

National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Commission

A Platform for Strength:
The Legacy Report of the
National Assembly for Wales
Commission 2011-2016

March 2016

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Online: **www.assembly.wales**
Email: **contact@assembly.wales**
Telephone: **0300 200 6565**

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Contents

Introduction	1
Summary of Recommendations.....	2
Commissioners and Deputy Presiding Officer.....	4
The Assembly Commission Strategy 2011-16	5
Strategic Goal: Provision of Outstanding Parliamentary Support.....	7
Strength in delivering Assembly services	7
Induction and Continuous Professional Development.....	7
Working in both our Official Languages	9
Supporting our vision for world class parliamentary committees	10
Supporting legislative output.....	12
The constitutional landscape	12
Building Links with the independent Remuneration Board.....	16
A modern democracy with the right tools.....	18
Becoming a leading open and easy to engage parliament with digitally accessible services.....	20
Strategic Goal: Engaging with the People of Wales and Promoting Wales.....	23
Overview	23
A Parliamentary Estate to be proud of.....	23
Youth Engagement and Education.....	24
Senedd@Wrexham and Senedd@Swansea	29
Addressing the Democratic Deficit in Wales.....	31
Embracing Social Media.....	33
Reflecting our Diverse Society.....	34
Women in Public Life	37
International Engagement	41
Improving access to our parliamentary Record of Proceedings	42
Strategic Goal: Using our Resources Wisely	45
Budget.....	45
Governance overview	45
Scrutiny and Transparency.....	45
Review of Effectiveness	47
Key Performance Indicators	49
Value for money and efficiency	51
Assembly Commission staffing.....	52
Independent Advisers.....	52
Improving our carbon footprint.....	54



Introduction

During this first five-year term of the Assembly, our task as Commissioners has been significant – to deliver the services necessary for the effective performance of Welsh democracy. Our focus has been to discharge our day to day responsibilities to high standards, with a sustained emphasis on continuous improvement, innovation and value for money. This has been crucial in order to support the Assembly to meet the challenge of increased responsibilities within the capacity constraints that are a feature of being the UK's smallest legislature.

With only 60 Members, the National Assembly is small by any objective local, national or international comparison. Assembly Members are thinly spread, especially in their committee work, and these pressures will only intensify as our legislative and fiscal responsibilities increase. In March 2011, just a few weeks before we took up office as Commissioners, the referendum showed clear public support for the Assembly to have full law making powers. With that in mind, we took a strategic and proactive approach to our statutory responsibilities to ensure that public expectations were met and that the services we provided enabled the elected Members of the Assembly to carry out their functions effectively.

Our approach has led to some outstanding achievements, which have built a strong and firm platform for the future. This report is testament to that. In addition to highlighting examples that exemplify best practice in parliamentary services, we are also making a number of recommendations that we hope will be helpful to the new Assembly Commission that will be elected after the May 2016 Assembly election.

As a Commission, we have benefitted from the dedicated contribution of the Deputy Presiding Officer, David Melding AM. We would also like to thank Assembly Members for your constructive engagement with us over the five year term and, particularly for your feedback which has contributed significantly to the improved services described in this report.

Finally, we would like to place on record our thanks to the Chief Executive, her Management Board team and all Commission staff for their hard work and commitment in delivering Commission services. The examples provided in this report demonstrate why Member-centric service provision and high quality delivery are so important in a modern, small and relatively young parliamentary institution. As a result, we are often the envy of other parliaments across the world. We wish our successors all the very best as they take the Assembly into the next constitutionally important phase of challenge and change.

Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer
Angela Burns AM, Welsh Conservatives
Sandy Mewies AM, Welsh Labour
Rhodri Glyn-Thomas AM, Plaid Cymru
Peter Black AM, Welsh Liberal Democrats

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation: The Assembly Commission is delighted with the positive engagement by Members and their staff who have seen the value of innovative and tailored CPD programmes. Given new powers and responsibilities and the new Members expected in May 2016, the Assembly Commission should consider building on the experience of the Fourth Assembly by developing an innovative and needs-led programme for the Fifth Assembly. (Page 6)

Recommendation: The Wales Bill foresees the devolution of powers with the potential to make significant changes for the Assembly. Assembly Commission leadership will be important if new electoral powers are devolved on the future size of the Assembly and the related question of the resources required to deliver an effective institution. The new Assembly Commission will need to ensure that resources are available and aligned to deliver emerging changes, together with the necessary support and services to Assembly Members. (Page 15)

Recommendation: The Assembly Commission and the Remuneration Board respectively decide the services and financial support Members require to undertake their roles effectively. To share strategic thinking on new or emerging priorities, the new Assembly Commission should consider further joint meetings with the Remuneration Board. (Page 17)

Recommendation: In an increasingly digital world, making the best use of Assembly business information through digital technology will be a defining characteristic of the world class Parliament that the Assembly strives to be. Excellent service provision and democratic engagement will increasingly require excellence in digital and information management. The new Assembly Commission will need to consider how to make the most of these opportunities for the benefit of Members and the people of Wales, to enable us to respond effectively to the challenges ahead. (Page 21)

Recommendation: That the new Assembly Commission reaffirms its commitment to engaging young people in the Assembly's work and considers whether there is merit in exploring options for a youth parliament. (Page 25)

Recommendation: Building on the success of Senedd@Swansea and Senedd@Wrexham, the new Assembly Commission should consider building such engagement activities into its strategic communications plan. (Page 28)

Recommendation: The Assembly Commission values the highly important work of the Democratic Deficit campaign, ensuring that those who deliver and access the wide range of news platforms in Wales become more aware of the public policy differences. This area of work should continue to be developed into the Fifth Assembly to ensure that the media recognise those differences and that any future constitutional changes are understood and taken into account. (Page 30)

Recommendation: Given the pace of change for new technologies and online platforms, the Commission suggests that any future communication strategies to be agreed by the new Assembly Commission should be sufficiently flexible for future developments. (Page 32)

Recommendation: That the new Assembly Commission considers the conclusions of the Review of the Record of Proceedings and the longer term benefits and challenges of the ambition to become a leading open digital parliament. (Page 43)

Recommendation: The new Assembly Commission should consider the positive attributes of openness and accountability in its approach to budget planning and corporate priorities in the Fifth Assembly. (Page 44)

Recommendation: A number of suggestions for the incoming Commission were highlighted in the review of effectiveness report, aimed at supporting the Commission in its on-going development as a high performing and effective 'governing board' into the Fifth Assembly. It is recommended that the new Assembly Commission considers these suggestions to ensure it exemplifies best practice. (Page 46)

Recommendation: In 2015, an internal audit report concluded that the Assembly Commission has a well-developed value for money culture in place and that this culture is embedded throughout the organisation. The new Assembly Commission should consider building on this strong foundation ensuring that value for money, efficiency and procurement development work continues to evolve and exemplify good practice. (Page 50)

Recommendation: Given the work undertaken to improve the Assembly's carbon footprint throughout the Fourth Assembly and the positive example this sets, the new Commission should consider reaffirming its commitment to achieving the further energy emissions reduction set out in the 'route map' by 2021. (Page 55)

Commissioners and Deputy Presiding Officer

The Assembly Commission serves the National Assembly for Wales to help make it a strong, accessible and forward-looking democratic institution and legislature that delivers effectively for the people of Wales. Its role is to provide the National Assembly with the staff, property and the services required to fulfil this role.

The Commission consists of the Presiding Officer and four Assembly Members, one nominated by each of the four party groups represented in the Assembly.



Dame Rosemary Butler AM (Welsh Labour)

Presiding Officer and Commission Chair, taking lead responsibility for communications as well as professional development for Members and their staff.



Peter Black AM (Welsh Liberal Democrats)

Commissioner with responsibility for ICT, broadcasting and e-democracy, alongside sustainability and the Assembly's estate.



Angela Burns AM (Welsh Conservatives)

Commissioner with responsibility for budget, governance (including Audit and Risk Assurance Committee membership) and links with the Remuneration Board. Angela also has responsibility for the improvement of services to Assembly Members and the Commission's role as the employer of Assembly staff.



Rhodri Glyn Thomas AM (Plaid Cymru)

Commissioner with responsibility for legal services, alongside the Assembly's Official Languages function and policy.



Sandy Mewies AM (Welsh Labour)

Commissioner with responsibility for education services, front of house, the Assembly's facilities, retail, catering and security. Sandy also has responsibility for the Commission's statutory equality functions and freedom of information.



David Melding AM (Welsh Conservatives)

Deputy Presiding Officer, able to exercise the functions of the Presiding Officer in the absence of or at the request of the Presiding Officer. David also attends meetings and functions as Deputy Presiding Officer in order to raise the profile of the National Assembly for Wales.

The Assembly Commission Strategy 2011-16

In 2011, the Assembly Commission agreed its strategy for the Fourth Assembly, building on the work of the previous Commission and prioritising services to support the Assembly in delivering its responsibilities within a new constitutional framework.

Statement of Purpose:

The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

The Assembly Commission serves the National Assembly to help make it a strong, accessible and forward looking democratic institution and legislature that delivers effectively for the people of Wales.

The Commission will:

- Provide outstanding parliamentary support
- Engage with the people of Wales and Promote Wales
- Use resources wisely

The Strategy was underpinned by a Plan to deliver priorities aligned to these goals enabling Commission staff to develop their service plans and their own performance objectives around business as usual activities, as well as the strategic leadership and priorities identified by the Assembly Commission.

In April 2014, the Assembly Commission met to review the Strategy for the remaining years of the Fourth Assembly. Ensuring a strong focus on services to Assembly Members and engagement of the Welsh public, the Commission considered progress and developments across the range of services and provided further leadership to ensure that the priorities for change, innovation and investment delivered the required outcomes prior to the Assembly's dissolution in April 2016.

Priority areas to support the strategic goals:

- Enabling the Assembly to be as effective as possible through the support we provide, including through the impact of the next stages of our ICT Strategy
- Enhanced bilingual services
- Better engagement with people in Wales
- Making the most of our Estate
- Complete readiness for the transition to, and new challenges of, the Fifth Assembly.

Recommendation

The Assembly Commission is delighted with the positive engagement by Members and their staff who have seen the value of innovative and tailored CPD programmes. Given new powers and responsibilities and the new Members expected in May 2016, the Assembly Commission should consider building on the experience of the Fourth Assembly by developing an innovative and needs-led programme for the Fifth Assembly.



Strategic Goal: Provision of Outstanding Parliamentary Support

Strength in delivering Assembly services

Throughout the Fourth Assembly, the Assembly Commission provided strong leadership and provided strategic focus on the provision of the best services possible to our stakeholders and, in particular, the provision of support to Assembly Members. As a small legislature, where powers and responsibilities have increased incrementally since 1999, Member-centric and creative services and solutions have been developed to ensure that they address the specific needs and range of functions that Assembly Members are required to carry out. Reputationally, this has put the Assembly in a strong and often enviable position when compared with other parliamentary institutions across the United Kingdom and beyond. This is borne out by an increasing number of visits by foreign parliamentarians who wish to explore in more detail how the Commission has delivered its responsibilities and by improved satisfaction results provided by Members and their staff across our range of services. This chapter notes some of the Commission's key highlights during the Fourth Assembly.

Induction and Continuous Professional Development

The Assembly election in 2011 saw 23 new Members returned to the Assembly with a further three Members returned in 2013 and 2015. A highly successful and envied programme of induction for new Members was delivered, ensuring that Members had the information they needed to undertake their new roles quickly and effectively. Feedback from new Members in their meetings with the Presiding Officer proved extremely valuable and demonstrated that Commission staff had been attentive and knowledgeable, ensuring that their early days at the Assembly were highly regarded.

Information from these meetings, face to face discussions with Members and their support staff and Assembly Committee feedback provided a wealth of information, enabling Commission staff to develop and deliver a needs-led and flexible programme of continuous professional development which was established for the Fourth Assembly. It offered a flexible and varied range of support and evolved throughout the five year term based on regular feedback. There was a significant focus on the business-related functions of the Assembly, with CPD activities focusing on effective scrutiny, supporting committee chairs in their leadership roles and developing the financial scrutiny capacity of the institution. Other aspects of the programme supported the work of Members and their staff in engaging with and representing their constituents, and included providing access to support on matters including welfare reform, domestic abuse, mental health first aid, social media skills and Welsh language tuition.

A formal review was undertaken in 2015, which demonstrated that this programme had been well received and maintained consistently high engagement levels. In each year of the Fourth Assembly at least 40 Members and 150 of their staff took up CPD opportunities.



Working in both our Official Languages

Following the introduction of the National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012 and the Official Languages Scheme, the Assembly Commission has provided strong and ambitious leadership to ensure a step-change in the delivery of bilingual services to the National Assembly and to those who engage with us. Building on our previous experience since 1999 and our ambition to be recognised as a truly bilingual institution, the Commission's focus has been centred on four key areas:

- To provide innovative, tailored support to enable people to use both languages;
- To make the best use of technology to enable more efficient bilingual working;
- To develop the Welsh language skills and confidence of Assembly staff in providing that support; and
- To share the things that work for us with the rest of Wales and the multilingual world beyond our borders.

To ensure that the Commission deliver their statutory responsibilities, maintaining the Assembly's reputation as a bilingual parliamentary organisation and to raise the bar for bilingual service delivery, the following achievements have been embedded across the organisation:

- Working with Microsoft, Welsh was included into the Microsoft Translator software and launched world-wide in the Senedd in 2014. This transformed ways of working by enabling world-wide users to translate from one language to the other directly from Microsoft supported applications. This led to a change in the ways we communicate as an organisation, both for non-Welsh speakers and for professional translators. Non-Welsh speakers are able to get the gist of correspondence received in Welsh, and translators' use of machine translation has led to an overall increased efficiency of around 20 per cent. This has released internal staff resource to be used in other priority areas and faster turn-around of translation.
- Collaboration with Microsoft has continued in order to improve the facility and the Translation Service has also liaised with other bilingual public sector organisations to demonstrate the benefits of machine translation, as well as encouraging organisations to share data with us to improve the quality of the translation system.
- We launched our Bilingual Skills Strategy in April 2015 to refocus staff resources and change organisational culture, so that bilingual working is the norm and we are able to deliver a high quality bilingual service to Members and the public. This has led to an organisation-wide skills audit to inform the development of language plans in each of our service areas. This has enabled recruiting officers to consider a team's capacity to deliver bilingual services prior to advertising a vacancy.
- The range of formal Welsh language learning enjoyed by Assembly Members and staff has continued throughout the Fourth Assembly. In addition, the appointment in November 2014 of a staff Welsh language tutor has proved successful because of the varied and tailored approach on offer. This has included one-to-one mentoring sessions, formal lessons and more informal learning activities for individuals and groups, from absolute beginners to advanced learners.
- Following a pilot across four Assembly Committees, the Commission increased the availability of private Committee papers in both official languages further facilitating Members' ability to work in the language of their choice.
- Increasing the visibility of those who are fluent or learning Welsh by designing lanyards, which encourage the proactive use of Welsh as an everyday language has been extremely popular both

inside and outside the National Assembly, with more and more organisations ordering supplies for their staff across Wales.

Progress has been significant in the last two years and this is evidenced in the 2014 Assembly Member survey results, where working in the language of their choice achieved the highest score of all areas surveyed. This score was maintained in the 2015 survey.

Supporting our vision for world class parliamentary committees

The Assembly's committees are at the very heart of the democratic process, holding Ministers and the Welsh Government to account, enabling the public to directly influence politics and playing a vital role in making laws for Wales. The Assembly Commission, responsible for ensuring that Assembly committees are fully resourced to fulfil their functions, initiated a review of that support and in December 2013 its report was launched. It articulated the Commission's ambition for Assembly committees to be world class by demonstrably improving the quality of policy outcomes, legislation, public services and government spending for society as a whole in Wales. Noting that their work should be strategic and rigorous, the Assembly Commission stated that committees should be respected, accessible, influential and act with integrity and independence. Since then, the Assembly Commission has continued to support and promote the approach to deliver world class committees:

- Unique among UK legislatures, each committee is supported by an integrated team, made up of clerks, researchers, outreach and communications staff, lawyers and translators who provide different aspects of specialist advice to deliver high quality, innovative services.
- A continued investment in a dedicated EU Office in Brussels is recognition of the importance of supporting and promoting the EU-related work of the Assembly and committees.
- Continuous professional development opportunities for committees and Chairs have been developed and improved.
- Further strengthening of the culture of continuous improvement in our support helps ensure that activity is Member-led and tailored to their needs.
- In recognition of the pressure placed on Assembly Members, the Commission provides more concise, tailored research briefings, and there is increased availability of private papers in both official languages.
- To broaden the range of information available to committees, greater use of external expert advice is available when required.
- Committees have adopted innovative approaches to public consultations which has not only empowered new and hard to reach audiences to contribute to their work, but is increasingly recognised by UK legislatures as a model of best practice.
- Committees have developed innovative ways of presenting their work to different audiences, such as through social media and more accessible reporting formats.



Supporting legislative output

Given the increased volume and complexity of legislative scrutiny undertaken during the Fourth Assembly, the Commission has ensured that the staff and services provided to support larger and more wide-ranging Bills have complemented its vision for World class committees. Work from introduction, through scrutiny and the amendment process to final approval is undertaken bilingually with our Acts carrying equal legal status in both Welsh and English. Given the complexity of Wales' conferred powers settlement (illustrated by the number of referrals to the Supreme Court of Assembly Bills), staff have effectively and proactively managed the increased demand for in-depth legal advice on legislative competence.

It is essential that high quality support is in place for legislative scrutiny and amendment, as it is for the scrutiny of Welsh Government policy and financial decisions. A step change in the volume of both Government and back-bench Member-led Bills has required flexibility in the way we organise support for legislative scrutiny. Effective capacity planning has enabled us to deliver flexibly the range of services required to enable a Committee to undertake its scrutiny role effectively. The Commission supported an initiative to build and improve the legislative drafting skills of Commission lawyers, through coaching and mentoring from an experienced former Parliamentary Counsel. Three Assembly Bills introduced by Assembly Members have been produced through this initiative, including the Holiday Caravan Sites (Wales) Bill; the Financial Education and Inclusion (Wales) Bill; and the Safe Nurse Staffing Levels (Wales) Bill.

The scrutiny of Bills has, without doubt, dominated the work programmes of some committees, with timescales and volume largely determined by the Welsh Government. A Bill, once introduced, becomes the responsibility of the Assembly (not the Welsh Government) and, as we expect the number of Bills and their complexity to increase in the Fifth Assembly, and as the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee has notably recommended that Fifth Assembly committees seek to undertake greater 'pre' and 'post' legislative scrutiny, it is vital that staff support structures remain flexible and responsive to the needs on individual committees.

A list of Acts passed by the Assembly since 2011 can be found here: www.assembly.wales/acts.

The constitutional landscape

Throughout the Fourth Assembly, the Assembly Commission has been actively involved in discussions about the future constitutional settlement for Wales. Initially, through the **Commission on Devolution in Wales** (the Silk Commission), the Presiding Officer provided strong and convincing evidence to safeguard future constitutional changes to enable the Assembly to realise its potential for future generations. The Assembly Commission has focused its attention on the support and services provided to Members to ensure that they are fully prepared for the implications of constitutional change.

The Wales Act 2014 has already come into force, giving the Assembly tax-raising powers for the first time and implementing many of the recommendations of the Silk Commission's first report. Under the leadership of the Assembly Commission, officials have been drawing in and developing in-house expertise to ensure that Members are well equipped to deliver the enhanced role that tax-raising powers demand.

The Scottish Independence Referendum in September 2014 also gave a renewed urgency to pan-UK constitutional change and triggered new processes in each of the nations. The Secretary of State for Wales announced in October 2014 his intention to secure a cross-party consensus based on the second Silk Commission report, which considered the Assembly's legislative competence.

The Presiding Officer has consistently promoted her three priorities for constitutional change:

- enhancing the capacity of the Assembly by increasing its size;
- embedding the sovereignty and permanence of the Assembly, and;
- moving towards a clearer, workable devolution settlement that could be delivered through a reserved powers model.

In January 2015, the Assembly Commission published its report, “The Future of the Assembly: ensuring its capacity to deliver for Wales”. A copy of that report can be found on this [page](#). Following the incremental devolution of further powers since 1999 and expected intensity of the increased legislative and fiscal responsibilities, the Commission set out its argument to increase the size of the Assembly from 60 Assembly Members to between 80 and 100 Members. The Commission provided a robust and costed case as a major contribution to ongoing considerations about the devolution of further powers to Wales. This was driven by the desire to give elected Members a realistic opportunity to scrutinise the policy, administration, spending and legislative proposals of the Welsh Government as robustly as the people of Wales deserve; made comparison with local, national and international elected institutions and recognised that the 43 backbench Members who hold these responsibilities through their committee and plenary work are too thinly spread.

The St David’s Day Announcement made by the Secretary of State for Wales in February 2015, provided a basis for devolution of further powers to Wales. Whilst recognising its limited scope, the Presiding Officer welcomed the announcement as setting out a good basis for institutional reform to advance discussion on the devolution of further powers.

Following the publication of a draft Wales Bill in October 2015, the Presiding Officer said:

“I am pleased that the draft Bill addresses the UK Government’s important St. David’s Day commitment to give the Assembly power over its own internal arrangements and electoral matters.

However, I am disappointed with the way in which the move from a Conferred Powers model to a Reserved Powers model has been dealt with in the draft Bill. On this issue, I have made it clear that my support for the Bill is conditional on it meeting three key criteria: clarity, workability, and no roll-back of the Assembly’s existing powers. Unfortunately, I believe the current draft would amount to a backwards step for the National Assembly and would not deliver the lasting constitutional settlement for Wales, and the UK as a whole. If the UK Government proceed as presently proposed, I would anticipate almost immediate calls for yet another Wales Bill, something that none of us wishes to see. I am therefore encouraged by the Secretary of State’s commitment to continued dialogue to achieve a lasting settlement.”

Following the presentation of **detailed evidence** to the pre-legislative scrutiny inquiries of the House of Commons' Welsh Affairs Select Committee and the Assembly's Constitutional and Legislative Affairs (CLA) Committee, the Presiding Officer continued to lead positive and constructive discussions with the Secretary of State to press for a Wales Bill that would stand the test of time. Instigated by the Presiding Officer, the Assembly held an unprecedented three hour debate on the draft Bill and the report of the CLA Committee in January 2016. As the Fourth Assembly is dissolved prior to the election in May 2016, the Wales Bill is expected to commence its scrutiny in the Houses of Parliament.

The Wales Bill will devolve competence to the Assembly over its own operational and electoral arrangements, largely as a result of the case presented by the Presiding Officer and the Commission, which was supported by the Silk Commission. If the Bill receives Royal Assent, this will be a lasting and important area of work for the Fifth Assembly and the next Presiding Officer and Commission to build on.

Recommendation

The Wales Bill foresees the devolution of powers with the potential to make significant changes for the Assembly. Assembly Commission leadership will be important if new electoral powers are devolved on the future size of the Assembly and the related question of the resources required to deliver an effective institution. The new Assembly Commission will need to ensure that resources are available and aligned to deliver emerging changes together with the necessary support and services to Assembly Members.



Building Links with the independent Remuneration Board

The Remuneration Board was set up in 2010 as an independent body to determine Assembly Members' pay and allowances. Following the Assembly Commission meeting in April 2014, in which the strategy for the remainder of the Fourth Assembly and the planning required for complete readiness for transition to, and new challenges of the Fifth Assembly, were discussed, the Presiding Officer wrote to the Chair of the Remuneration Board. Her letter shared the Commission's strategic thinking to ensure that the Board's future proposals reflected the challenge, magnitude and complexity of the responsibilities that fall to existing and future Assembly Members.

“The challenges for the remainder of this Assembly and for our successors after the 2016 election are significant. We will be cementing our position as the national democratic forum for Wales and acquiring new responsibilities for taxation, borrowing and possibly further policy responsibilities. We will tackle these challenges with just 60 Members - small by international standards, smaller than many local authorities in Wales and by far the smallest legislature in the UK. This already places an enormous burden on Members, in particular those in opposition and on the back benches who carry sole responsibility for legislative, financial and policy scrutiny.”

The Commission sought to ensure that the independent Remuneration Board fully recognised the breadth and demanding nature of the role of Assembly Members and urged the Board to keep talking and listening to Members in order that those challenges could be fully understood and tackled. As the Board was consulting on its Determination for the Fifth Assembly, a joint meeting was held in November 2014 which led to further consideration of Member and support staff equality monitoring, Members' future pension arrangements and a potential apprenticeship scheme for political groups represented at the Assembly.

The Assembly Commission would like to place on record its thanks to the former members of the Remuneration Board. The Board's work was recognised in a Senedd debate on the Assembly Commission's budget in November 2015. The debate emphasised the importance of the independence of the Board and the removal of Assembly Members from the process of determining their own pay and allowances. It was widely recognised that Board members played an important role in ensuring confidence that public money is spent with probity, accountability, value for money and transparency. The Assembly Commission is delighted to have attracted such high calibre individuals to serve in the Board's second five year term.

Recommendation

The Assembly Commission and the Remuneration Board respectively decide the services and financial support Members require to undertake their roles effectively. To share strategic thinking on new or emerging priorities, the new Assembly Commission should consider further joint meetings with the Remuneration Board.



A modern democracy with the right tools

Since its inception in 1999, the National Assembly has been viewed as a modern democratic institution that has embraced information technology as an integral part of its core business functions. Building on decisions of the previous Assembly Commission from 2007-11, and based on their own experience and Member feedback, Commissioners led an innovative, business-focused programme to transfer the Assembly's ICT services from an outsourced, shared service arrangement with Welsh Government, to in-house delivery.

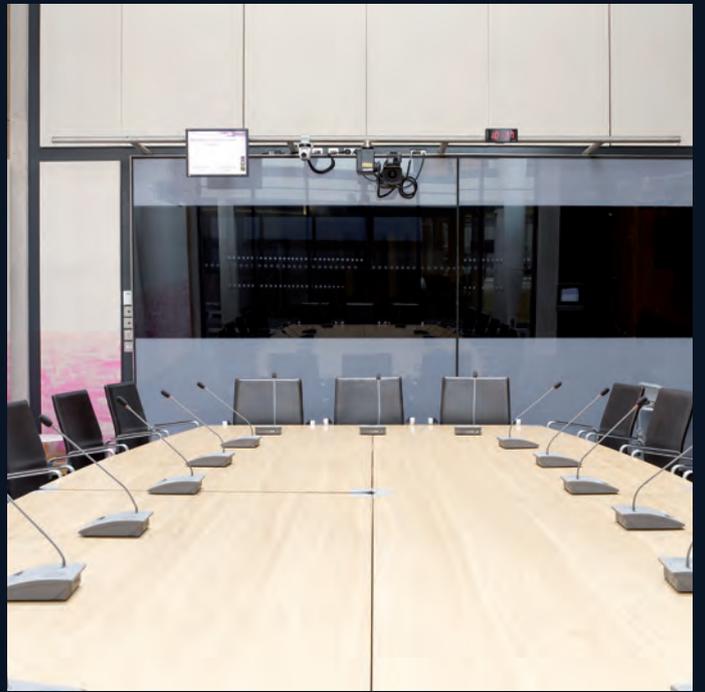
The vision for the Future ICT Services Transition Programme was to provide a service specifically designed for the Assembly's needs. Its aims were to return control over investment and development to the Commission; to introduce flexibility and innovation into ICT solutions to support the business; to do all of this within the existing ICT budget; and to release funds to deliver the ICT Strategy. Significant improvement to services to Members, both at Cardiff Bay and across Wales, lay at the heart of this major change.

The Assembly Commission provided the strategic and proactive leadership necessary to ensure that this critical transition was planned, managed and governed to the highest standard. The 18-month programme was completed on time and under budget in 2014 and has since been recognised as an exemplar by external auditors and the Assembly Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

Some of the benefits now being delivered include:

- Highest ever levels of user satisfaction with ICT, from Members and support staff;
- Upgraded networks to constituency offices to improve services at lower cost;
- Greater control over time, cost and delivery creating capability and capacity to address new, more creative and flexible ways of working;
- Use of secure cloud services to improve accessibility and resilience;
- An in-house applications management and development function to provide new ICT applications;
- Greater use of Wales-based SME suppliers when we need additional expertise;
- The building of an integrated replacement Plenary Business System, due for deployment in 2016;
- Annual savings of some £700,000 arising from in-house service provision;
- The release of £400,000 from the ICT running costs for reinvestment into the Assembly ICT infrastructure, to improve the reliability and resilience and reduce future operational support and maintenance costs;
- Replacement of the previous audio-visual equipment support contract with an in-house solution, which has delivered savings of around £400,000 per annum;
- Replacement of the old telephony contract has saved in the order of £180,000 per annum;
- A new platform for our internet services with work on a new website; expected to be delivered for the Fifth Assembly.

The Assembly Commission is delighted with these outcomes and the long term vision to continue providing flexible, cost-effective solutions, dictated by user needs. Flexibility will be the cornerstone of the ICT Strategy in readiness, potentially, of an expanded Assembly which will require increased services in the future.



Becoming a leading open and easy to engage parliament with digitally accessible services

Looking to the future, the world is changing rapidly and Assembly services need to continually adapt and respond to the challenges this brings. People's experience of using digital services in their everyday lives is rapidly increasing expectations. How people engage with the political environment is changing, including expectations of transparency and accessibility of information. At the same time, Members carry challenging workloads and those pressures will continue in the next Assembly. Broader economic pressures also require us to continuously demonstrate value for money in all aspect of our services.

As the Assembly Commission considered the conclusions of the Review of Reporting, it recognised the need for taking more radical steps over the next few years to transform how we manage and use Assembly business information, to ensure that the Assembly maintains its position as a leading digital parliament that is open, accessible and easy to engage with.

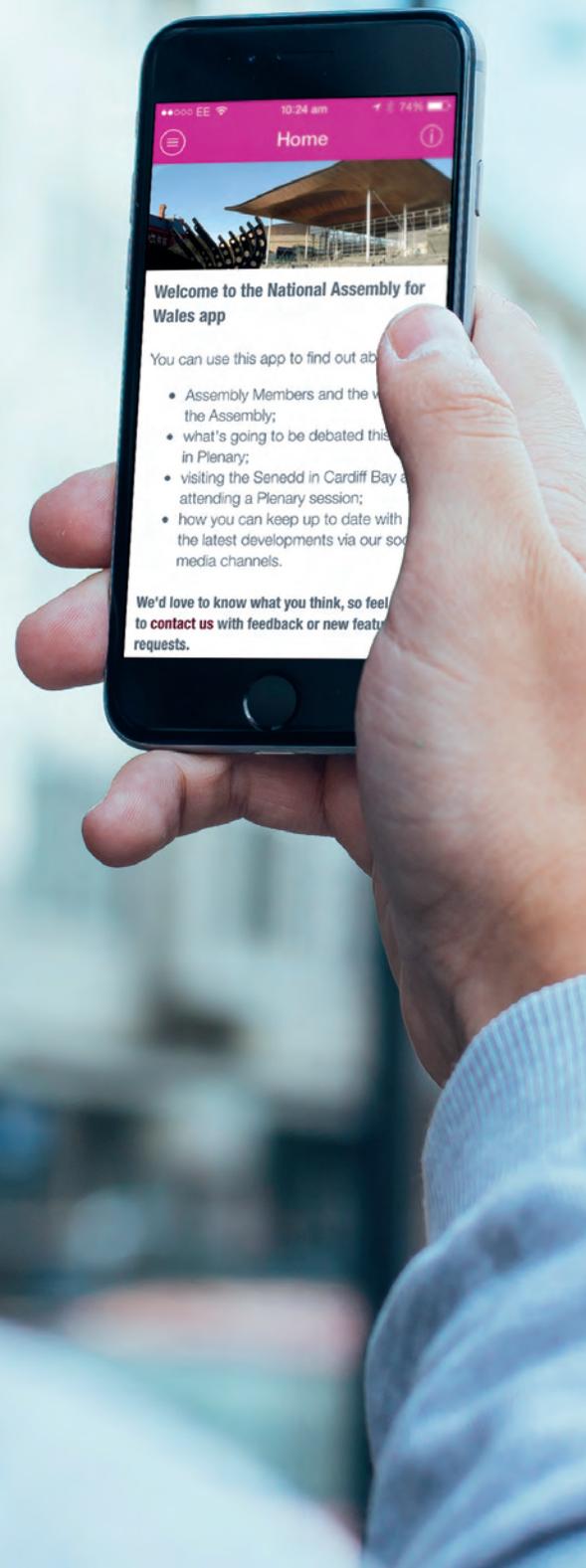
While we have made great strides in this area as illustrated in the next chapter, the Assembly Commission recognises that there is more that we could do. The website is an important platform for our digital services and the Assembly Commission is committed to ensuring that the website delivers what Members and the public need. A major revision of the website is underway and we will be delivering improvements to our website by the start of the Fifth Assembly.

A further example is the move towards publishing more open data. Early in 2015 we published the first Assembly open data sets, including the data in the Record of Proceedings. This enables other people to take our data and use it in different ways for their own audiences, potentially enabling much wider engagement and re-use of our information.

Recommendation

In an increasingly digital world, making the best use of Assembly business information through digital technology will be a defining characteristic of the world class Parliament that the Assembly strives to be. Excellent service provision and democratic engagement will increasingly require excellence in digital and information management

The new Assembly Commission will need to consider how to make the most of these opportunities for the benefit of Members and the people of Wales, to enable us to respond effectively to the challenges ahead.



Tŷ Hywel

As more than 100,000 people use the Tŷ Hywel entrance annually, the Assembly Commission proposed a range of accessibility improvements to ensure that visitors enjoyed the comfort and convenience expected of a modern democratic institution.

Enhancements to the entrance area reduced the practice of visitors, including young people undertaking educational visits, having occasionally to queue outside the main doors in all weather conditions. The Commission ensured that people with disabilities, who previously had to use a separate entrance, were provided with equality of access to the estate.

Cosmetic improvements ensured that our security arrangements were more effective while also improving the visitor experience. In view of the shortage of meeting and event spaces in Tŷ Hywel, private meeting rooms for Members' use with their visitors and a flexible event space was created in addition to the upgrading of other meeting spaces.

Feedback from Members, visitors and staff has been resoundingly positive.

Croeso
Welcome

Strategic Goal: Engaging with the People of Wales and Promoting Wales

Overview

The Assembly Commission is proud of its achievements to engage with a broader audience across Wales and beyond in its endeavours to create a better understanding of the important work that is undertaken at the Assembly. As a relatively young parliamentary institution serving all the diverse communities of Wales, the Commission has provided innovation and leadership in terms of how it communicates, its audience and to ensure that facilities across the estate are fit for purpose for all its visitors. This chapter notes some of the Commission's key highlights during the Fourth Assembly.

A Parliamentary Estate to be proud of

The Assembly's estate and its iconic buildings form a valuable and significant asset used to promote the Assembly and its work. Clearly the Senedd has continued to provide a draw for members of the public, international visitors and those with an interest in the political discussions that take place in it. As the principal democratic institution in Wales, visitor numbers on tours and visitor satisfaction levels have continued to increase. In January 2012, the Presiding Officer was delighted to welcome the millionth visitor to the Senedd. Receiving Trip Advisor's certificate of excellence in 2015 for consistently earning great reviews was another source of great pride to Commissioners.

The Assembly Commission reinforced its commitment to ensuring accessible public buildings that facilitate engagement with the Welsh public and promote Wales. To that end, it took a more strategic approach to investment in the estate to ensure that it supports the work of Members and reflects the Assembly's standing as Wales' principal democratic institution by developing a 10 year forward look investment programme based on robust condition surveys. This leadership has helped ensure continued positive feedback on the look and feel to Tŷ Hywel and the Senedd, which will continue into the next Assembly and beyond.

Amongst hundreds of events held across the estate between 2011 and 2016, the Senedd has hosted a range of nationally significant events which have attracted hundreds of visitors and well wishers to share in our pride. These occasions included:

- St David's Day celebrations to mark our national day;
- The Assembly's official opening by Her Majesty the Queen in 2011;
- A welcome home celebration event for Welsh Olympians and Paralympians in 2012;
- Remembrance services and related commemorations;
- Wales' Six Nations Grand Slam-winning national rugby team in 2012; and
- The Team Wales heroes celebration to officially welcome home Wales' Commonwealth Games athletes in 2014.

Youth Engagement and Education

The Assembly Commission's education service was already the envy of other parliaments and, throughout the Fourth Assembly, we have continued to see fantastic engagement either in school settings across Wales or in Siambr Hywel, our dedicated suite for young people who come to learn about the work of the Assembly. The Assembly Commission determined that the education service should refocus the approach for those of secondary school age and above to better engage the voters of tomorrow and to integrate their views into the Assembly's work. The development of the youth engagement work built on the strong foundation of our education service and was informed by the views of nearly 3,000 young people, gathered in 2013. The Commission developed its vision that the Assembly should be a world leader in youth engagement and, coupled with the huge appetite to get involved and have their say on issues that mattered to them, the Children and Young People Engagement Charter, was signed by the Presiding Officer and the Party Leaders in the Senedd in July 2014. This underpinned the Assembly's commitment to increasing engagement with the young people of Wales by allowing them to have their opinions heard and valued at the heart of Welsh democracy, enabling them to contribute to the future shape of Wales and Welsh democracy. Since then, three priority areas have become an integral part of our continuing engagement with young people:

- Youth engagement as an embedded part of the Assembly's policy and legislative work seeing almost 13,000 young people being directly included in the work of Assembly committees.
- Vote@16? – a national conversation with over 10,000 11-25 year olds on whether the voting age should be reduced to 16, with 53% saying that it should be and 79% stating that young people should learn about politics and elections. This was the biggest ever response to an Assembly consultation. It is anticipated that the power to legislate to lower the voting age will be devolved in the forthcoming Wales Bill.
- Working with new and more diverse audiences which has seen greater and more regular contact with the non-formal education sector; a strengthening of our networks of youth groups and other organisations; and an improved offer to engage outside the school environment to involve young people from harder-to-reach groups.

While youth engagement is becoming an undoubted success, with new developments such as the Young Assembly's Ambassador Scheme, an improved website and the continued embedding of young people's engagement in committee work, the Commission has received representations to consider how forming a youth parliament might complement the excellent work being achieved on engaging young people with the work of the Assembly. In 2013, this was not the preferred option of the 3,000 young people who favoured further engagement via national conversations and broader participation in the Assembly's work. While the Commission has been able to reach a geographically broad and diverse group in our youth engagement work, there may be merit in exploring further whether there is an appetite in the future for a more formal structure to support the development of work undertaken to date. However, the Assembly Commission felt that this should be a decision for the new Commission of the Fifth Assembly.

Recommendation

That the new Assembly Commission reaffirms its commitment to engaging young people in the Assembly's work and considers whether there is merit in exploring options for a youth parliament.



Dy Gynulliad di
Dy lais di
Dy ffordd di

—
Your Assembly
Your say
Your way

Y Siarter Ymgysylltu â Phlant a Phobl Ifanc

Mae plant a phobl ifanc Cymru wedi dweud:

- Siaradwch gyda ni,
- Gwrandewch arnom ni, a
- Cymerwch ni o ddifrif.

Ar y dydd hwn, 16 Gorffennaf 2014, mae Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn ymrwymo i sicrhau bod pob plentyn a pherson ifanc yng Nghymru yn cael y cyfle i gyfrannu at ein gwaith.

Byddwn yn gwneud hyn drwy:

- Estyn allan ac annog cyfranogiad;
- Helpu pobl ifanc i drafod y materion sy'n effeithio arnynt hwy;
- Rhoi adborth a'r wybodaeth ddiweddaraf am gyfraniadau pobl ifanc i'n gwaith.

Byddwn ninnau'n disgwyl i bobl ifanc:

- Gymryd rhan yn ein gwaith a rhoi barn onest inni;
- Deall y gall gymryd llawer o amser i newid pethau ar ôl i rywun fynegi ei farn;
- Parchu safbwyntiau eraill a deall mai democratiaeth yw'r Cynulliad ac mae'n rhaid inni felly ystyried mwy nag un safbwynt.

Children and Young People Engagement Charter

The children and young people of Wales have said:

- Speak to us,
- Listen to us, and
- Take us seriously.

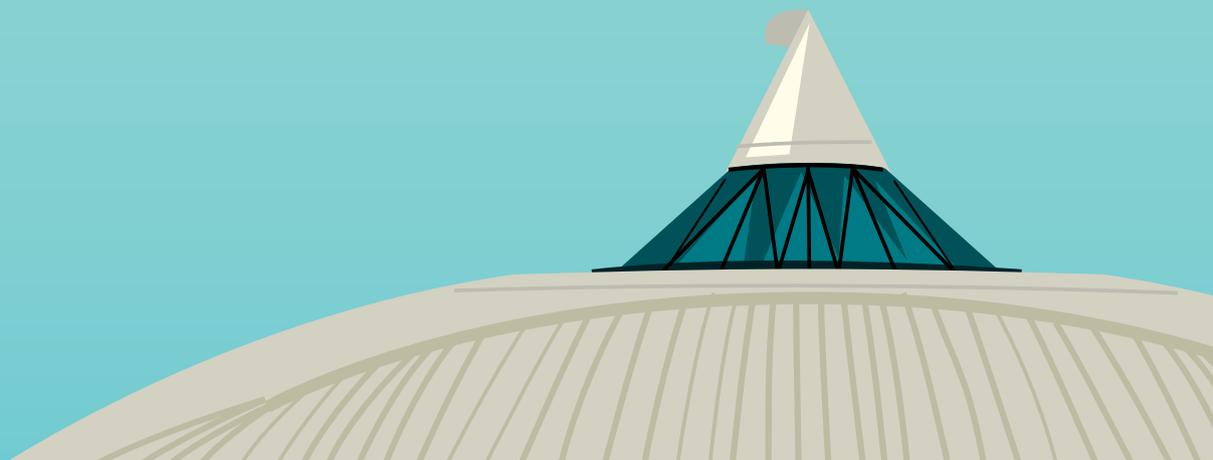
On this day, 16 July 2014, the National Assembly for Wales commits to making sure that every child and young person in Wales has the opportunity to contribute to our work.

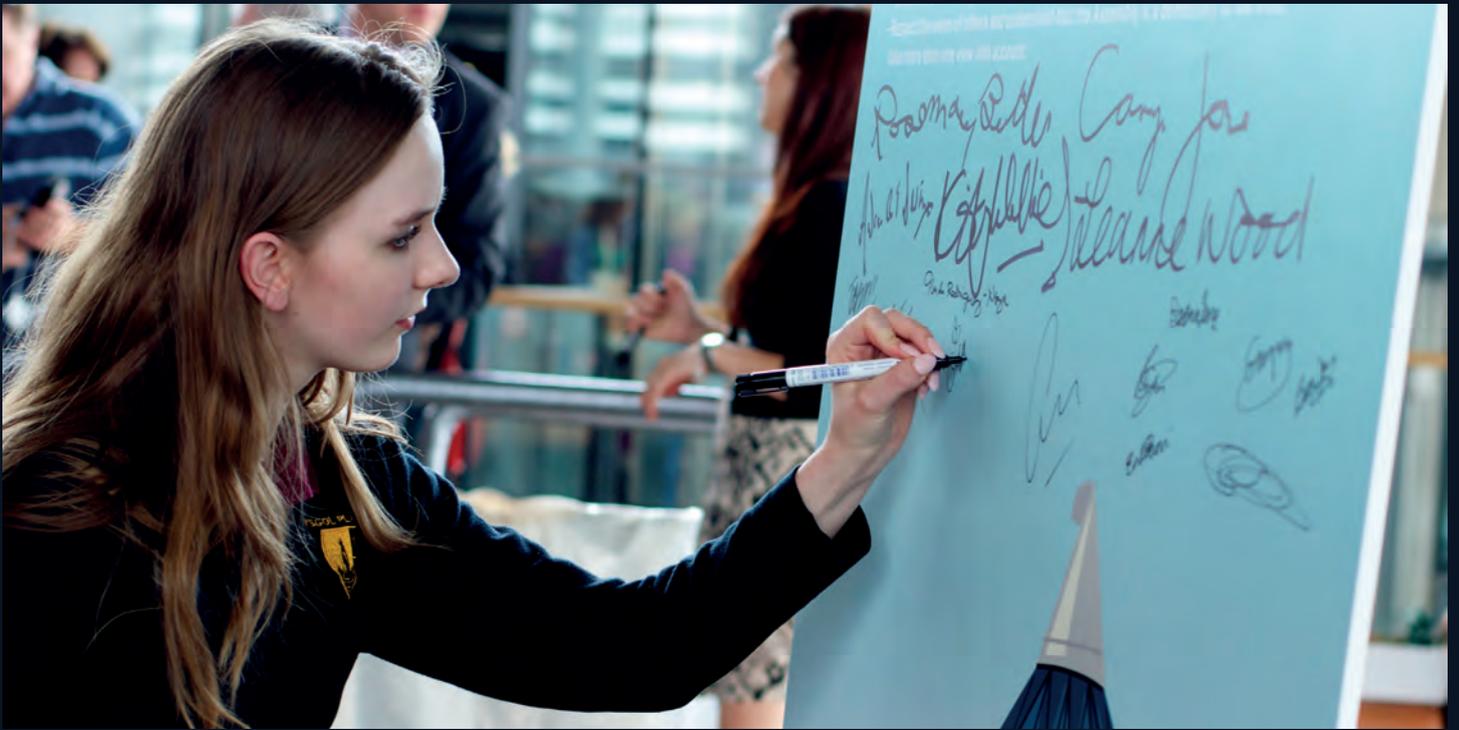
We will do this by:

- Reaching out and encouraging participation;
- Helping young people to debate the issues that affect them;
- Providing feedback and updates on young people's contributions to our work.

In return, we will expect young people to:

- Participate in our work and give us their honest opinion;
- Understand that it may take a long time to change things after they have had their say;
- Respect the views of others and understand that the Assembly is a democracy so we must take more than one view into account.





Recommendation

Building on the success of Senedd@Swansea and Senedd@Wrexham, the new Assembly Commission should consider building such engagement activities into its strategic communications plan.

Wy sy'n eich cynrychioli chi?
Who represents you?



bob person yng Nghymru yn cael
rychioli gan bum Aelod Cynulliad
dd yn cynrychioli eich etholaeth, a
war sy'n cynrychioli eich rhanbarth
Gymru. Gallwch gysylltu ag unrhyw un
pum Aelod Cynulliad am unrhyw beth
igwydd yn eich ardal leol.

gwybod pwy yw eich Aelod Cynulliad,
i: www.cynulliadcymru/aelodau

person in Wales is represented by five
mby Members. One who represents
constituency, and four who represent
region of Wales. You can contact any
ur five Assembly Members about
ething that's happening in your local

out who your Assembly Members are at:
www.assembly.wales/members

Mae Aelodau'r Cynulliad yn gmeud llawer
o'u gwaith yn y Senedd yn Mae Caerdydd.
Maen nhw'n cwrru adwywaith yr wythnos
yn y Siambr, sef Siambr drafod y Senedd.
Yn ystod y cyfarfodydd hyn, byddan nhw'n
trafod ac yn cymryd rhan mewn dadleuon ar
faterion sy'n effeithio eich bywyd bob dydd.

I gael gwybod beth maen nhw wedi bod yn
ei drafod, ewch i:
www.cynulliad.cymru/cyfarfod-llawn

Members do a lot of their work
ld in Cardiff Bay. They meet
k in the Siambr, the Senedd's
amber. During these meetings
s and debate issues affecting
day life.

Mae Aelodau'r Cynulliad yn eistedd ar
bwyllgorau hefyd. Grwpiau bach o Aelodau
yw'r pwyllgorau, ac maen nhw'n ystyried yr
hyn y mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn ei wneud
am faterion penodol. Yna, maen nhw'n
awgrymu sut y gall wella pethau.

I gael gwybod beth mae Aelodau'r Cynulliad
yn gweithio arny'n nhw ar hyn o bryd, ewch i:
www.cynulliadcymru/pwyllgorau

Assembly Members also sit on committees.
Committees are small groups of Assembly
Members who look at what the Welsh
Government is doing about certain issues.



Senedd@Wrexham and Senedd@Swansea

The Commission suggested that strategies should be developed to embed the Assembly's work into the hearts and minds of the Welsh public. For one week in March 2015, a trial initiative to take the Assembly on the road and to relocate some of its activities to demonstrate how the Assembly works for the whole of Wales was delivered in Wrexham. The activities consisted of a pop-up Assembly in several locations across Wrexham, outreach and youth engagement workshops for local organisations and educational sessions with schools in the local area. In addition, a series of events to raise awareness of the Vote@16? national conversation and the Presiding Officer's Women in Public Life and Democratic Deficit initiatives were successfully delivered. Over the course of the week, Assembly staff spoke directly to over 2,000 people and there was considerable coverage in the local press.

Building on this and following overwhelmingly positive feedback, this initiative was developed further and taken to Swansea in October 2015. An enhanced range of activities were organised including a legislative seminar, with the significant addition of three Assembly Committees conducting meetings locally during the week:

- Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee
- Public Accounts Committee
- Enterprise and Business Committee

In partnership with The Wave radio and the South Wales Evening Post, we achieved fantastic media coverage in the lead up and during the week, reaching over 300,000 people and culminating in all events being well-attended. The Assembly interacted in person with some 1,500 people during the week and over 500,000 through our media partnership and Radio Wales coverage. Partnering with local media had the additional benefit of taking the Assembly into local residents' living rooms and nearly 1,000 people visited the website during the week as a result of Senedd@Swansea, the majority of these visitors were from Swansea itself. Our article on the scrutiny of the First Minister was our most viewed blog to date. Given the extent of engagement, both face to face and across various platforms, the Assembly Commission believe that such initiatives should be considered in the Fifth Assembly.

Recommendation

The Assembly Commission values the highly important work of the Democratic Deficit campaign, ensuring that those who deliver and access the wide range of news platforms in Wales become more aware of the public policy differences. This area of work should continue to be developed into the Fifth Assembly to ensure that the media recognise those differences and that any future constitutional changes are understood and taken into account.



Addressing the Democratic Deficit in Wales

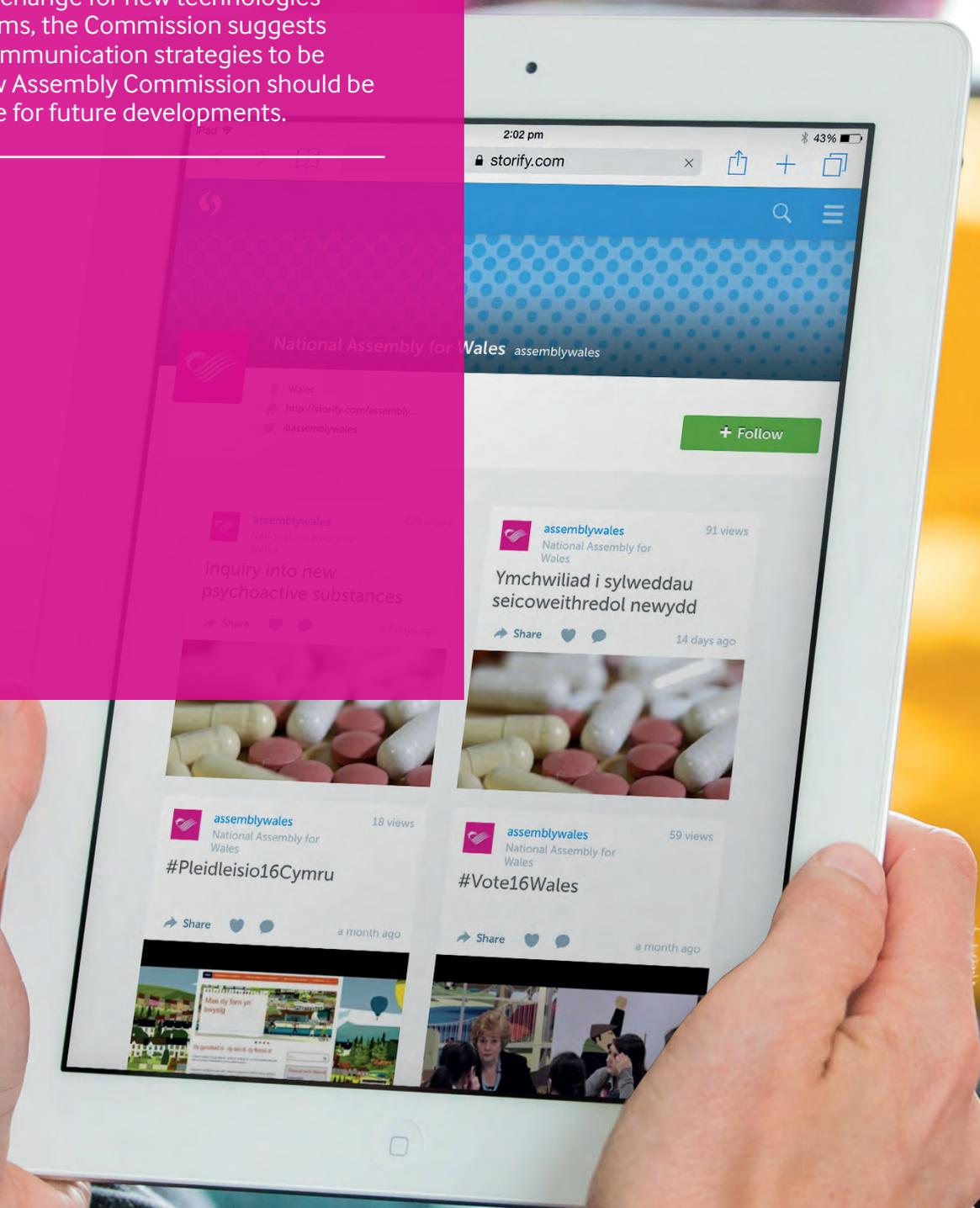
During the Fourth Assembly the Presiding Officer has pledged to work towards addressing the “Democratic Deficit” caused by large numbers of people in Wales consuming news and current affairs from UK broadcasters, newspapers and media organisations which often ignore the different public policy landscape in Wales compared to England. To that end she has sought to build partnerships with the media at a UK, Wales and Hyperlocal level, as well as with academia and other media organisations, to promote more coverage of the work of the National Assembly to Welsh audiences and to ensure that the issue remains at the top of the political agenda.

This work has included:

- **Engaging senior figures from the UK media**, including the Director General of the BBC, who now appear before the Assembly’s Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee on a regular basis to undergo scrutiny in relation to the BBC’s provision for its Welsh audiences, at both a Wales and network level;
- **Hosting high-level media seminars** to highlight the issue with panellists including Kevin Maguire, Associate Editor of the Daily Mirror; Peter Knowles, head of BBC Parliament; and Peter Riddell, Director of the Institute of Government and former Deputy Editor of the Times;
- **Developing partnerships with the emerging hyperlocal sector** by arranging “News days” in both South and North Wales to work with hyperlocals to encourage more coverage of the Assembly’s work;
- **Developing partnerships with Universities**, including Cardiff University’s Centre for Community Journalism and Glyndŵr University to develop that hyperlocal engagement;
- **Working with those academic partners, together with unions, the media and other journalistic organisations**, to develop opportunities for journalists at all levels to learn more about the Assembly’s work; and
- **Continuing to provide a strong Welsh voice in the BBC Charter review process**, including submissions to Assembly and House of Commons Committee inquiries on the issue.

Recommendation

Given the pace of change for new technologies and online platforms, the Commission suggests that any future communication strategies to be agreed by the new Assembly Commission should be sufficiently flexible for future developments.



Embracing Social Media

During the Fourth Assembly, we have significantly increased our use of online communications for engagement. At the beginning of the Fourth Assembly we had a small social media presence: on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Flickr. Over the past five years, Commission staff have responded to the changing digital communications landscape by increasing our use of online platforms for sharing information and encouraging feedback. We have also started to make website improvements, moving towards integrating our online content and taking advantage of engagement opportunities that arise from our use of online service, as opposed to using them as signposting alone.

Our Assembly committees have set up Twitter feeds to inform followers of developments in their business and activities, encouraging discussion around specific topics. The Assembly also has an extremely successful blog, In Brief, run by the Research Service, which offers articles and statistics about topical issues and regularly achieves over 4,000 hits a month. We have also made use of platforms like LinkedIn, Storify, and Slate to create more engaging products with our information and have experimented with Twitter question and answer sessions, web-chats, and online surveys. The development of a 'sharing' facility from Senedd.tv will see even greater engagement with our outputs, as audiences have the power to clip and share videos of Assembly proceedings. The Commission is particularly pleased that developments in the area of online communications have enabled the Assembly to engage with new and diverse audiences and communities across Wales. With over 50 accounts providing information in both our official languages, the Assembly reaches over 30,000 profiles on Twitter and we have had 75,000 views of our YouTube videos. We are seeing audiences increase year on year and hope to continue this trend for the Fifth Assembly and beyond.

Reflecting our Diverse Society

The Assembly Commission has been committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and respecting human rights both as an employer and service provider. The Assembly's Equality Plan 2012-16 details how the Assembly Commission will promote equality, value diversity and identify and remove potential barriers to equality for our staff, Assembly Members, their staff and members of the public.

Throughout this Assembly, the Commission has considered and agreed Annual Equality Reports, providing updates on progress made on actions set out in its Equality Plan 2012-16. The Reports cover work that teams across the Assembly undertook to promote equality over the previous year, to meet requirements under the Equality Act 2010. Driving its ambition to become a leader and to set a strong example to organisations across Wales and beyond, the Assembly Commission has promoted and supported a suite of improvements to ensure that barriers are removed, accessibility is improved and that an inclusive culture continues to thrive.

The headline achievements across the last five years include:

- The Assembly further improving its recognition as a LGBT friendly employer being ranked at No.3 in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index of Top 100 UK employers for 2016 and named this year's Top Welsh Public Sector Employer for the third year running;
- Gaining external recognition from Action on Hearing Loss, the National Autistic Society, Top Employers for Working Families reaching the Top 10 in 2012, awarded the highly prestigious Investors in People Gold Standard and, in 2014, The Times Top 50 Employer for Women;
- The appointment of a BME Action Plan Coordinator to take forward the Commission's commitment to support the recruitment, retention and advancement of BME staff.
- Improvements to the Assembly estate to continue to enhance accessibility;
- The launch of online equality training for Members and their staff, and training on Dementia Friends, Disability Confidence and Supporting LGB staff;
- Introducing a more formalised system of Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to ensure that we have a consistent approach across the organisation.



Recognition of very good practice from our own internal audit conclusions was further supported by external awards as indicated below:



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE** | Gold



**Top Employers
for Working Families**

2013

Top 21

THE  **TIMES**
**TOP 50
EMPLOYERS FOR
WOMEN**
2014

in partnership with



**Stonewall
TOP 100
EMPLOYERS**
2015
**100 CYFLOGWR
GORAU**

**LOUDER
THAN
WORDS**



The National
Autistic Society
Cymru



Cymdeithas
Genedlaethol
Awtistiaeth
Cymru



Gwobr
Ystyriol o
Awtistiaeth

we're supporting

AGE POSITIVE



Women in Public Life

In 2012 the Presiding Officer hosted a series of regional seminars on the theme of Women in Public Life. An examination of the barriers to increasing women's representation, outlined in the "Who runs Wales" report produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, was undertaken. Panels of influential women from different sectors were engaged in discussions looking at the barriers to participation. Key findings from the individual seminars informed the content for a national conference where panels of experts and guest speakers offered practical solutions for enhancing the representation of women in public life.

At the conference the Presiding Officer was mandated to assess action within political parties to address gender representation; asked to provide access to women role models who had succeeded in traditionally male-dominated occupations; to provide a centralised resource for public appointments and to create a development scheme providing training, mentoring and role shadowing at the highest level. Each of these areas were developed during the course of the #POWiPL campaign and a Women in Democracy Caucus was formed with representatives from each of the Welsh political parties. The Caucus reported in March 2015 and has continued to meet to assess progress.

This video explains why this campaign was developed:



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_Fsw_BlfPw

The Women in Public Life lectures series attracted the following high profile speakers and attracted widespread interest as well as consistent feedback regarding the inspiration that attendees felt:

- Helen Clark – Former New Zealand Prime Minister and administrator of the United Nations Development Programme;
- Baroness Susan Greenfield – International Scientist;
- Shami Chakrabarti – Human Rights Campaigner;
- Janet Street Porter – Journalist and Broadcaster;
- Meera Vijayann – Journalist and Political activist;
- Ann Hewlett – International Economist;
- Julia Gillard – Former Australian Prime Minister.

As evidenced by the large number of those who have engaged with the Women in Public Life campaign, there has been a significant momentum to ensure that women's participation increases across the board. At the end of the Fourth Assembly, the Presiding Officer has sought to ensure an enduring legacy for this work as it is complimentary to other strategies being undertaken. Options to ensure that this work has a sustainable future are currently being explored.

Women in Public Life portal

The Women in Public Life portal, launched in October 2013 and run in collaboration with Women Making a Difference, quickly became a focal point to find out the latest opportunities and information on public life in Wales. Through the use of social media we were able to keep hundreds of women in Wales up to date on the latest vacancies and information on public life in Wales.

The Women in Public Life Development Scheme, launched in January 2014 and delivered on behalf of the Assembly by Chwarae Teg and Cardiff Business School, provided intensive personal development and skills training, one to one mentoring support and role shadowing opportunities at the highest levels to motivate and encourage a number of participants across Wales to be able to successfully apply for public appointments at all levels locally, regionally and nationally.

Portal - 800 hits per day on average

Newsletter – 600 recipients per month

4,000+ followers on our combined social media channels

#POWiPL

Wenrywod
Bywyd Cyhoeddus
Women
in Public Life



British Isles and Mediterranean Regional Conference

In May 2014, the National Assembly for Wales' Branch of the CPA hosted the British Isles and Mediterranean Regional (BIMR) Conference at the Senedd. The conference theme was Equality of Access to Democracy, reflecting some of the strategic priorities of the Presiding Officer and Assembly Commission. Participants took part in 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.

This was the first time the Assembly had hosted this prestigious conference since 2002, attracting over 50 delegates from 15 UK and international legislatures. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, reflecting the success of the conference as a whole.



International Engagement

From the outset, the Assembly Commission has continued to provide strategic leadership to ensure that Welsh democracy is given sufficient prominence on the world stage and that partnerships with international parliamentarians were established or strengthened. Increasingly, we have seen other parliaments engage with us as we are seen as a distinct, innovative and progressive international legislature. Areas of significant interest have been the use of technology in the Siambr, our continuous professional development programme, our approach to youth engagement, gender representation and operating a bilingual legislature.

International visits hosted at the Assembly:

- 20 in 2011
- 23 in 2012
- 30 in 2013
- 34 in 2014
- 29 in 2015

Throughout the Fourth Assembly, the Presiding Officer, Assembly Commissioners and Assembly Members have represented the institution and participated extensively in the work of international networks and fora, including the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) and the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE). Attendance at international commemorations have further strengthened our partnerships. Examples include:

- The Presiding Officer and Party Leaders took part in the Service of Dedication of the new Welsh National Memorial in Pilckem Ridge; and
- The Commission visit to Flanders to attend Langemark, where the Presiding Officer laid a wreath on behalf of the Assembly.

At European level, the Assembly has continued to play a positive role in engaging with the EU policy and law-making process on key areas of interest to Wales and strengthened the relationship with Welsh MEPs. The Assembly Commission has continued to support our EU Office to lead on the production of publications to support Members' work on EU issues, including the EU Weekly Update, EU Policy Updates and blog posts and making effective use of the @SeneddEurope Twitter feed. Much of this content is finding a wider readership among stakeholders and the wider public in Wales as it aims to raise awareness of key priorities for Wales, explaining their relevance and potential impact, as well as tracking dossiers through the EU decision-making process.

Outward visits to other institutions:

- 18 in 2011
- 28 in 2012
- 33 in 2013
- 36 in 2014
- 29 in 2015

Improving access to our parliamentary Record of Proceedings

Early in 2014, the Assembly Commission initiated a wide-ranging review to explore new opportunities for our approach to the reporting of our proceedings, including how it could be used to increase engagement and understanding of the work of the Assembly. An in-depth analysis of the processes, staffing resources and technology was undertaken alongside a public consultation to determine a user-led focus to future requirements. Users of the Record of Proceedings wanted it to be available earlier, to be more accessible, re-usable and searchable. The Commission's vision for the future of reporting became:

“Our bilingual Parliamentary official report is fit for communication in an evolving digital world, is reusable, available earlier, and accessible. Reporting on proceedings is an integral part of our communications strategy to make Assembly proceedings more transparent so that the people of Wales understand what is being debated and decided by the Assembly.”

A number of efficiencies and improvements were introduced during the review process, including a new editing style enabling the written record to sit more comfortably alongside the audio visual version on Senedd.tv. In line with its vision, the Assembly Commission endorsed a number of further changes which would see other improvements introduced at the beginning of the Fifth Assembly, with others introduced incrementally:

- As soon as possible after the first hour of Plenary, a draft version of the Record will be published on the website and updated as the meeting progresses;
- A fully bilingual version of the Record will be available sooner than the current five day target;
- Members' pages on the Assembly website will feature their latest speeches and voting records with more sophisticated searching facilities introduced at a later date;
- Users will be able to access the Record and Committee transcripts in open data and publication in multiple formats will enable them to copy and paste its content for their own communication; and
- Improvements to how we present business-related information online by using the Record more effectively and displaying a rolling Record alongside Senedd.tv.

These improvements will enhance our digital engagement further. However, the Commission agreed that further integration was required across the Record, committee transcripts, Senedd TV, news releases and our social media channels to give them greater visibility on our internet homepage and our news services. Further work on emerging best practice in becoming a leading open digital parliament is currently being planned.

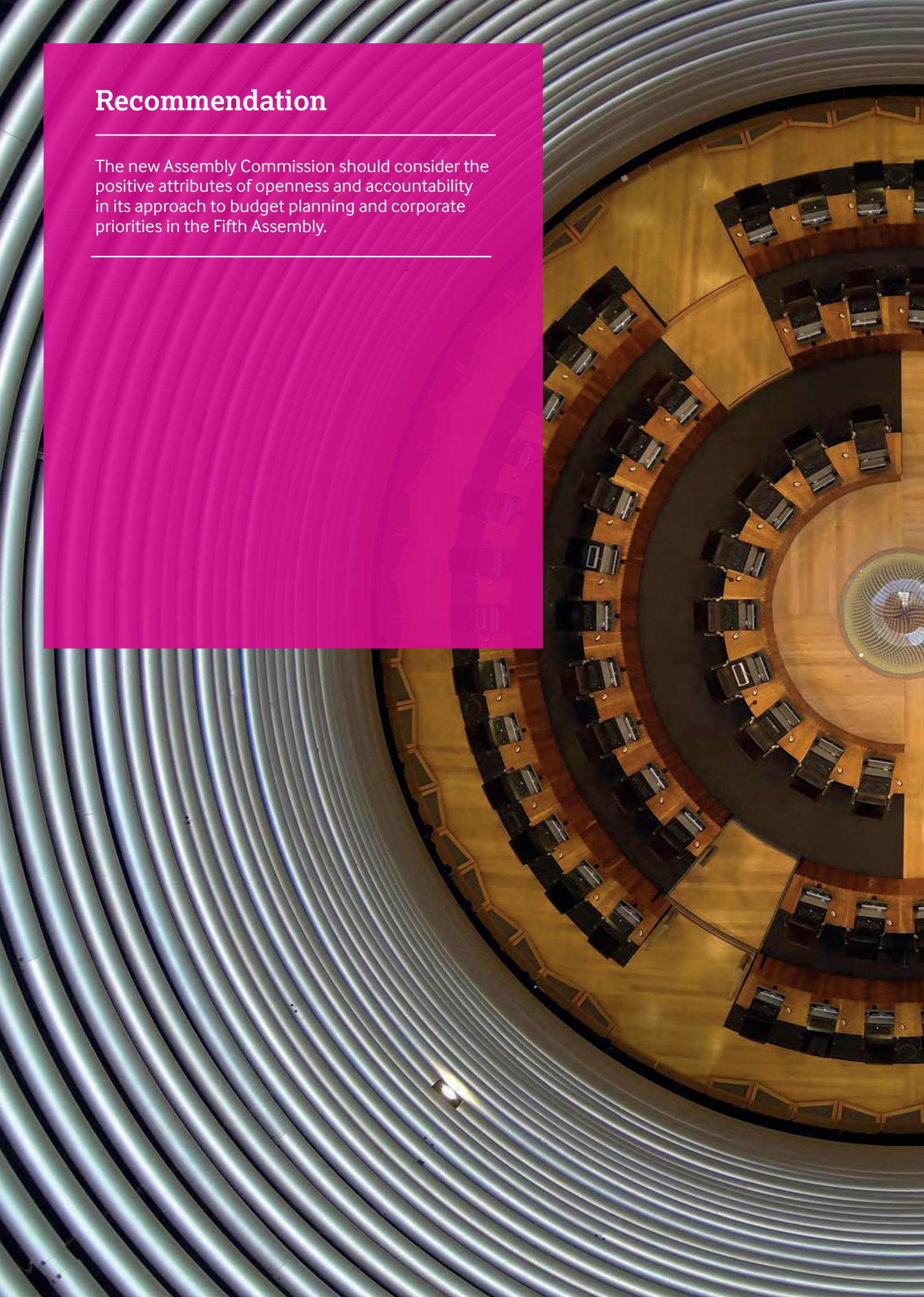
Recommendation

That the new Assembly Commission considers the conclusions of the Review of the Record of Proceedings and the longer term benefits and challenges of the ambition to become a leading open digital parliament.



Recommendation

The new Assembly Commission should consider the positive attributes of openness and accountability in its approach to budget planning and corporate priorities in the Fifth Assembly.



Strategic Goal: Using our Resources Wisely

Budget

The Commission provided strategic leadership in its approach to budget planning for the full duration of the Fourth Assembly. In 2011, the Commission set a clear three-year budget strategy for enhancing the capacity and capabilities of Assembly services to deliver the Commission's strategic goals:

- in support to Members and their new legislative responsibilities;
- in the estate as a venue for Wales;
- in communications and technology; and
- in how the Assembly works as an efficient corporate body.

Detailed plans underpinned the budget strategy allowing the Commission to take a long-term view of spending requirements, resulting in an approach that delivered greater clarity, transparency and consistency. The Commission ensured sufficient financial resources were available through its robust annual budget process, resulting in final budget proposals being presented to, and approved by, Assembly Members every autumn following scrutiny by the Assembly's Finance Committee. In December 2015 and building on progress and achievements over the previous five years, the Assembly approved the Commission budget for the first year of the Fifth Assembly. This budget puts the new Assembly in a positive financial position but provides the new Commission the flexibility to focus on new or emerging priorities during a period of significant constitutional change.

Governance overview

From the outset, the Assembly Commission has taken its governance responsibilities very seriously to ensure that the services provided were efficient, effective and delivered positive outcomes for Members and stakeholders. Multiple strands of oversight, including a comprehensive approach to governance, supported by independent advice and assurance, put the Commission in a highly regarded and positive position. The Commission's governance arrangements are considered to be a beacon of good practice. Continuous improvement was provided through scrutiny at Assembly committees such as the Finance and Public Accounts Committees. A strong link between the Assembly Commission Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Commission itself was provided by Angela Burns, as the Commissioner with responsibility for governance and, latterly, by David Melding. This section illustrates some of the highlights during the Fourth Assembly.

Scrutiny and Transparency

Opening itself for scrutiny through a range of evidence sessions at the Finance Committee has increased the transparency of the Assembly Commission's work. Targeted scrutiny of some of the Commission's key priorities, such as proposals for new ICT services and the Official Languages Scheme as well as detailed budget scrutiny and the development of corporate performance indicators, enabled the Commission and stakeholders to engage in an open way, enhancing its accountability through this process. Engaging with the Assembly's scrutiny committees has been hugely positive and garnered support for the Commission's multiple year approach to budget planning.

Recommendation

A number of suggestions for the incoming Commission were highlighted in the review of effectiveness report, aimed at supporting the Commission in its on-going development as a high performing and effective 'governing board' into the Fifth Assembly. It is recommended that the new Assembly Commission considers these suggestions to ensure it exemplifies best practice.



Review of Effectiveness

The Corporate Governance Principles adopted by the Assembly Commission at its first meeting in 2011, required it to arrange an evaluation of its effectiveness from time to time. The Commission subsequently undertook three effectiveness reviews in relation to its role as a governing board during the course of the Fourth Assembly. Following two substantive reviews in 2013 and 2014, and one follow-up review, conducted by the Assembly's Head of Internal Audit, the concluding report highlighted the effective ways in which the current Commission discharged its functions. Key findings included:

Strategy

Just two months after the election in May 2011, the Commissioners published the Commission's Strategy, articulating the strategic goals over the lifetime of the Fourth Assembly and clearly setting a direction of travel for the Commission and its staff. Strategic focus and momentum was maintained throughout the Fourth Assembly. Exemplifying good practice, specific meetings were set aside with no set agenda to facilitate strategic and free thinking.

Budget and Investment Strategies

Early in the Fourth Assembly, the Commission set the direction of travel and outlined the thrust behind its budgetary strategy, including the need to ensure that budgets contained sufficient resources to allow the Commission to provide the services required by the Assembly as a legislature with full law-making powers following the 2011 referendum. As a growing institution, the Assembly required a high standard of appropriately resourced support services to enable Members to undertake their roles. There was also a need to continue to deliver efficiency and value for money. The Commission successfully steered its budget through the National Assembly's Finance Committee annually, enabling it to realise its vision and make the necessary new investment to confirm the Assembly as an unequivocally strong legislature. The investment strategy set by Commissioners during the Fourth Assembly has realised the Commission's aspirations of:

- cost effective tools to provide enhanced bilingual services;
- improving the sustainability of Tŷ Hywel, to make it less carbon hungry;
- developing an apprenticeship and graduate placement scheme, improving opportunities at all levels for those who want to work at the Assembly;
- investing in programmes to widen involvement in politics and democracy;
- further developing a comprehensive professional support service for Members; and
- responding to the growing legislative programme and future constitutional changes.

Commission meetings and administrative arrangements

The rolling forward work programme, which details the approach to activity for the year ahead, has provided focus and enabled the Commission to influence on-going priorities and the decision making process. Commissioners have continually valued the service they receive from the Principal Commission Secretary and the support of other Commission officials who contribute to the meetings, cultivating strong working relations with them enabling meetings to run effectively. Commissioners also unanimously welcomed the added value contribution made by the Independent Advisers who provided an alternative and welcome independent perspective to discussions.

Working corporately

Commissioners are required to act corporately in the interest of the Assembly as a whole, rather than simply being representatives of party groups. Consequently, they were able to take a corporate view back to party groups, which they were able to defend resulting in clarity about the decisions being taken and leading to few Commission questions tabled by Members. Commissioners have developed a strong command of their respective portfolios enabling them to lead discussions of their areas of responsibility.

Communications

The review found that communication between the Commissioners and Assembly Members was strengthened in the Fourth Assembly as were communications with the Chief Executive and other senior staff. The successful implementation of significant projects and finalisation of the Commission's budget were evidence of the effective relationships established. Strategic priorities were clarified and relationships strengthened with the independent Remuneration Board through meetings and correspondence. Further good practice was evidenced in Commissioners' engagement with staff support networks and all staff meetings – strengthening the relationships with Commission staff below the most senior level.

Key Performance Indicators

During the Fourth Assembly, the Commission led the approach to developing, enhancing and monitoring the performance of the organisation for its key stakeholders. Regular Corporate Performance Reports are now published as a business as usual activity. These include Key Performance Indicators on service delivery, budgetary performance, governance and assurance, demonstrating the Commission's commitment to operating in an open and transparent manner. The reports give a breakdown of performance against detailed measures and targets, comparisons to earlier periods and narrative commentaries to set the context and explain any concerns, such as gaps between performance and expectations. A traffic-light overview gives a clear indication of overall performance and facilitates strategic action to target areas of performance where improvements are necessary. Some highlights include:

- Member satisfaction improved and was sustained in some of the Commission's key priority areas, such as the ability to work in the official language of choice and ICT services;
- Significant increases in social media interactions, particularly for Twitter, YouTube and Senedd.tv;
- Visitor numbers have been maintained and visitor satisfaction levels improved;
- Upgraded technology has improved access to information and proceedings;
- Strong budgetary performance with value for money savings annually achieved and payment to suppliers within targets; and
- Timeliness and service delivery to Members consistently high in terms of issuing committee papers, research briefings, Record of Plenary and committee transcripts.

Recommendation

In 2015, an internal audit report concluded that the Assembly Commission has a well-developed value for money culture in place and that this culture is embedded throughout the organisation. The new Assembly Commission should consider building on this strong foundation ensuring that value for money, efficiency and procurement development work continues to evolve and exemplify good practice.



Value for money and efficiency

The Assembly Commission promoted the significance of setting high value for money standards and embedding a culture of efficiency into all services throughout the Fourth Assembly. The emphasis has been to source goods and services that deliver the quality and value for money that Members and the public have the right to expect. Particular support and encouragement has been provided to potential suppliers that are small and are based in Wales.

The Commission has aimed to ensure that every pound spent in supporting the Assembly represents good value for the public money it spends and that resources are used in the most appropriate way to deliver effective services to the Assembly and the people of Wales. The Commission set three priorities:

- improving management information to better understand the activity and costs associated with Assembly services and what drives those costs;
- simplifying processes and how Commission staff work in order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of Assembly services and make even better use of resources; and
- maximising the benefits and cost savings from procurement and robust contract management.

Savings initiatives since 2011, included combined in-year savings, cash releasing savings and the windfall from rates rebate, which was returned to the Welsh Government through a supplementary budget. Some examples which illustrate the benefits of focusing on this area of work include:

- Since 2012, the £500,000 annual efficiency saving target has been exceeded year on year;
- Through our procurement work, a growing percentage of savings that reduce our operating baselines for more than one year are now being achieved;
- Significant efficiency savings have come through changes in the Commission's ICT service, with the move from an externally provided service to in-house provision;
- Baseline costs of the ICT service have been reduced and made resources available to invest in improvements to infrastructure and business systems in support of Assembly Members and the Commission; and
- For suppliers that work alongside Commission staff on our estate, a new development programme aims to drive improved efficiency and value for money from these contracts, encourage innovation and promote our core values especially in the areas of equality, diversity and sustainability.

Assembly Commission staffing

At its first meeting in 2011, the Assembly Commission delegated day to day staffing responsibilities to the Chief Executive and Clerk of the Assembly. However, Commissioners developed and maintained a close relationship with the Chief Executive, teams and individuals throughout the Fourth Assembly both in general terms and in relation to their Commissioner portfolio responsibilities.

The Commission's priority has been to ensure that consistently strong, integrated support is provided to meet the needs of individual Assembly Members and committees. This means continuously improving upon the high quality parliamentary services provided by Commission staff. As the Assembly prepares for further constitutional changes in the Fifth Assembly, having the right people, with the right skills, in the right place has become an integral part of the Assembly Commission workforce planning, to ensure that the Assembly and its Members are properly supported in their work. A twice yearly capacity planning review now takes place where changes to service plans, new priorities, risks and opportunities are considered and assessed against the Commission's resources. Having a skilled, professional, flexible and engaged workforce has been a positive feature of this Assembly, as evidenced in the higher than public sector average engagement scores from staff surveys. Further external verification was provided to the Assembly Commission when it was awarded the prestigious Investors in People Gold standard.

Independent Advisers

The Assembly Commission appointed independent advisers to ensure that Commissioners and the Assembly's senior management team are supported and constructively challenged in their roles.

The advisers are involved in a number of the activities and service areas of the Assembly. They participate in the meetings of the Commission; consider our performance management and reporting arrangements; advise on the Commission's responsibilities for staff appraisal and remuneration policies and systems; and maintain a critical overview of the Commission's financial controls and risk management procedure.



Keith Baldwin

Keith spent 20 years as a partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC). Apart from his client responsibilities during this period, he also held a number of management roles including Deputy Partner-in-Charge of Government Consulting and partner responsible for the risk and quality management functions within PWC's Advisory Business. He has held a number of non-executive and advisory roles since leaving PWC.



Mair Barnes

Mair Barnes advises and mentors a number of Board directors across a variety of sectors in addition to being a non-executive director of a global business. She is the former Chair of Vantios plc and Managing Director of Woolworths plc. She has held non-executive directorships at the Department of Trade and Industry and the Cabinet Office.



Helena Feltham

Helena has experienced a long career in Retail and Human Resource Leadership. She is currently the Director of Human Resources for B&Q and has previously held appointments as the Global HR Director for TOPSHOP TOPMAN and as HR Director at Marks & Spencer, Jack Wills Ltd. and Woolworths South Africa. She has also spent time in Executive search with Odgers Berndtson, covering senior appointments across both public and private sectors. Helena has served as a non-executive director of an NHS Trust, is currently a Justice of the Peace and Board Member and Trustee of Action for Children and The Retail Trust.



Eric Gregory

Eric is a non-executive director for Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO), the Ministry of Justice Legal Aid Agency (LAA) and the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme, where he also chairs the Programme Risk and Assurance Board. He is a member of both the HMPO and LAA Audit Committees. He worked for the John Lewis Partnership for 25 years until 2009, where he was a Board Director for seven years, holding all three principal IT Director roles before becoming Personnel Director. He was previously non-executive director for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) London and a member of their ICT Board. He has also held the position of Chair of the Consumer Goods Forum IT Board, and was a member of the e-skills Businesses Board for six years.



Hugh Widdis

Hugh is the Head of the Government Legal Service for Northern Ireland and Departmental Solicitor for the Northern Ireland Executive. He has over 15 years of experience in parliamentary and government legal services. Prior to joining the Northern Ireland Executive, Hugh was Director of Legal and Governance Services for the Northern Ireland Assembly. He has previously worked in research, as a barrister in private practice and as an in-house lawyer in a leading financial services provider. He has also worked in the Scottish Parliament's legal office, and on discrimination law in the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. Hugh is a barrister and member of the Bar of Ireland and the Bar of Northern Ireland.

Improving our carbon footprint

From the outset and building on previous work undertaken, the Assembly Commission emphasised the importance of delivering the Carbon Management Plan, for which baseline figures were set in 2008-09. The focus on that work has seen continuous improvement in terms of the Commission's energy efficiency reducing both consumption and emissions. In December 2014, the Commission reached a key milestone in the continued efforts to cut carbon emissions from our estate's most significant impacts as the Carbon Management Plan was brought to a conclusion. Significantly, it achieved a 35% reduction in energy emissions which the Carbon Trust cited as 'Public Sector leading performance in Wales' and the Commission is proud of the reductions achieved against an extremely challenging target. A 4% reduction in business travel emissions was achieved compared to the baseline despite an increase of 16% in mileage, signalling a reduction in the carbon intensity of travel but more importantly the emergence of smarter travel choices. In a financial context, our annual cost for electricity for the first three years of the Fourth Assembly had increased by 9% while our consumption in Kwh was reduced by a similar factor. Without the action taken, costs would have been £20k higher over the period. Managing energy usage has enabled the Commission to manage its utility budgets more effectively against a trend of annually increasing utility costs.

In addition to achieving Green Dragon level 5 accreditation for continual environmental improvement, the Assembly was successful in winning an award for the Most Sustainable Public Sector Organisation in Government across the UK by the Institute of Public Sector Estates Management in 2014.

The Commission reaffirmed its commitment to improving the environmental impact of the estate by approving the Energy Reduction Route Map in June 2014. This clearly indicates the Commission's appetite to lead by example and drive further efficiencies across the estate. The 'route map' challenges the Commission to achieve a further 30% energy emissions reduction by 2021.

Recommendation

Given the work undertaken to improve the Assembly's carbon footprint throughout the Fourth Assembly and the positive example this sets, the new Commission should consider reaffirming its commitment to achieving the further energy emissions reduction set out in the 'route map' by 2021.

