



Executive Board Report to the Assembly Commission – October 2007

1. Assembly Commission's Strategic Goals

1.1 Strategic Goal – Promoting and widening engagement in devolution

Building the new education facilities in and around the Siambr Fach is programmed to start on 22 October and be completed in time for the spring term. The Pierhead feasibility study is under way, but in the interim we are trying out some different types of events and temporary exhibitions to demonstrate the variety of possible uses of the building. As part of a review of staff accommodation, we are looking at providing flexible office space in the Assembly Office for many of the staff based at the Pierhead, co-locating key communication staff with their colleagues.

Work is under way on a communication strategy, based on the Commission's commitment to promote and widen engagement in devolution.

1.2 Strategic Goal - Unity, leadership and a bold response to constitutional change

Members' Ballot

The first ballots for Members to propose Legislative Competence Orders and Measures were held on 24 June. Members and their staff were offered the opportunity of two drop in sessions to discuss their proposals with members of the Legislation Office, Members' Research Service and lawyers and over 30 turned up. The successful Members were:

- Ann Jones – 'Domestic Fire Safety' (Legislative Competence Order)
- Jenny Randerson – 'Healthier School Meals' (Measure)

The second ballot was held on 3 October following further successful drop in sessions in the Cwrt. The successful Members were:

- Jonathan Morgan – Mental Health Reform (Legislative Competence Order)
- Mike German - School Closures (Consultation and Categories) (Measure)



1.3 Strategic Goal – Respect, Probity and Good Governance

The Commission's draft budget was laid on 24 September and was scrutinised by the Finance Committee on 4 October. The Committee endorsed the Commission's draft budget. At the Committee's request, some minor changes to the format were made; these did not change the figures. The Commission's open approach to its budget process and willingness to participate fully in ongoing scrutiny was supported by the Committee. The draft transcript is available as a paper to note and the Finance Committee's report will be circulated once it is laid.

1.4 Strategic Goal – Working Sustainably

The designers of the environmental systems in the Senedd, BDSP, are due to report this week on their work to re-benchmark the operation of the building, enhance the monitoring systems and address some issues with the programming of the building. This work will allow improved monitoring against a proper benchmark. A full report will be provided for the Commission on performance of the building and changes to the system.

Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly, Lorraine Barrett AM, attended a session for staff encouraging contributions to our sustainability action plan. We have agreed to offer this session to all building users who would like to attend, including Members, AMSS, Government staff based in the Bay and contractors.

1.5 Strategic Goal – the best service, provided in the most effective way

Excellence in our services has been recognised externally in the last few months:-

- The Assembly Commission has achieved continuation of Green Dragon level five, a high standard in sustainable management of the Assembly Office. The next step is to work towards extending the standard to the rest of the estate.
- The Commission has been recognised through the Disability Two Ticks Award, which demonstrates excellence in securing diversity in the way we recruit and develop disabled staff.



- The development of our new website and the way IT services have been included in the Senedd has helped us to reach the finals of the British Computer Society awards, in the category of Public Service Organisation of the Year. The awards are given in December.



2. Key Activities and Events

2.1 Assembly Business

The level of committee and plenary activity is significantly higher than in previous Assemblies.

In terms of committees:

- 11 permanent committees were established at the start of the Assembly;
- 2 sub-committees have since been set up;
- 3 Government LCO committees and one Government Measure committee have been established;
- the first private Member's Measure and LCO received plenary support to continue their passage and so 2 further committees for their scrutiny will be established very shortly;
- 2 other private Members' proposals are in the pipeline;
- the Business Committee has been asked to table motions to establish a North Wales Regional Committee and a Children and Young People Committee.

The general pattern is one of more frequent meetings for these committees than before. In a six week period in September/October of 2007, for example, 60 formal committee meetings took place compared with 38 in the equivalent period last year, an increase of some 58%. In addition, the level of activity for plenary sessions is having a knock on effect for Record, Interpretation and Chamber Service staff.

The Commission has endorsed a significant increase in the procedural, administrative, research and record/interpretation resource available to support this activity. Recruitment is well under way, though it will still be some time until all new staff are in post. We hope that the Commission will be able to review the situation fully later in the term to assess whether this additional resource is sufficient to meet demand.

2.2 Wythnos Cymraeg yn Gyntaf/Welsh First Week

As an organisation, we participated in the Welsh Language Board's Welsh First week with a series of events to complement the ambition in our Scheme. We provided laminated cards to staff to encourage them to answer the telephone or greet their guest bilingually; attendance was arranged at Menter Caerdydd Welsh Learners Group; a buffet lunch was arranged for learners so that they could meet trainers and Welsh speaking staff informally before they embarked on their courses and Sian Jones, Welsh tutor, spent the week encouraging AMs to use Welsh first.



2.3 Appointments

A number of appointments have now been made to key positions in our staffing structure:

- Keith Bush has been appointed as Chief Legal Adviser and Director of Legal Services. He started with us on a full time basis on 8 October.
- Sulafa Halstead has been appointed as Head of Committee Services and will join us from Stoke on Trent City Council on 18 October.
- Non Gwilym, Head of External Communications, started on 3 September on a full time basis.

2.4 Recruitment of Independent Advisers

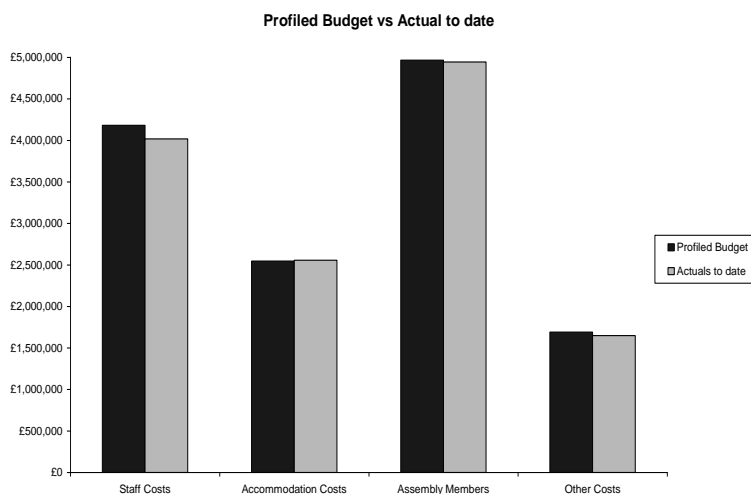
A recruitment exercise was conducted to recruit two independent advisers to the Assembly through open competition. They would act in a non executive capacity advising Commissioners and senior management on all aspects of the Commission's business for around 15 days a year. One would also chair the Corporate Governance Committee. We hope to make appointments within the next few weeks.

2.5 Presentation to the Welsh Language Board

At the start of October, Adrian addressed the staff of the Welsh Language Board on the subject of how the Assembly now works - in particular, the legislative process, how it holds the government to account and some implications for the Board. The presentation, given as part of an all-staff training day, was extremely well received.

3. Financial report

- 3.1 For the five months ending August 2007, actual net spend is broadly in line with expectations, with just a 2% underspend (£218,000). 42% of the £33.582m approved budget has been spent or committed to date.





3.2 The Commission has agreed to seek a supplementary budget of £3.04m, with a further £5.139m to cover costs transferring from the Welsh Assembly Government. The supplementary budget may be reduced if we identify savings in our forecast spend.

4. Other information

4.1 A list of information disclosed between May and September 2007 under the Freedom of Information Act is attached at Annex A. The full disclosure can be provided to Commissioners on request.



ANNEX A

INFORMATION RELEASED FOLLOWING ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

MAY 2007 – SEPTEMBER 2007

- Details of disciplinary action taken against security staff for the misuse of CCTV and telephony equipment
- Details of rent/mortgage payments claimed by Peter Law between May 2003 and April 2006
- Details of Agency staff working for APS
- Dates that AMs took the oath for each of the three Assemblies
- Breakdown of costs associated with the royal opening on 05 June 07
- Further information on the misuse of CCTV
- Details of expenses claimed by AMs in 2005/2006
- Copy of the MRS paper provided to the Sustainability Committee and a note of the meeting held on 05 July 07
- Details of the salary payable to Carwyn Jones as Counsel General

INFORMATION WITHHELD FOLLOWING ACCESS TO INFORMATION REQUESTS

MAY 2007 – SEPTEMBER 2007

- Details of allowances and expenses claimed by AMs in 2006/2007 – exempt under section 22 – future publication
- Transcript of oral evidence provided by Nick Bourne to the Standards of Conduct Committee – exempt under section 36 – prejudice to the free and frank exchange of views for the purpose of deliberation
- Legal advice received by the Presiding Officer with regard to the appointment of the Counsel General – exempt under section 42 – legal privilege.