

**Wales Office
Management Committee**

**Minutes of meeting held on
22 January 2015**

Members present

Director of the Wales Office and Chair
Lead Non-Executive Member & Alternate Chair
Non-Executive Member
Deputy Director, Private Office
Deputy Director, Communications

In attendance

Chief Accountant & Head of Corporate Services
Head of HR
Committee Secretary
Internal Audit (for Agenda item 5.1 only)

Apologies

Deputy Director, Constitution
Head of Policy

1. Introduction and apologies

1.1. Apologies were received from the Deputy Director, Constitution and Head of Policy

2. Minutes and Actions from previous meeting

2.1. The minutes and summary minutes were agreed by the Committee. There were no outstanding action points from the previous meeting.

3. Performance and Corporate issues

3.1. The Committee considered the departmental performance statistics. The Deputy Director, Private Office outlined the new processes that had been put in place for dealing with Ministerial correspondence.

The Committee also noted the continuing high performance of the department in dealing with Parliamentary Questions (PQs) and Freedom of Information Requests, and considered that this demonstrated the benefits of the shared service that was in place.

The Committee considered the Sustainability Development Report, and noted in particular the reduction in air travel in comparison to prior years.

3.2. The Chief Accountant presented a finance update to the Committee noting the monthly budget meetings between the Director/Deputy Directors and Finance to discuss spend to date, profiling and other issues.

3.3. The Chief Accountant presented an update on corporate services. The key points were:

- (i) Installation of the secondary glazing in Gwydyr House commenced in December and was expected to be completed by February.
- (ii) A new heating and cooling system had been installed in the Secretary of State's room, and Ministers room and the basement video conference room in Gwydyr House.

3.4. The Head of HR presented an update on HR, focussing on staff recruitment and confirming that a number of appointments were in the process of being made.

4. Risk and Strategic Review

4.1. The Committee reviewed the updated Wales Office Business Plan and supporting papers in relation to Policy and Constitution's achievements against the Plan. The Committee welcomed the update on progress, highlighting the need to communicate the Department's achievements.

The meeting discussed the timetable for the Wales Office annual report, noting the impact of the General Election.

4.2. The Committee considered the updated strategic risk register. The Chair highlighted the new risk in relation to the St David's Day programme of work. Other Government Departments had provided significant support to this work, particularly in relation to the reserved powers framework.

5. Substantive Items

The Management Committee welcomed Internal Audit, who provided a presentation on the Internal Audit report on the review of Wales Office Governance processes. The Committee agreed that matters should be considered further following the forthcoming General Election.

5.1. The Head of HR outlined the results of the 2014 Staff Engagement Survey, noting a five per cent increase in the level of engagement amongst staff. The three themes with the highest positive response were 'Organisational Objectives and Purpose', 'My Team' and 'Resources and Workload'. A "People Survey Working Group" had been established within the department to consider the results of the survey and develop an action plan.

The Committee then discussed the promotion of learning and development opportunities

within the department.

- 5.2. The Head of HR presented a paper on staffing and succession planning to the Committee, outlining the steps that had been taken to reduce the headcount in line with the Spending Review whilst ensuring flexibility. The Head of HR noted the need to maximise the benefits of this flexibility without increasing staff insecurity. The Lead Non-Executive Member raised the need to provide guidance or reassurance to staff in advance of the General Election. The Chair noted that he had held all staff meetings focused on looking forward and challenges for the Office.