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**Office of the Secretary of State for Wales  
Departmental Board**

**Minutes of meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

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**Members present:**

Director and Chair  
Lead Non-Executive Director  
Non-Executive Director  
Deputy Director, Constitution and Corporate Services  
Deputy Director, Policy  
Deputy Director, Communications  
Principal Private Secretary

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**In attendance:**

Head of Legal Advisors  
Head of HR  
Head of Finance and Corporate Services  
Senior Private Secretary and Board Secretariat  
Business Manager and Board Secretariat

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**Apologies:**

Secretary of State for Wales  
Permanent Under Secretary of State for Wales

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**1. Introductions**

- 1.1. The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members, with specific welcomes to the Non-Executive Director and new Deputy Director for Communications.
- 1.2. Apologies were received from the Secretary of State and the Permanent Under Secretary of State.
- 1.3. The minutes of the Departmental Board meeting held in October were formally agreed.
- 1.4. The Chair ran through the action log. On Action 4 the Head of Finance updated that this was considered by the Audit and Risk Committee in December, and further action was underway. A future session specifically focussing on risk management for SLT and the Non-Executive Directors was agreed. On Action 7, it was agreed that this was complete. On Action 8, this was noted as in progress. On Action 16, this is close to completion and Board Members were asked to complete their returns. On Action 18, this is underway

and will be picked up again in due course. On Action 20, this action is underway under the guidance of the new Deputy Director of Communications.

<b>Action 023</b>
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<b>Head of Finance to convene SLT and NEDs to discuss risk management</b>
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1.5. On Directorate plans, recorded in the log as action 21, following discussions at the earlier Ministerial and Senior Leadership Team meeting the Lead Non-Executive noted that further work was required to refine these plans. As agreed at the meeting, the focus in the first instance would be the Nation Plan, simplifying it into a list of clear priorities that the Office can focus on going forward. The draft Departmental Plan would be revisited to ensure that it set out what the Department was aiming to achieve in the next 12 months, after which divisional risk register and divisional plan documents could be refreshed and re-focussed. The Non-Executive Director noted the importance of the Nation Plan encapsulating the strategic vision of the Department and the Secretary of State, with an underpinning set of priorities. That vision and associated actions should be articulated constantly and consistently across official and Ministerial business. The Deputy Director for Policy concurred with the need to rationalise and prioritise, noting that this would aid delivery. The Deputy Director for Communications raised the issue of timelines and the need to ensure that the strategy looked ahead over the next three years at least. The Principal Private Secretary agreed but felt that the specific commitments were likely to relate to the next 12 months, centred on major fiscal events. The Chair summed up the discussion, noting the need to clarify our core projects and deliverables for the coming months, and asked the Deputy Director for Policy and the Deputy Director for Constitution and Corporate Services to harmonise the Departmental and Nation Plans, with the former setting out the Office's overarching narrative and key priorities and deliverables and the latter focusing on Departmental aims, objectives and activity for the next 12 months. Divisional plans should sit beneath the Departmental Plan and provide more granularity on the deliverables and timelines. The Head of Finance and Corporate Services will assist with the clear articulation of the divisional plans.

<b>Action 024</b>
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<b>Deputy Director for Policy and the Deputy Director for Constitution and Corporate Services to harmonise and update Departmental Plan and Nation Plan</b>
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<b>Action 025</b>
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<b>Head of Finance and Corporate Services to lead on updating the divisional plans</b>
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<b>Action 026</b>
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<b>Head of HR to lead a discussion on Office values, both with SLT and in due course with the Departmental Board meeting</b>
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## **2. Cardiff Hub Update – for the Board to note**

- 2.1. The Deputy Director for Constitution and Corporate Services updated on the progress of the Cardiff Hub. The Hub will be ready for occupation in February 2021, so HMRC will provide only a skeleton staff and the formal opening and introduction of OSSW staff will be delayed until the pandemic recedes. This is likely to take place in May.
- 2.2. The Board noted the update.

## **3. People Survey – for the Board to discuss**

- 3.1. The Head of HR introduced the paper on the 2020 People Survey, highlighting that the Senior Leadership Team are due to discuss this in more detail imminently and that an action plan would be created in the aftermath of that discussion which could be brought back to the Board for review at the next meeting.

<b>Action 027</b>
<b>People Survey discussion to be deferred to the next Board meeting</b>

## **4. Other business**

- 4.1. The Board noted *Paper 3 – Welsh Language Update, Paper 4 – Finance/Corporate Services, Paper 5 – Correspondence Statistics and Paper 6 – HR update.*
- 4.2. The Lead Non-Executive Director closed the meeting and thanked participants for their time and input.