

Highlight report to the Commission

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April 2014

Highlight report to the Commission

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The highlight report outlines work that has recently been undertaken, or is underway, to make progress towards the Commission's strategic goals. The report aims to provide Commissioners with useful information so that they can perform their role of oversight and holding management to account. This report gives an update on key activities and projects since December 2013.

A. Strategic Goal – provide outstanding parliamentary support

2.0 Influencing and preparing for constitutional change

2.1 The Strategic Transformation Service co-ordinates work relating to the future evolution of the Assembly. One important area is ensuring that we are prepared to respond to and influence constitutional developments.

2.2 As a result of evidence provided to the Welsh Affairs Committee in January 2014, and correspondence with the Wales Office from both the Presiding Officer and Finance Committee Chair, the Wales Bill (unlike the draft Wales Bill) now features the devolution of legislative control over the Assembly's budgetary procedures. This is an important step toward the Assembly being positioned to effectively scrutinise the application of the Welsh Government's forthcoming tax-varying and borrowing powers. We are having regular dialogue with Welsh Government and Wales Office officials to ensure these views are understood and responded to where possible.

2.3 The Silk Commission has recently addressed a number of issues which the Presiding Officer called for during its evidence-taking, and the final report includes many references to the useful written and oral evidence provided by her. As a result, the Silk Commission has made the following recommendations:

- that the existing conferred powers model be replaced by a reserved powers model;
- that if the Assembly wishes to change its name to the Welsh Parliament, then this should be respected;

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- to address the capacity and size of the Assembly; and
- to remove a number of outmoded restrictions upon the Assembly.

3.0 Supporting Committees

3.1 The Commission's report *Review of Support for Committees* was published in January and the Presiding Officer has now met with the majority of Chairs to discuss their approach to meeting the Commission's vision for world-class committees. The report has been received positively by Chairs, and the teams that support committees are working to identify both short and longer term enhancements to their support. The short term work includes wider provision of bilingual briefing, greater consistency in the way Members receive their papers, CPD, and planning of committee work programmes to take a more strategic view.

Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013

3.2 On 1 April the final changes to Standing Orders, required under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013, came into force. The Act changes the position regarding the Assembly's oversight of the Auditor General for Wales (AGW) and strengthens the accountability and transparency of that Office. The Bill established a new Wales Audit Office (WAO); a board responsible for the corporate functions previously vested in the AGW.

3.3 For the Assembly, there is now a clear split between the operational work of the AGW and a governance role in respect of the WAO. The work of the AGW is subject to examination by the Assembly's Public Accounts Committee and the governance role, including examination of budgets, falls to the Finance Committee.

The work of Committees

3.4 An outline of the work that Committees have been involved in can be found at Annex A.

3.5 New steps include:

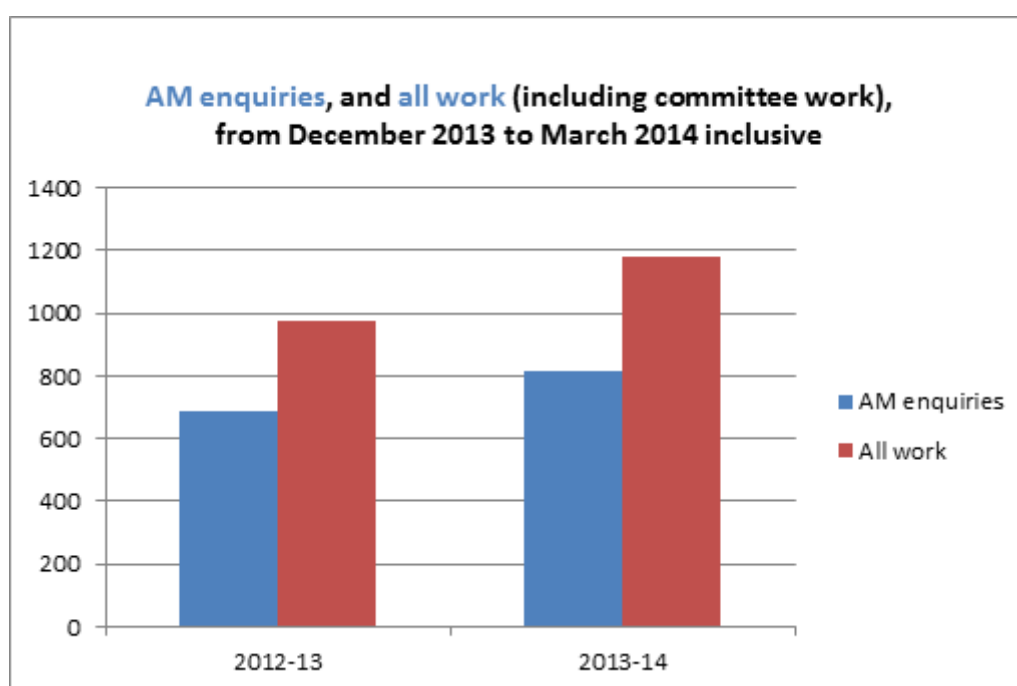
- the Presiding Officer's meetings with Committee Chairs to embed the Commission's vision of world class committees; and

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- new Twitter channels launched for Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee and Enterprise and Business Committee, to add to the existing Environment and Sustainability Committee and Health and Social Care accounts, which have a growing following.

4.0 Members' use of the Research Service

- 4.1 Assembly Members and their staff are continuing to make excellent use of the Research Service for confidential, individual research enquiries. For the period Dec-Mar 2013-14, enquiries were received from 52 AMs (87%); 49 (82%) asked at least twice; 46 (77%) asked at least 3 times and 45 (75%) asked at least 4 times.
- 4.2 Researchers handled 816 enquiries during December 2013-March 2014, compared to 685 during the same period in 2012-13. In terms of all written work handled by the Research Service (including individual enquiries, committee briefings, blog posts, pre-prepared briefings, and factsheets to support Members with their constituency work), there was an increase from 977 to 1,177 in this four month period (see chart below).



- 4.3 To help to tailor this support to the changing needs of Members and their staff, a Business Improvement Group has been set up, comprising Research Service staff and Assembly Member Support Staff from each party. We are confident that this will provide a greater

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insight into how Members and their staff work, the pressures they face and how best to support them.

5.0 Engagement and work of the Assembly on EU affairs

- 5.1 There is clear evidence from Brussels that the National Assembly for Wales is one of the most active legislatures when it comes to discussing EU affairs, and in its positive engagement with the EU institutions. Assembly Members and Committees are supported in this work by the EU Office, which co-ordinates and directs the EU activities of the Assembly, the Research Service, Committees, Legal Service, and other teams within the Assembly Commission.
- 5.2 The work in Brussels (and elsewhere in the EU) gives visibility to Assembly Members, to the work of the Assembly, and through the direct influence that the Assembly's two representatives on the Committee of the Regions, Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM and Mick Antoniw AM, have in the EU decision-making process. The Assembly is closely involved in the preparations for the First World War Commemorations, including strong links with the Flemish Parliament (the Assembly Commission visited in February 2013), and co-operation activities will feature as part of the programme of activities over the next five years.
- 5.3 #SeneddEurope, the Assembly's twitter account on EU matters, was set up in November, and has become an established communication tool on the EU activities of AMs, Committees and plenary, as well as a vehicle for cascading information of relevance to Wales on the EU agenda.
- 5.4 There is further information in Annex B on our considerable engagement in EU activities, our close work with stakeholder organisations across Wales and in Brussels, including the activities of the Committee of the Region Members and CALRE (the EU network of regional parliaments and assemblies). Gregg Jones will be attending a Commission meeting later this year to discuss this work with Commissioners.

6.0 Remuneration Board

- 6.1 The Remuneration Board is currently considering the full package of remuneration for Assembly Members in the Fifth Assembly. This includes a review of their salaries, pension arrangements and allowances.

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6.2 Following the Assembly vote on April 2 to amend the list of people forbidden from being members of the Remuneration Board, the Counsel General made the necessary order. The recruitment process is underway to appoint a new member of the Board and a permanent new Chair. In the meantime, the Board has committed to regular meetings with Assembly Members, Party Leaders and Assembly Member Support Staff to receive a wide representation of political views on every strand of its remit.

7.0 Information and Communications Technology

Future Services Transition Project

7.1 At their meeting on 26 March the Commissioners took the decision to transfer the management of ICT services from Atos to the Commission with effect from 7 April 2014. The Commissioners had received regular updates on the readiness for transfer and had received assurances from the Project Board, Director of ICT and from the external auditors, KPMG. The transition has gone very smoothly. The project will continue to run until 31 July 2014, which is the point at which all remaining contract arrangements with Atos come to an end. The project has been delivered within time and budget parameters and the management arrangements have been commended by KPMG.

ICT Strategy

7.2 With the Transition Project almost complete, focus will turn to increasing the pace of delivery of the ICT Strategy. The Assembly's website replacement project is well underway and will provide the Commission with a much-improved website. This is being delivered via the SharePoint platform, which will be the base information management system for most future business systems development, including the replacement for Medialon for Plenary and Committees. Continuous improvement work in the Senedd includes replacing the Committee room microphones and video cameras. The trial of new Siambr microphones has been successful and these will now be installed at all seats.

7.3 The transition project highlighted a number of necessary infrastructure changes, for example new Firewalls. The new Senedd.tv project is nearing completion - this is an exciting development as it will allow users to watch, pause and replay live broadcasts and search

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the synchronised video and Record of Proceedings (RoP) in their language of choice. It also includes the capability to add captions to the video feed to identify agenda items, speakers and further helpful information. The new Senedd.tv system will improve the production process for the RoP, by streamlining the way it is indexed.

- 7.4 Looking to the next 12 months, significant work is needed on the Commission's ICT infrastructure, following transition from Atos, to prepare for ICT improvements. These changes include a new backup system, the build and deployment of a new user client, upgrade of all Servers to Windows 2012, migration of email to a new platform and an upgrade to Microsoft Office applications. All of this is necessary as the foundation for the flexibility, mobility and ease of use that is required of the ICT systems. The new telephony system needs to be in place at the latest by March 2015, sooner if possible. Towards the end of 2014 the Domain Name will change from .wales.gov.uk to .cynulliad.cymru / .assembly.wales, for our websites and email addresses. Incremental improvements will be made to the Siambro following the Commission's decision to go ahead with the refit. Services at Constituency Offices will also be improved, particularly addressing network performance and providing wireless capability.

8.0 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for AMs and AMSS

Since January a wide range of training interventions and development opportunities have been attended. During the last quarter of 2013-14, 34 Assembly Members participated in some form of CPD activity, including 8 new participants. In total, 138 CPD opportunities were taken up by AMs between January and March 2014.

During the same period a total of 96 AMSS took up 285 CPD opportunities. Activities included:

- Financial Scrutiny
- CPD for Committee Chairs
- Scrutiny of Legislation and amendments master classes
- Welsh Lessons
- Management and Leadership training
- Appraisals and 360 reviews
- Managing Challenging Behaviour

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- Speech Writing

9.0 Machine translation

- 9.1 The Translation and Reporting Service (TRS) has been piloting the use of machine translation to speed up text translation. Tests show that using machine translation increases output by around 20%. Testing of Microsoft Translator, now that the Welsh language model has been launched, is on-going. This will give us a good basis to fully evaluate the options for using machine translation in TRS. It is already enabling TRS to fully translate committee briefings in-house at the request of Members for the first time. We will now assess what additional support we are able to offer Members with this enhanced capacity.
- 9.2 Record and transcript editors in TRS have started using MS Translator to facilitate the translation of Members' Welsh contributions, producing the transcripts of Plenary and committee meetings more efficiently.
- 9.3 We have held drop-in and briefing sessions for Members and staff to promote the use of the Microsoft Translator. The feedback received from sessions with staff is that the Welsh model for Microsoft Translator has enhanced bilingual working throughout the Assembly. It has reduced bureaucracy and streamlined the process of working in a bilingual institution, promoted more bilingual working internally and helped Welsh learners to reinforce and build on what they learn in their lessons.

B. Strategic goal – engage with the people of Wales and promote Wales

10.0 Microsoft Translator

- 10.1 The launch of the global Welsh model for Microsoft Translator took place in the Senedd on 21 February, enabling Microsoft users throughout the world to translate into and from Welsh. 59 external stakeholders attended the launch. The video shown at the event has been posted on the Assembly's YouTube feed and Machine Translation webpage, and is the second most popular video in the Assembly's history. The video was most popular in the UK, USA, Germany, Hong Kong and Russia.
- 10.2 The publicity surrounding the launch event had a global reach of up to 5 million people, promoting not only the Welsh language but also the National Assembly and its partnership with Microsoft.
- 10.3 We are continuing to engage key organisations to invite them to provide us with bilingual data to feed into the system to improve the quality. TRS recently presented their experiences of using Machine Translation to the Association of Welsh Translators and Interpreters and the feedback was positive.
- 10.4 By using the Welsh model for Microsoft Translator, the Assembly is able to engage more efficiently with the public, as staff can process and reply to Welsh-medium communications more quickly and effectively, particularly in the context of social media and other instant, informal communications.

11.0 Women in Public Life

- 11.1 As part of her Women in Public Life campaign, the Presiding Officer launched the **Development Scheme** aimed at women from across Wales in January. The scheme will provide intensive personal development and skills training, one to one mentoring support, and role shadowing opportunities at the highest levels. It is intended to motivate and encourage participants across Wales to successfully apply for public appointments at all levels locally, regionally and nationally. We are delivering the scheme in co-operation with Chwarae Teg and Cardiff Business School.

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- 11.2 To further the Women in Public Life campaign, the Presiding Officer set up **The Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus**. The aim of the Caucus is to look at best practice, particularly from other parliaments around the world, to increase women's parliamentary representation. It will also learn about measures parliaments and parties put in place to ensure female representation at varying levels. The Caucus aims to report findings and recommendations by the end of 2014.
- 11.3 The Presiding Officer's **Women in Public Life Portal**, launched in September 2013, has been developed and has helped to increase the Presiding Officer's online presence. It includes inspirational profiles of women, informative blog entries and details of upcoming events. The campaign's social media followers increase week on week, helping to keep the conversation about the Women in Public Life campaign in the spotlight.
- 11.4 The Presiding Officer's very successful **lecture series** profiling women in traditionally male-dominated spheres will also continue in 2014.

12.0 Youth Engagement

- 12.1 Following the consultation that took place last year involving nearly 3,000 young people, the Commission agreed in February to mainstream youth engagement across the Assembly, enabling young people to join the debate on the issues they are passionate about.
- 12.2 An Action Plan was created and work is well underway to ensure that we can deliver each of the 19 actions within it. Some of the work will be completed ahead of a launch event on **16 July**, when we will celebrate the involvement young people have already had with the Assembly.
- 12.3 Two drop-in sessions have been held for Assembly Members and their staff to find out more about the consultation and to share their own youth engagement best practice for inclusion in the toolkit. Members have been very positive about the work already carried out and the mainstreaming approach. Further opportunities for Member involvement will be created before the launch.

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13.0 Outreach activities

- 13.1 Between January and mid-March, the Outreach team has engaged with 225 people in general awareness raising sessions, through groups such as the Scouts and Women Making a Difference.
- 13.2 An additional 551 people have taken part in activities relating to committee inquiries over this period, including:
- focus groups with homeless and gypsy traveller groups for Stage 1 scrutiny of the Housing (Wales) Bill;
 - a breakfast network session for the Finance Committee's inquiry into Finance Wales with Welsh businesses;
 - a web-chat with students for the Higher Education inquiry; and
 - video interviews with businesses for the inquiry into Trade and Inward Investment.

14.0 Events

- 14.1 The annual Politics and Government Conference for A-Level students took place in February and featured the First Minister and Paul Silk as guest speakers. The event generated a lot of local media coverage and social media activity.
- 14.2 We hosted the first 'Family Day' on St David's Day in the Senedd, providing arts and crafts activities for children in the Neuadd and food stalls, cooking demonstrations and musical entertainment in the Oriel. We also held 'quick fire' 15 minute talks from the chamber floor to ensure those visiting the Senedd had the opportunity to improve their understanding of the Assembly and its work. The day was a huge success, attracting 1,015 visitors making it one of the busiest days since the building opened in 2006.

15.0 Social media

- 15.1 Our **Twitter** accounts @assemblywales and @cynulliadcymru were officially verified by Twitter in March – a measure of how our accounts have matured. We continue to have a Klout of 60 on @Assemblywales meaning it is an 'influential account'. Our aim is to achieve a score of 65.
- 15.2 We achieved our most popular post on **Facebook** this year when we posted a photo of #POSenedd with former apprentices.

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15.3 More and better use is being made of **YouTUBE** to communicate Assembly activity. We recently uploaded explainer videos on the Participation Levels in Sport, Expert Witness Training and on Bariatric Services committee inquiries. Our second most popular video in Assembly history in terms of minutes watched is the Microsoft Translator video.

16.0 Members' Intranet refresh

16.1 We committed to reviewing the content and services provided on the Intranet in response to feedback in the Assembly Member and Support Staff survey. A refreshed Members' intranet was launched on 27 March. Its design is based on the services that the Commission provides to Assembly Members.

16.2 We have redesigned the news page, adding in new features and services to make it more useful and more relevant, which includes integrating content from the Assembly's Twitter accounts.

17.0 Media coverage of Assembly business

17.1 Significant coverage of Assembly Committee business has been achieved in the last quarter. Highlights include front page stories in the Western Mail for the Finance Committee's report on Enterprise Zones and the Health and Social Care Committee report on NHS preparedness for winter pressures. Notable external report launches include the Enterprise and Business Committee report on the future of the Wales and borders rail franchise, launched on a train between Cardiff and Hereford.

17.2 The Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee report on participation levels in sport was launched at a Cardiff gym.

17.3 Links to the news pages for the major stories can be found at Annex C.

18.0 Promoting Wales Internationally

18.1 The National Assembly for Wales' Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) will be hosting the British Isles and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Conference in the Senedd and Assembly estate between 27 and 29 May 2014. This will be the first time the CPA Wales Branch has hosted this prestigious conference since 2002. Wales is one of 13 Branches which form the BIM Region

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together with Alderney, Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Malta, Northern Ireland, St Helena, Scotland and the United Kingdom.

- 18.2 The theme of the Conference will be 'Equality of Access to Democracy'. To reflect some of the strategic priorities of the Presiding Officer and Assembly Commission the conference will incorporate Plenary and Workshop sessions on: Enhancing the Participation of Women in Public Life and Democracy; Bilingualism and the Role of Official languages in Parliament; and Engagement of Young Citizens in the Democratic Process.
- 18.3 More information about the conference, including a draft programme, is available here:
- http://www.assemblywales.org/bimr_draft_working_programme.pdf
- 18.4 Annex D lists the main international events and visits, including diplomatic visits.

C. Strategic goal – use resources wisely

19.0 Investment Programme

19.1 The Investment Board continues to meet every two weeks to perform its strategic role of oversight and management of the Commission's investment budget. A large part of this work requires the Board to consider the priority of proposed development projects and to take decisions regarding the funding of these projects. Once approved, projects periodically provide progress reports to the Board. The Board is also responsible for ensuring the Assembly's outturn is within budget by closely monitoring monthly outturns and forecasts and identifying opportunities to use any resources that become available in the most effective way. For the new financial year, the Board has taken on the additional role of scrutinising proposals for new permanent and temporary posts. This will ensure that existing resources are used as effectively as possible and that new resources are clearly prioritised against our Strategic Goals. Annex E gives examples of some of the work the Board has considered since October 2013.

20.0 Internal Audit

20.1 There has been significant change in Internal Audit during the past year with the appointment of a new Head of Internal Audit and a new co-sourced partner firm.

Achievements

20.2 Despite the changes, the Internal Audit Plan will be completed on time and an Annual Report and opinion will be prepared in time for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting in 9 June.

20.3 In accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the Assembly Commission's first Internal Audit Charter has been developed and was approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee at their meeting in November. For the first time a Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan has also been developed.

20.4 Effective collaborative working with external audit counterparts has been formalised through the development of the Internal-External Audit working protocol.

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Monitoring Of Internal Audit Recommendations

- 20.5 A sharper focus on internal audit recommendations has been introduced in the year, with regular monitoring reports taken to each meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The latest report highlights that from the last three years, of the 115 recommendations raised, 101 are now fully completed.

Adding Value

- 20.6 The Head of Internal Audit is undertaking a Review of the Effectiveness of the Assembly Commission and has been commissioned to undertake a similar exercise with the Remuneration Board.
- 20.7 He also represents the Assembly Commission at the PwC Heads of Internal Audit Forum and will be hosting counterparts at the UK Intra Parliamentary Forum to be held at the Assembly in July 2014.
- 20.8 A wider commitment to raising staff awareness across the Assembly Commission has included presentations at team meetings on key issues covering audit and assurance, governance and risk. A fraud and whistleblowing session was delivered by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)..

21.0 Information Governance

- 21.1 Further progress has been made in strengthening information governance arrangements. A year into the new process of using Information Asset Registers we are assessing progress by way of self-assessments of Information Asset Owners and a review with internal audit. A new process for assessing, managing and escalating information risks has also been introduced. The Information Governance manager has assisted Assembly Members in their roles as data controllers, and will continue the work of last year's ICO advisory visits by beginning a programme of visits to Constituency Offices to offer advice to Members and staff on information handling procedures.

22.0 MyView: HR-Payroll project

- 22.1 A new integrated HR and Payroll system has been implemented and in November, the system paid all Members, Support Staff, Commission staff and AM Pensioners for the first time.

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- 22.2 In March, Commission staff gained access to the self-service element of the system giving them greater level of access to their private data and enabling them to: amend their own personal details; request, manage and authorise annual leave; report absence; view and print new electronic payslips; and complete their performance reviews.
- 22.3 Additional modules will be rolled out over the next few months including: an enhanced performance management framework; a learning and development module; online recruitment to Assembly jobs; and a travel and subsistence claims facility. MyView will also offer enhanced management of information with an advanced reporting capability which will improve staffing and costing reports.

23.0 Staff Matters

Performance Management and Development

- 23.1 Management Board has agreed improvements to performance management within the Commission, including changes to the culture of managing performance. More will be done to support managers and improve the quality and consistency of reviews. The new system will be implemented in September. All staff will receive training and the tools to support the changes.

Secondments

- 23.2 Between October and March there have been 26 internal secondments and 15 external secondments. External placements have included Dyfed Powys Police, Gwynedd County Council, Sports Wales, Scottish Parliament, the House of Lords, London Assembly and the Brussels Office. These placements provide staff with excellent opportunities to gain insights into how other organisations work, in addition to developing their skills and experiences and sharing good practice in return.
- 23.3 The Director of Assembly Business, Adrian Crompton, will be working with a social purpose company, Global Partners, in Egypt and other countries. His role is to help political parties and parliamentary staff prepare for parliamentary elections expected in Egypt in the autumn and then to support the new parliament in its early days of operation. Adrian will continue with some of his Commission responsibilities, including supporting the National Assembly Remuneration Board.

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Maximising the staff experience through Corporate Well-being

A corporate wellbeing event was held in March - 'Live Well, Work Well 2014'. Organisations involved included Civil Service Sports Council, Welsh Blood Service, Hafal (Wales' leading charity for people with serious mental illness and their carers), Mind Cymru, Stop Smoking Wales, Diabetes UK, Vitality Gym and Pure Café.

Recruitment

- 23.4 Between 1 October 2013 and 31 March 2014, 44 vacancies have been advertised internally and 38 vacancies have been advertised externally. Recruitment to public appointments included the Public Services Ombudsman Wales and the Chair and Member of the Remuneration Board.

Apprenticeship Scheme 2013-14

- 23.5 Six new apprentices joined the Assembly in February. This is the Commission's second apprentice scheme and we have incorporated lessons learned from the pilot in 2012-13. The apprentices are based across the organisation, including the North Wales office. They are working alongside, and in addition to, existing staff and completing an NVQ level 2 in Business Administration.

24.0 Equality and accessibility

External Recognition

- 24.1 The Assembly continues to be recognised as a top employer for working families and for people who are deaf or have a hearing loss. Stonewall have recognised the Commission as the Top Public Sector Employer in Wales for lesbian, gay and bisexual people and ranked the Commission number 11 in their Workplace Top 100 index.
- 24.2 The Assembly Commission has been named in The Times Top 50 Employers of Women in the UK. The award, which The Times runs in partnership with gender campaign group Opportunity Now, recognises the work carried out by organisations that help women continue in their careers, while maintaining family and caring commitments. The Assembly has been specifically recognised for the way in which it provides a range of flexible working options.

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Supporting the Assembly's Black Minority Ethnic (BME) Staff and Increasing BME Representation in the Workforce

- 24.3 An action plan to support the Assembly's BME staff and to increase BME representation has been developed. We have recently appointed a new co-ordinator who will take forward the action plan.

The National Autistic Society Autism Access Award

- 24.4 The Assembly will be working closely with the National Autistic Society to work towards gaining its Autism Access Award through a development action plan over the next year. This approach is in line with the other UK legislatures, which will help to ensure that our estate and the Assembly in general is accessible to people with autism.

25.0 Work on the Assembly Estate

Senedd signage

- 25.1 To complete the installation of external signage to the Assembly Estate, building signage has been installed to the front and side of the Senedd. We are confident this will encourage additional visitors to the Senedd and will enhance the identity of the Assembly and our buildings within Cardiff bay.

Security works

- 25.2 Our security measures are kept under review to ensure they reflect the prevailing UK security threat level and the specific business and geographical considerations that apply to the Assembly. We are also mindful of the need to strike an appropriate balance between maintaining an open, attractive and accessible estate and ensuring effective security measures. To help get this balance right the rising blockers on Pierhead Street have been replaced with stainless steel rising bollards that meet recognised security specifications and standards. Rising bollards have been used effectively between the Senedd and the Wales Millennium Centre and we have also installed fixed bollards to the pavement on the public highway outside Tŷ Hywel.

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Tŷ Hywel phased toilet refurbishment

- 25.3 As part of our forward maintenance plan, we have a programme to refurbish the toilets within Tŷ Hywel. The toilets have not been refurbished since the building was opened in 1992 and there have been increasing maintenance calls as a result of toilet blockages as well as a deterioration in terms of decoration and flooring from general wear and tear. We have completed the refurbishment of the toilets on the first and fourth floors to include improving pipework to reduce blockages, installing new sanitary wear, cubicles, decoration, flooring and lighting. We have also ensured that the fittings are DDA compliant in line with current best practice. The remaining toilets will be refurbished on a rolling phased programme over the next few years.

Senedd heating improvements

- 25.4 In response to comments about temperatures and draughts within the Siambr, Committee Rooms and offices within the Senedd, we have completed works to enhance the natural ventilation system within the Senedd. This will provide supplementary heating to the under floor trenches to prevent air entering the spaces at external air temperatures. Additional heaters and control equipment have been installed to the under floor trenches to reduce the draughts experienced as well as increase the heating capacity within the rooms. The biomass boiler had sufficient capacity to supply the additional heaters and, therefore, there will be minimal carbon impact resulting from this enhancement to the natural ventilation system. We hope this improves the comfort and environment within the Siambr and Committee rooms for Members.

Installing a moveable partition between Conference Rooms 23 and 24

- 25.5 To give additional flexibility for meetings held in Tŷ Hywel and provide a larger meeting space, a moveable partition has been installed between Conference Room 23 and 24.

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26.0 Sustainability initiatives

Developing a Carbon Reduction Routemap

- 26.1 Following earlier successful work with the Carbon Trust and partners, and to assist our sustainability objectives and achievements to date, we have been working with the Carbon Trust and Arup to develop a Carbon Reduction Routemap to identify future sustainability initiatives and improvements. The Routemap has identified short, medium and long term targets to ensure we continue to drive down our carbon emissions and build on the success to date of our Carbon Management Strategy. The Routemap will be presented to the Commission in May and will provide a focussed plan to support our sustainability goals.

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D. Financial Update

27.0 2013-14 Budget

27.1 Through the financial year, the Commission's forecast has been within its key financial performance indicators. Specifically, to deliver a year end outturn of 1% or less, to achieve £500k of Value for Money savings and to pay invoices and expense claims within 10 days.

27.2 At the end of February;

- we had exceeded the Value for Money target;
- we are expecting the year-end outturn to be 0.2% or circa £100k; and
- the latest update of prompt payment performance shows we are settling supplier invoices and expense claims within 4 days.

28.0 2013-14 Annual Accounts

28.1 The annual audit will start on 3 June 2014 and work is progressing well to compile the year end accounts. The finance team has circulated detailed instructions and is offering workshops to help Finance Coordinators with the data needed. Assembly Members have been briefed that the final date for submitting 2013-14 claims is 30 April 2014.

29.0 Value for Money (VfM)

29.1 The VfM target of £500k was achieved by the end of December 2013, adding another consecutive year to target achievement. As with previous years, the primary contributor to savings has been staff vacancy management. However, since the appointment to the Head of Procurement role, we are seeing an increased level of contract savings being achieved and captured.

29.2 In November, we gained £680k rates rebate resulting from a revaluation of our Estate. This rebate relates to the financial years 2010-11 to 2013-14. The revaluation will provide additional savings on rates of £190k per annum until 2017 and will be re-invested into Commission services in line with strategic priorities.

Highlight Report to the Commission

30.0 Value for money achievements over the Fourth Assembly

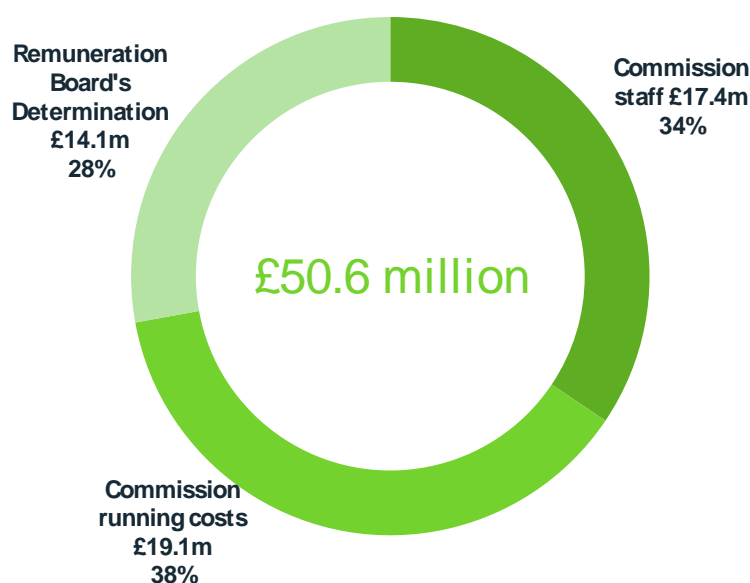
30.1 We have achieved or exceeded our Value for Money target for each year of the Fourth Assembly.

	Target	Achieved
2011-12	£0.350 million	£0.530 million
2012-13	£0.470 million	£0.470 million
2013-14 (as at December)	£0.500 million 20% from non staff savings	£0.508 million
2013-14 rates windfall		£0.680 million
2014-15	£0.500 million	
2015-16	£0.500 million	

31.0 2014-15 Budget

31.1 The 2014-15 Approved Budget is the final year of the Commission's three-year investment strategy and provides £14.1 million for the Remuneration Board's Determination for Assembly Members and £36.5 million for Assembly services. This budget will see £1.7m available for investments to further the Commission's strategic priorities.

Cost of the National Assembly for Wales in 2014-15



Highlight Report to the Commission

32.0 Procurement

- 32.1 This is the second full year of our new approach to procurement in the Assembly and we are pleased with the progress made over the last year. We have awarded more contracts over £25k and delivered more procurement savings than we did in year one.
- 32.2 We continue to prioritise the commercial work-stream on the Future ICT Services Programme and we remain on target to deliver the necessary contracts by July 2014. We are close to finalising the Legislative Workbench contract; the Hardware support contract and the Field Engineers contract.
- 32.3 In the last quarter we have awarded a further three contracts – Women in Public Life; Share-point Website development and the Garaging and Maintenance for our outreach bus.
- 32.4 Last year 71% of the contracts we awarded over £25k went to Welsh SMEs.

Key performance measures

Measure	2012-13	2013-14
Contracts awarded (full Procurement involvement)	7	12
Procurement savings	£254,964	£283,209

Good Practice

- 32.5 We held a contract management training course delivered at the end of January by the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS). The two day course was attended by all members of the Procurement team. Colleagues from Facilities Management and ICT who have responsibility for managing contracts also attended.

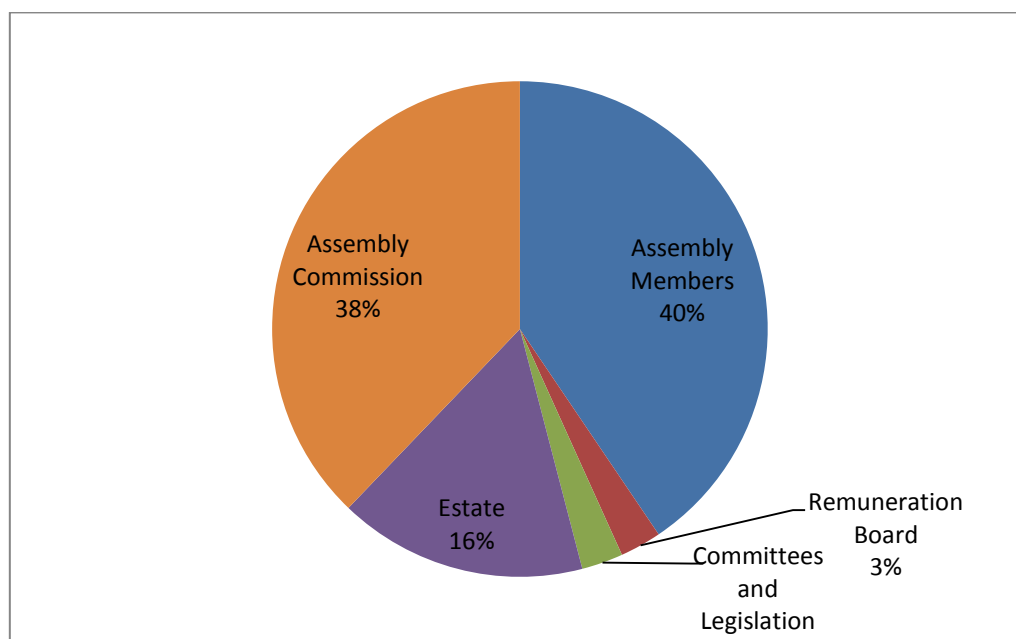
Highlight Report to the Commission

E. Freedom of Information (FOI)

32.6 A list of information disclosed since the last report under the Freedom of Information Act is attached at Annex F. This is for the period October 2013 to March 2014 and it has been categorised to indicate the subject matter of FOI requests in the period. The list also includes details of information withheld due to FOI exemptions.

32.7 The chart below shows the 37 requests as they have been categorised. Of the 37 requests received, there were no time and cost exemptions applied, but information was withheld in relation to 15. Four requests required either no work or less work to prepare the response as information was publically available on the Assembly website.

FOI requests by category (October 2013 to March 2014)



FOI requests by number

Number	Jan-Dec 2012	Jan-Dec 2013	Jan-Mar 2013	Jan-Mar 2014
Total requests	79	67	26	16
Information Withheld	13	16	1	8
No information held	13	3	0	1
Time/cost exemptions	1	0	0	0

Highlight Report to the Commission

Annex A - The work of Committees

This term, Committees have been:

Legislating

- Completed Assembly proceedings for the Social Services and Well-being (Health and Social Care Committee (HSC)) and Education Bills (Children and Young People Committee (CYP)).
- Supported the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee (CELG) and the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs (CLA) Committees in their consideration of the general principles of the Housing Bill.

Scrutinising

- Completed inquiries on a range of subjects from childhood obesity to Wales in Europe.
- New inquiries started on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), tourism, and making laws.
- Evidence to CELG from Sir Paul Williams and fellow commissioners about the Williams Commission report on public service governance and delivery in Wales.
- Evidence to CELG from Lord Patten (Chairman of BBC Trust) and Lord Hall (BBC DG) as well as S4C, ITV Wales and Ofcom to follow up work on the future outlook for the media in Wales.
- Drilled down into the UK and Welsh Government negotiations on the European TEN-T and CEF regulations, which revealed some oversights that are now being addressed by the Minister and officials (Enterprise & Business Committee (E&B)).
- Experimented with no written evidence on a one-off scrutiny of WOMEX 2013, which resulted in a letter of congratulation from E&B to the Minister.
- First ever scrutiny session on the Government's end-of-year budget spending (E&B).
- Expert advice used to good effect in HSC medical technologies inquiry.

Highlight Report to the Commission

Developing

- PO has held meetings with Committee Chairs to embed the Commission's vision of world class committees.
- Agreed a new operating arrangement with the Welsh Government to reflect a more mature and trusting way of working, with significant advances in terms of agreed deadlines for written evidence and communication between officials.
- Supported two newly-appointed Chairs (for E&B and Environment & Sustainability Committee (E&S)).
- Offered further financial scrutiny training to Members, AMSS and officials.
- Worked in partnership with Chwarae Teg on an expert witness training programme to encourage more women in public life to give oral evidence to Assembly committees.
- Committees are discussing strategic approaches to the remainder of the Fourth Assembly.

Promoting

- An Assembly first in launching E&B Rail Franchise report on a train and over the border (in Hereford). There was a great welcome on the platform from rail user groups who rely on cross-border services.
- New Twitter channels launched for CLA and E&B, to add to the existing E&S and HSC accounts, which have a growing following.
- Good media coverage for work such as report on participation in sport in Wales.
- Silk 2 report echoed E&B recommendations for further devolution of certain transport powers.

Reaching out

Highlight Report to the Commission

- Educational attainment and poverty inquiry (CYPE) included outreach to a school in Barry and focus groups in Swansea and Wrexham.
- E&B fact-finding for European funding inquiry included visit to Brussels to engage with Commission officials and other European partners, and engagement with students and staff from Cardiff and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities in informal discussion groups.
- Video evidence from small Welsh businesses to inform E&B inquiry into trade and inward investment.
- Bariatrics inquiry by HSC included offsite meeting in Swansea, visit to WIMOS, and focus groups that comprised health professionals and patients.
- Well-received meeting of E&S at Aberystwyth University about Sustainable Land Management, to explore knowledge transfer from university research centres to land managers in the field, and including a visit to the world-leading IBERS research facility. The Committee involved stakeholders in drawing conclusions and drafting recommendations by holding a workshop in Cardiff Bay; this led to a refinement of the Committee's view and will contribute to the final inquiry report.

Highlight Report to the Commission

Annex B - Engagement and work of the Assembly on EU affairs

Activities of Committee of the Regions Members (CoR)

Mick Antoniw AM (since April 2013) and Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM (since 2010) are the National Assembly for Wales CoR representatives. During 2012-2013 Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM was 'rapporteur' (author) of three reports for the Committee of the Regions on Synergies in Budgets (January 2013), Public Private Finance and the role of the European Investment Bank (April 2013), and State Aid to Fisheries and Aquaculture (November 2013). Mick Antoniw AM was 'rapporteur' for a report on EU Co-operation Public Employment Services (November 2013). As a result of this work both have been invited to speak at numerous high level EU conferences/seminars in Brussels and in other parts of Europe. Rhodri Glyn chaired two conferences during the EU Open Days Week of the Regions in both October 2012 and 2013, and has been invited to speak at a follow up conference in the European Parliament in June after the elections.

Mick Antoniw AM has been actively involved in the response of the Committee of the Regions to the Ukrainian crisis. In February he was part of a high level political delegation to Kiev led by the President of the CoR, and in April he had a bilateral meeting with the Deputy Vice-Prime Minister of the Ukraine. He also spoke on behalf of his political group during a debate with the Vice-Prime Ministers at the CoR plenary session in Brussels. Mick has subsequently been nominated by his political group to become a member of the CoR Regions cross-party group on relations with eastern neighbouring countries to the EU (CORLEAP).

In December the Welsh delegation to the CoR (which includes the two WLGA representatives, Councillors Bob Bright and Chris Holley) submitted a Welsh response to the debate on the future of the CoR that is taking place to mark its twentieth anniversary. The Assembly also participates in the CoR Subsidiarity Monitoring Platform and its Subsidiarity Expert Group (the latter newly established in 2012). Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM was a panellist at the Subsidiarity Forum organised by the CoR in the Bundesrat in Berlin in December 2013, where he spoke about the work of the Assembly on subsidiarity issues, and the interactions with the European Commission and UK legislatures in this work. The conference brought together senior politicians and officials from the EU Institutions, national parliaments, and sub-Member State legislatures from across Europe, to exchange experiences and discuss the functioning of subsidiarity monitoring in practice.

Highlight Report to the Commission

CALRE

As UK representative assembly on CALRE (the EU network of regional parliaments and assemblies) the Assembly participates in the Standing Committee and a number of working groups of CALRE, including e-democracy, gender equality and subsidiarity. Participation is led by the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer which included meetings in Brussels in September, October and March. CALRE is an excellent forum for exchanging good practice and experience between institutions, such as a consultation drawing together the different approaches to supporting youth engagement by CALRE members instigated by the Assembly's Presiding Officer.

Relations/work with the UK legislatures on EU matters

The Deputy Presiding Officer participates in the twice yearly EC-UK Forum, which brings together the Chairs of the European Committees and equivalents in the Houses of Parliament, Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly, and National Assembly for Wales. The last meeting took place in the House of Lords in November, and the next is scheduled for mid-June, following the European Parliament elections. The EC-UK Forum is an informal meeting, held in accordance with 'Chatham House rules' that provides an opportunity to share information on ongoing and planned EU-related work. This includes work on subsidiarity matters, European Commission Work Programme, and specific policies/issues of common interest is supplemented by positive ongoing relationships throughout the year between officials.

EU-related work in Committees

CLAC	<p>Wales' role in EU decision-making.</p> <p>Report published March, to be debated 6 June.</p> <p>Evidence gathering included via rapporteur visits to Brussels to meet MEPs, officials from EU institutions, EU networks and Brussels-based representations.</p>
E&B	<p>EU Funding Opportunities.</p> <p>Due to report in July.</p> <p>Evidence gathering included an outreach event at Cardiff Met University and Committee visit to Brussels.</p> <p>Evidence taken from wide range of stakeholders from educational,</p>

Highlight Report to the Commission

CLAC	<p>Wales' role in EU decision-making.</p> <p>Report published March, to be debated 6 June.</p> <p>Evidence gathering included via rapporteur visits to Brussels to meet MEPs, officials from EU institutions, EU networks and Brussels-based representations.</p>
	<p>cultural, business, transport, public and third sectors.</p>
E&B	<p>Trans-European Networks, Trade and Investment and STEM</p> <p>EU focus running through this work focusing in particular on the Welsh Government's work to maximise the opportunities within these areas.</p>
E&S	<p>CAP and fisheries update sessions</p> <p>Sessions included update from Gwilym Jones, member of the Cabinet of the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development.</p> <p>Sessions are also planned on EU Strategic Environment Assessment Directive.</p> <p>The Committee has completed work on the European Commission's proposals for a Directive on Invasive Alien Species, and has considered EU marine policies as part of its marine work. The Chair and officials recently attended a meeting of the House of Lords Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Sub-Committee (to the EU Committee) to discuss this work, and this is expected to lead to closer co-operation and sharing of information on EU related work in future.</p>
CYP and CELG	<p>EU update sessions held in December. Following up includes scoping potential visits to the OECD (for CYP) and Brussels during 2014-15 on priority areas of these Committees' work.</p>

Other EU-related work

Regular meetings have been held with Welsh MEPs, and MEPs participated in the work of the Assembly, including the inquiry by CLA Committee into Wales' role in EU decision-making. Strong links have been developed with the European Commission's Office in Wales, headed up by David Hughes, with regular contact and input into the formal and informal work of the Assembly, as well as links with the European Parliament's UK offices.

Highlight Report to the Commission

Annex C - Major coverage of Assembly Business since January 2014

[Failings at Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board must be a lesson to all health boards in Wales, says National Assembly Committee](#)

[National Assembly Committee unveils Charter for 2018 Wales and Borders rail franchise](#)

[Clarity needed over the objectives and expectations of Welsh Government's enterprise zones, says Assembly Committee](#)

[Assembly Committee concerned by lack of detail in Welsh health boards' winter plans](#)

Highlight Report to the Commission

Annex D - International events and visits, including diplomatic visits

Date	Details
13 January	Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM represented the Assembly on the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)'s, Environment and Social Committee meeting as part of its current inquiry into 'Roma Travellers' held in Dublin.
13 January	William Powell AM represented the Assembly on the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)'s, European Committee meeting as part of its current inquiry into the role of the 'European Investment Bank' held in Luxembourg.
20-21 January	A Federal Canadian Parliamentary delegation, representing both houses, visited the Assembly to learn of and share best practices in a range of areas including Working Bilingually and Environment and Sustainability and met with the Presiding Officers and senior officials.
11 February	EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Laszlo Andor visited the Assembly and met with the Presiding Officer.
30 March - 1 April	Deputy Presiding Officer David Melding AM, Joyce Watson AM, Darren Millar AM, Lindsay Whittle AM and William Powell AM attended the 48th British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly Plenary held in Dublin.
7 April	Dinny McGinley TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs visited the Assembly and met with the Presiding Officer to discuss official languages in Parliament and to learn more of the Assembly's OLS and recently launched Machine Translation software.

Highlight Report to the Commission

Diplomatic visits

The Presiding Officer also hosted these recent diplomatic visits to Cardiff Bay, during which time she was able to give an overview of the Assembly and its work as well as to discuss the importance of promoting Wales and Welsh democracy on the world stage and the positive role of diplomatic relations in achieving this.

- 5 December - Her Excellency Ms Alicia Castro, the **Argentine** Ambassador to the UK.
- 6 December - His Excellency Mr Claus Grube, the **Danish** Ambassador to the UK.
- 31 January - His Excellency Mr Pasquale Q Terracciano, the **Italian** Ambassador to the UK.
- 5 February - His Excellency Dr Daniel Mulhall, the **Irish** Ambassador to the UK.
- 5 March - His Excellency Mr Sergei Aleinik, the **Belarus** Ambassador to the UK.
- 6 March - His Excellency Mr Witold Sobków, the **Polish** Ambassador to the UK.

Highlight Report to the Commission

Annex E - Projects reviewed by Investment Board

- On-going monitoring of the transition of ICT provision from Atos to an in-house provision;
- Agreed funding for the Website/Sharepoint project, which will deliver improvements to the Assembly website and provide an improved user experience and improved access to information;
- Agreed a new approach to project management in the Assembly to enable a consistent approach to how projects are managed;
- On-going monitoring and review of contract management in the Assembly;
- Agreed additional spend for the Broadcasting Workflow project, which will enable the Assembly to stream in a wider range of formats, including HD;
- Approved funding for extending access to public wireless in the Senedd;
- Approved funding for replacement security bollards to maintain our existing levels of external security and enhance the appearance and public experience of the estate;
- Overseen delivery and funding of phase 1 of the HR/Payroll project. Due to consider funding proposal for phase 2 shortly;
- Overseen delivery and funding of phase 1 of the machine translation project which saw the launch of Microsoft Translator for Welsh;
- Currently overseeing the youth engagement project that will enable improved engagement and participation with this group.

Highlight Report to the Commission

Annex F – Freedom of Information requests

INFORMATION RELEASED FOLLOWING ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

October 2013 – March 2014

21 requests for information were received during the period October 2013– March 2014, in relation to which information was released or the requester was informed that no information was held. The categories are indicative of the nature of the request.

Assembly Members

- Private healthcare entitlement
- AM's pension provision
- Cost of alcohol refreshments
- Number of medically obese AMs
- Voting record
- AM's/Commission's cost of office supplies

Assembly Commission

- Hunger strikes at Tŷ Hywel (x2)
- Number of research assistants and interns
- Cost of external public relations advice
- Employment of illegal immigrants
- Staff disciplined for drug and alcohol misuse
- Money spent on unused/incorrect train tickets
- Employment of trainee solicitors

Estates/Facilities

- Stolen items and the cost of replacement
- Textiles used in the Senedd
- Cost of pest control on the estate

Highlight Report to the Commission

- Cost of subsidies for food and drink
- Sponsorship from fossil fuel companies (current and future plans)
- Cost of renovating Tŷ Hywel reception

Remuneration Board

- Representations made to support women who are lone parents.

INFORMATION WITHHELD FOLLOWING ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

October 2013 – March 2014

16 requests for information were received during the period October 2013 – March 2014, in relation to which information was withheld. The relevant exemption is shown below by reference to the relevant section of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Assembly Members

- Employment of family members as support staff. **Used section 40. (Personal Data).**
- Plenary attendance records. **Used section 21. (Information already available elsewhere).**
- Current salary banding and job titles of those support staff employed. **Anonymised data and used section 40.**
- Number of support staff and complaints made against AMs (x2). **Requested verification of identity.**
- Payments made to support staff upon resignation/termination of employment (x2). **Used section 40.**
- Details of PO's car. **Used section 21.**
- Second home allowance and expenses. **Used section 21.**

Assembly Commission

- Cost of the Women in Public Life project and cost/mileage of the PO's vehicle. **Requested verification of identity.**
- Hunger strikes at Tŷ Hywel (x2). **Used sections 14 (vexatious request) and 40.**
- Trade union activity. **Used section 40.**

Highlight Report to the Commission

- Number of vehicle lease contracts/hire purchase agreements and details of the PO's car. **Part exempt used section 40.**
- Details of corporate service functions; Payroll, HR, Finance/Accounting and Procurement. **Anonymised data and used section 40.**

Committees/Legislation

Details of the Social Services Bill. **Used section 21.**