] **Darren Millar:** Well, the Welsh Government do say that they are going to draw the attention of local authorities to the report, but there is nothing to stop us as a committee raising it in particular with certain individuals if we want to. I am quite happy to follow whatever line the committee wants to take. Mike.

[14] **Mike Hedges:** Well, I was going to say that if we are going to send it to local authorities, I don't think we should be picking and choosing. I think we should send it to all of them.

[15] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Well, the Welsh Government has said that it will send it to all of them. Do we want to do that as well, or—

[16] **Jenny Rathbone:** Well, could we get the clerk to check when they are going to do it, to ensure that they are going to do it next week not next month?

[17] **Aled Roberts:** I think that as long as the Government say that they are going to do it immediately, I think it's duplication, really, if we do it.

[18] **Darren Millar:** Okay. We will ask—

[19] **Sandy Millar:** It's not—*[Inaudible.]*

[20] **Darren Millar:** We will ask the clerks to try and identify. Joanest, you wanted to come in.

[21] **Ms Varney-Jackson:** Just a point of information for Members that Government has laid—well, actually, it has made and now laid—the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, which contain some requirements for publication of remuneration levels. It also makes specific reference now to internal drainage boards and their practices—just referring back to the work that committee did some time ago.

[22] **Darren Millar:** Okay. Perhaps we could have a note on that, Joanest, just for the committee to look at. I mean, the one thing that I think was missed slightly from the response was that we made a reference in our report to the opportunities provided by the grants given to different organisations to be able to attach grant conditions rather than sort of audit disclosure requirements, if you like, in order to get the disclosures that we wanted from those organisations that are in receipt of significant public funds. They don't really cover that, do they, to a great extent in their response?

[23] **Mr Thomas:** No, and they haven't pursued their next stage. The response concentrates on the public sector itself.

[24] **Darren Millar:** If Members are happy, if we respond welcoming the very positive response that they've given to the recommendations, but just ask whether the grants option, as it were—the grants condition option—is something that they are going to pursue in the short term, perhaps, before the audit regulations are amended. Are Members happy with that? Yes. Okay, we'll do that. Any other comments?

[25] **Mr Kay:** [*Inaudible.*]—debate tomorrow.

[26] **Darren Millar:** Yes. We've got a debate, obviously, tomorrow afternoon on this in the Chamber. Any other comments? No. Okay.

09:09

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42(ix) i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to Resolve to Exclude the Public from
the Meeting**

[27] **Darren Millar:** Item 4 then.

Motion:

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[28] Does any Member object? There are no objections, so we will go into private session. Thank you.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:09.
The public part of the meeting ended at 09:09.*