

## Annex B - The Board's response to the recommendations of the review

### Summary of progress on the recommendations of the Mid-term effectiveness review of the Independent Remuneration Board

In March 2023 the Board received a review of its effectiveness. The review was carried out by Gareth Watts, Head of Governance in the Senedd Commission. There were 12 recommendations covering the relationships between the Board, Commission and Senedd Members; increasing transparency and effective resourcing of the Board's work.

In response, the Board agreed an action plan which was agreed and implemented from May 2023.

The recommendations have resulted in greater joint working with the Commission, increased transparency and engagement with Senedd Members and the smoother joint working.

Rec 1. The Board, in conjunction with the secretariat team, introduce a Board Charter or other such governance document.	
<b>AGREED ACTION</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>
Board's Secretariat will update the existing governance document, 'Board's Charter', reflecting the legal requirements of the operation of the Board and setting out the details of roles, responsibilities and administrative arrangements, for agreement by the Board.	The charter was updated and published in July 2023.

2	<p>The Board works with Commission officials to agree and set aside time to develop relationships between the Board and officials. Time and dates should be set aside for development and team building opportunities to contribute towards developing the effectiveness of the Board further.</p>	<p>Each thematic review of the strategic work programme for the Sixth Senedd is led by a Board member.</p> <p>Board members working directly with officials outside Board meetings should help to develop closer working relationships between Board members and officials.</p> <p>As part of the induction process for new staff to the clerking team individual meetings with Board members will be organised.</p>	<p>There is regular informal engagement between the secretariat, other Senedd Commission staff who provide information and advice to the Board ('the integrated team'), the Chair and Board members through thematic review work, meetings and visits to Tŷ Hywel. This has increased the understanding of roles and effectiveness of the Board's work.</p> <p>New staff have been introduced to all Board members individually.</p> <p>During in-person meetings, the Board members have taken the opportunity to meet the 'integrated team'.</p>
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3	<p>The responsibility for Board recruitment rests with the Commission. If opportunities arise the current Board should work with the Commission, to review the role specification for future Board Members in light of Senedd reform. This review should be completed in advance of the next round of Board recruitment.</p>	<p>As set out in Section 6 and Schedule 2 of the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 it is the Senedd Commission's responsibility to make arrangements for selecting candidates for membership of the Board and appoint its members.</p> <p>The Board plans to review its skills matrix prior to the next recruitment process and to discuss this with the Commission.</p>	<p>This is a matter for the Commission. Subject to Chair/Chief Executive discussions and timescales, the Board is content to provide an assessment of skills requirements to inform the Commission's recruitment process for the next Board.</p>
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4	<p>The Board works with the secretariat to develop other mechanisms to regularly gather feedback from all those who participate in meetings.</p>	<p>Chair will undertake an annual appraisal of the Board's work with fellow Board members individually, as a means of gathering feedback on the way in which the Board operates.</p> <p>The Chair will also work with the Secretariat to identify a mechanism or mechanisms for collating feedback to the Board.</p>	<p>Annual appraisals with each Board member have been instigated. The first instance were completed in August 2023.</p> <p>Board members, secretariat and the integrated team are asked for feedback at the end of each Board meeting, to review and inform preparations for the next meeting.</p>
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5	<p>The Board undertakes further gap analysis to determine whether there are other areas it lacks in terms of expertise or capacity to make informed decisions with complete information.</p>	<p>Recruitment of a full-time qualified researcher is currently underway.</p> <p>The Board will commission further expert support for its planned thematic reviews as needed.</p> <p>The Board will review its expertise and capacity needs as part of its end of term effectiveness review to help identify any changes in the staffing support needed by the Board in the Seventh Senedd.</p>	<p>A senior researcher joined the secretariat in September 2023.</p> <p>Beamans Consulting were contracted to carry out consultation for the review of staff pay and grading. Their report was presented to the Board in March 2023.</p> <p>A tender specification has been agreed to contract expertise for the research to inform the review of Members' pay in 2024-25.</p> <p>The Board will review its expertise and capacity needs for members and the secretariat in advance of the Seventh Senedd.</p>
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<p>6</p>	<p>a) The Board should enter into discussions with the Commission to review their relationship in respect of the services the Commission provides to the Board and consider how this may operate going forward.</p> <p>b) The Board should also work with Commission staff to ensure clarity for Members and their staff to understand the respective roles of the Board, MBS, and the Chief Executive.</p>	<p>The Chair of the Board meets regularly with the Commission’s Chief Executive. The staffing support provided to the Board by the Commission is reviewed as part of these discussions.</p> <p>In order to address the lack of clarity on the respective roles of the Board and Commission in regulating Members’ expenditure and resourcing and supporting Members the Board will seek to clarify this through all communications with Members, for instance via update letters.</p> <p>a) The Chair of the Board will meet the Llywydd, as Chair of the Commission, to request that a mechanism is established for regular dialogue between the Board and Commission on Senedd reform. Such a mechanism will allow for discussions on the respective roles of the two bodies in supporting Members in future.</p> <p>b) The Board recently commenced a simplification review with the aim that the framework in place to regulate Members’</p>	<p>a) The Board’s Charter was shared with the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Senedd as part of the review in July 2023. The ways of working with the Commission, in particular the way in which evidence and information is provided, is set out in the Board’s Charter.</p> <p>Meetings between the Chair and the Chief Executive take place before each Board meeting.</p> <p>The Chair has met with the Llywydd twice during 2023-24 to explore a more regular programme of Board / Commission dialogue and joint work (which will be discussed by the Commission on 29 April 2024).</p> <p>The Senedd Commission has allocated a ‘lead’ official for each of the Board’s thematic reviews.</p> <p>The Annual Review of the Determination 2024-25 included proposals arising from the</p>
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		<p>expenditure through the Determination is clear and as simple as possible to navigate for Members and their staff. Working with the Commission in the context of this review should help ensure greater clarity on the respective roles of the Board and Commission</p>	<p>simplification thematic review. This included clarifying the respective roles of the Board and Commission and increased the profile of the simplification work (and the visibility of the Board) with Commission officials.</p> <p>The respective roles of the Commission and the Board are reiterated in the annual review consultation documents and the 'decision letter' published alongside the revised Determination in March 2024.</p> <p>Board members take the time to explain the roles of the Commission and the Board at their drop in sessions with Members preceding each Board meeting.</p>
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7	<p>The Board should look to address the concerns identified in relation to the way in which it communicates with its political stakeholders. One route may be to engage communication expertise to help and support the Board. The Board should also involve Members and their staff in finalising and agreeing any new ways or principles adopted in respect of future communications to ensure a shared understanding.</p>	<p>The Board will continue to seek opportunities to engage Members jointly with the Commission on shared areas of interest, where appropriate.</p> <p>The Board will work with the Commission on the simplification review to help ensure greater clarity on the respective roles of the Board and Commission.</p> <p>The Board will continue to seek opportunities to raise awareness of its work programme, and when engagement with political stakeholders is planned, for example via update letters issued following each Board meeting, regular meetings with the Chiefs of Staff of political groups in the Senedd and via Representative Groups and the Political Contact Group.</p>	<p>Engagement with Members and their staff has greatly increased during 2023-24.</p> <p>The Board has had a total of 34 meetings with Members.</p> <p>The Board has met in person in Tŷ Hywel 5 times during 2023-24 and have spoken to 21 Members at the drop in sessions around these meetings. The Board has met the Members' Representative Group five times and the Chiefs of Staff six times and now provides a bilingual summary document of issues to discuss in advance.</p> <p>Board Members (and consultants on their behalf) have met with several Members, support staff and group staff as part of thematic review evidence gathering.</p> <p>Board members visited 9 offices of 11 Members during the autumn of 2023-24 to understand the issues</p>
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			<p>faced by constituency staff and discuss the implementation of the Determination with Members.</p> <p>Awareness raising of the Board's activities is promoted via the Members' intranet, direct emails regarding thematic reviews and email updates following each Board meeting.</p> <p>Face to face meetings in advance of each Board meeting and update letters setting out the decisions taken by the Board has been found to be the most effective means of engaging with Members and their staff.</p>
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8	<p>Transparency is an important principle which underpins the work of the Board. The Board should re-review in which circumstances it would be appropriate to share the information it receives by way of research to ensure that those affected by its decision have a clear understanding of the evidence which led to the decisions being made.</p>	<p>The Board will consider on a case-by-case basis what level of information could usefully be published to explain the key evidence which has informed its decisions.</p> <p>In future, the timing of the Annual Review of the Determination will allow for more time for budget planning in advance of the commencement of each financial year including an advance verbal briefing of Chiefs of Staff to answer concerns before the final Determination is agreed and published.</p>	<p>The Board has increased dialogue and information sharing with Representative Groups to share information as well as improve the input into the Board's decision making. The Board now provides a bilingual summary document of issues to discuss with the Representative Groups in advance of meetings.</p> <p>The outcomes of the Annual Review process were communicated to the Chiefs of Staff as soon as the decisions were made to allow Members and groups to plan their budgets in good time.</p> <p>The information gathered as part of the review of Members' staff pay and grading has been published. This allows a fuller understanding of the evidence base for the Board's decisions for changes to the Determination in advance of the Seventh Senedd.</p>
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9	<p>The Board should ensure that the work it takes forward on simplification addresses the issues noted in respect of the Determination. In taking forward this work it should also include Commission staff (including MBS), Members and Support Staff in its discussions and deliberations to helping to shape the way forward for the Determination.</p>	<p>The Board is committed to working with the Commission in order to ensure any changes made to the Determination do not create unnecessary complexities for MBS in its administration and achieves as much clarity as possible on the allowances available to Members and what is required to enable Members' business costs to be claimed.</p>	<p>The simplification review not only seeks to clarify and simplify the language in the Determination but also seeks to understand the totality of the advice and guidance around the operation of the Determination in practice.</p> <p>Engagement with the Commission has resulted in a number of proposals in the Annual Review to make the process of claiming costs simpler and quicker. These proposals were well received and have generated useful conversations with the Commission on improving the way Members claim costs which will inform the preparation for the Determination for the Seventh Senedd.</p> <p>Members, support staff and other political stakeholders were given the opportunity to comment on proposals in the annual review of the Determination and their</p>
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			<p>feedback was acted on and then summarised in the 'decision letter' which was published alongside the Determination on Members' pay and allowances 2024-25.</p> <p>Those working in MBS have commented that the letter is a useful guide to the changes to the document and summary of the annual review process.</p>
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<p>10</p>	<p>The responsibility for any change in remit or reform of the Board would be the responsibility of the Senedd. However, the Board should enter into discussions with the Commission to raise the themes around its ongoing relationship with the Commission and any potential impact on its future remit, resulting from Senedd reform.</p>	<p>The Board's remit is set out in the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010. Any changes to the Board's remit are a matter for the Senedd.</p> <p>The Board has established a mechanism for regular dialogue between the Chair of the Board and the Llywydd of the Senedd Commission</p>	<p>The Chair has met the Llywydd twice and the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Senedd six times since the recommendations were accepted by the Board.</p> <p>This is part of a more regular programme of Board and Senedd Commission dialogue and joint work on shared interests.</p> <p>The Board stands ready to engage with Welsh Government as it takes forward the Reform Bill Committee's recommendations to review the public resources and funding available to registered political parties in Wales and to review the costs associated with the Bill.</p>
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<p>11</p>	<p>The Board (under the direction of the Chair) and working with the secretariat should consider looking to introduce some form of annual performance management arrangements with Board members in line with good practice.</p>	<p>Chair will undertake annual appraisals with each Board member individually. This will be informed by feedback from officials who support the work of the Board.</p> <p>The Board also considers any feedback on its work received from Members and Support Staff, for example comments made during Representative Group meetings or in response to the Board's consultations, as a means of ensuring continuous development and improvement.</p>	<p>Annual appraisals were carried out in August 2023 and will be scheduled annually.</p> <p>Feedback around improved engagement and information sharing is sought through discussions with Representative Groups and at the end of each Board meetings.</p>
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12	<p>The Board should work with its secretariat to develop a means of tracking its progress and puts in place a communication plan to ensure it can demonstrate the progress being made to its stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Board will measure its progress in achieving its <u>strategic objectives</u> and communicate progress to its stakeholders via an annual report, as required under Section 11 of the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010.</p> <p>The Board will use this process to reflect on the achievement of its strategic objectives and implementation of the Effectiveness Review recommendations, and to communicate progress on the Action Plan to its stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Annual Report 2022-23 published in July 2023 set out progress against the Board's published strategic objectives, as will the report on 2023-24.</p> <p>The progress was also highlighted at the launch event of the annual report in July 2023.</p> <p>The Board also provides updates on the progress of thematic reviews via update letters and the Board's website.</p>
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