



**Academi Genedlaethol ar gyfer
Arweinyddiaeth Addysgol Cymru
National Academy for
Educational Leadership Wales**

Minutes/Action Notes from Board Meeting 19th July 2024

In Attendance: Dr Sue Davies (SD) (Chair)
Tegwen Ellis (TE) (Chief Executive)
Dr Martin Price (MP)
Mike James (MJ)
Dr John Graystone (JG) (joined via MS Teams)
Dr Debbie Nash (DN)
Prof. Paul Marshall (PM)
Kirsty Payne (KP) (Head of Operations)
Dr Chris Lewis (CL) (Director)
Gaynor Ace (GA) (Secretariat)

Invited: Gillian Gillet (GG) – Audit Wales (joined via MS Teams)
David Richards – Public Bodies Unit

1. Welcome, confirmation of minutes and actions from previous meeting

SD opened the session and welcomed everyone to today's face to face Board meeting. Apologies had been received from Katie Phillips and Yusuf Ibrahim.

There no conflicts of interest and no gifts to be reported.

The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record with a typo in the last section where SD had been referred to as SP.

SD referred to the Action Log from the previous Board meeting and noted that all the actions had now been completed or would be dealt with later in the agenda.

2. Finance and HR Committee Report

MP provided an overview of matters discussed at this month's committee meeting. There were no specific HR concerns and JG will provide an update on his well-being catch ups with staff during today's meeting.

The budget is on track with some minor amends which KP explained in full to the committee. An unexpected bill for business rates had been received in respect of

business rates the former Swansea offices premises – WG has agreed to cover this bill and the tenancy was agreed by their officials.

A draft copy of the Financial Statements for the year ending 31/03/24 was presented to committee. A revised copy of the Directors' report is required. Policy updates had been provided with today's Board papers which bring the policies up to date with current practice. **The Board was happy to formally agree these policy amendments.**

A discussion had been held regarding rotating committee chairs. This will be included in the agenda for the November AGM.

SD thanked MP for his summary and the Board accepted the committee report. SD commented on how useful it was for her to sit in on both committees in order to gain an overview of their scrutiny work.

3. Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Report

MJ provided an overview of matters considered at this month's AARAC committee meeting. The internal audit annual report provided reasonable assurance which is deemed the highest accolade. There was an increase in findings and recommendations but when queried, the auditors reassured the committee by putting this down to an increase in activity and also different scopes in the audits.

KP presented a very thorough and informative deep dive on funding which proved an eye opener for the committee in highlighting scope changes, constraints and debt policies. Despite generally receiving below inflation increases, the committee were impressed by the organisation's ability to achieve more with less. The committee were also very impressed at how KP and team managed the budget within such tight constraints.

A schedule of committee deep dives had been included with today's papers and **the Board were happy to approve this.**

SD congratulated KP on her careful management of the budget and thanked the committee for their excellent scrutiny. The Board was happy to accept the committee report.

4. External Audit Plan Presentation – Audit Wales

The Board was pleased to welcome Gillian Gillet (GG) from Audit Wales who provided an overview of the 2024 Audit Plan. The plan is similar to previous years and sets out the statutory responsibilities and obligations of Audit Wales as external auditors. It also identifies audit risks and sets out costs and allocations of work.

Expected expenditure is detailed on page 6 of the report but it was noted that absolute assurance cannot be provided at this stage. These figures will be revised when the accounts have been finalised. Core areas have been identified and lower and upper materiality levels have been set. The financial statements are based on risks identified. One significant risk is highlighted on page 9 - management override of controls.

It is planned to undertake the audit work in August/September which will be reported on at the November Board meeting. The audit fee of £5,900 was included on page 11 – this reflects an increase of 6.4% due to inflationary pressures.

JG queried whether there were any major differences from last year's audit. GG explained that there had been a slight change to the format but no change in the audit approach which still follows a risk based approach.

SD and MP thanked GG for a clear and reassuring overview. GG then left the meeting.

KP spoke of the key financial controls audit being carried out shortly by the internal auditors. This should provide an extra level of assurance for the Board. PM commented on the fee increase highlighting the fact that the organisation is directed to use Audit Wales by WG. Although the fee quoted seemed reasonable for the amount of work undertaken it was deemed useful to make some comparisons with other audit providers.

The Board were happy to sign off the Audit plan.

5. Chief Executive Report against the Corporate Plan

TE began by thanking the Board for their support and scrutiny over the last academic year. This has been a very successful year for the Leadership Academy and TE brought to the Board's attention a video on social media demonstrating activity over the summer term. TE intends to remind WG of how much has been achieved with a reduction in budget costs due to inflation. If budgets continue to rise below inflation it could potentially mean that certain aspects of the remit may not be fulfilled.

TE updated the meeting on the current situation with the Middle Tier Review. TE and team had recently met with the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Lynne Neagle MS to discuss what the organisation was doing to support leaders. It was interesting to note that the Cabinet Secretary highlighted the fact that school improvement was not currently in the remit of the organisation.

The review being carried out by Professor Dylan Jones had identified 3 areas of focus: school to school collaboration, Local Authority collaboration and collaboration on a national level. WG have so far been concentrating on the local level and have asked local authorities to draft an action plan on how they intend to provide school

improvement services. It was noted that some local authorities, like Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire are already working collaboratively. Drafts have been requested by end of July and action plans will be published by mid-November.

WG have been considering mandatory professional learning for school staff which will need to be in place from April 2025 such as ITE, induction and NPQH. The Welsh language and leadership will also need to be considered from a later date. No decisions have been published yet regarding the way forward. There has been mention of a new national entity to deliver professional learning.

SD commented that the review has highlighted the current lack of consistency so could usefully build on the good points. In response to a query about risk from MJ, TE reported that the senior management team had planned 2 away days in the summer when risks and mitigations will be considered.

TE was positive around the future role of the Leadership Academy providing examples of the Attainment Champions project which had recently been extended to the 2nd Pilot Phase. The Cabinet Secretary had also been keen for the organisation to take forward the Attendance Triads project. MJ was pleased to note that the Leadership Academy is being viewed as an enabler. MJ was concerned however as to how one national provider could remain independent and provide consistency across the board. JG liked MJ's suggestion that Estyn could take on some sort of quality monitoring role in this process. JG also commented on the buddying system for headteachers in Australia which was very successful. Teachers in Australia are also able to take sabbatical leave every 7 years which may help with recruitment and retention.

SD thanked TE for this overview which had sparked some very useful discussions. TE then outlined progress through the work stream areas as follows:

Para 1.1 Quality Assurance – The Middle Tier Review has implications to the current running of the endorsement system as some regions have paused their programmes. Mark Isherwood has shared concerns with WG and had considered shortening the review period. MJ recommended suspending or 'pausing' endorsement if monitoring could not be completed. TE will feed this back to MI.

Para 1.2 Innovation – Applications for the innovation pathway fund are still being received so the system is still progressing. Some of the funding allocated to innovation has been moved to the Associate Federation as their projects need investment.

Para 1.3 System Leadership – Cohort 5's commission on well-being is in its final draft and will be translated and branded for publication over the summer. The Curriculum for Wales commission is going through its final revision. Cohort 5 have now been invited to join the Federation from September 2024.

Mark Isherwood has conducted professional learning conversations with Cohorts 5 and 6 and will produce a report identifying the impact on self, organisation and system to assess the longitudinal impact of being an Associate.

Recruitment of cohort 7 is now complete. 14 were appointed but one has requested a deferment due to work commitments. The new cohort are of high calibre and representative of the sector as a whole.

Para 1.4 Leadership Development – A lot of activity here in the last quarter. A national conference was delivered in Llandudno through the medium of Welsh, primarily for Welsh medium schools. This event received excellent feedback and it is planned to hold a similar event next year for English medium schools. A number of youth work events have taken place to coincide with Youth Work week. Professor Alma Harris is leading on an insight piece which was deemed a really important piece of work, due to be published next year in partnership with the Centre for School Leadership in Ireland and Education Scotland.

Para 2.1 Resources – Meleri Light has been working on the self-evaluation resource for Welsh. Schools have been identifying how they are developing Welsh within their setting. Seven schools have been piloting this resource, aligned to Cohort 2's commission and funded by WG. The Leadership Academy will be requesting further funding to continue the Head of Welsh role. MJ initiated a discussion on Welsh schools vs bilingual schools and PM suggested looking at funding models such as British Council funding in Argentina. TE also referred to immersion centres in Ceredigion where refugees had been learning the Welsh language.

Para 2.2 Insight – A paper on reflective practice had been launched at the Urdd Eisteddfod, where an event had been held in partnership with EWC. EWC will produce guidance to go with the insight piece. A recent conference on attendance had been very professionally run.

Cohort 6 have now finished their learning experience and are moving into their second year to focus on their commission work. They have been split into two groups for commissions: one looking at self-evaluation for improvement and the other looking at leading an anti-racist organisation.

Para 2.3 Well-being – The draft commission on well-being has been very well received by WG. The well-being working group has been disbanded and a well-being advisory group has been formed with the first meeting planned for October. In response to an enquiry from DN, TE confirmed that the advisory group consisted of high level officials from WG and strategic members of the Health Board, EWC and Estyn. Two Associates have also been invited to sit on this group.

TE, Nia Miles and an Associate attended the Belmas conference and delivered 2 presentations on well-being and recruitment and retention which were very well received.

Para 2.4 Strategic Workforce Planning – Dr Chris Lewis will be giving a presentation on recruitment and retention under Item 7 of the agenda. This has already been shared with WG. In response to a suggestion from JG to consider appointing non

teachers to senior roles, TE replied that this has been suggested but would be unlikely to have union approval.

Para 3.1 Effective Governance – All were aware of concerns regarding the next Board refresh where 4 experienced members of the Board would be leaving at the same time. This would be discussed with the Public bodies Unit later in this meeting.

KP has drafted a strategic equality plan which TE is currently reviewing. Two away days are planned where the senior management team will evaluate the corporate plan. KP is keen to move away from reporting on work streams and move to considering strategic objectives. A more sophisticated reporting mechanism will therefore be considered.

Para 3.2 Executive Function – KP has conducted a staff survey on culture, ways of working and job satisfaction. A full detailed report will be given at the next Board meeting. KP was pleased to note a 100% response rate for this survey. Some minor suggestions for improvement will be considered over the summer including a more organised offer for professional learning. PM reminded everyone that this survey needs to be anonymous to comply with GDPR rules. As the sample size is so small, some responses could therefore need to be removed to ensure confidentiality.

The organisation will be working towards renewing the Investors in Well-being reaccreditation and Investors in People accreditation as a joint venture.

Para 3.3 Comms and Marketing – A full accessibility audit has now been carried out on the website and a report and action plan has been compiled. It was acknowledged that the website is now rather cluttered and overcrowded so a stream lining exercise will be undertaken soon.

It was pleasing to note that brand mentions and engagement have increased which were reflected in Charlotte's report. An excellent podcast has recently been recorded with Meleri Light talking to practitioners from a Welsh medium school with the aim of attracting people to move back to Wales to teach.

Para 3.4 Stakeholders and Partnership Work – TE spoke of her recent successful trip to Australia, a report of which has been attached to these papers. TE was pleased to report that she had made two new connections who would be very useful in scrutinising the Academy's work.

This week's stakeholder meeting had been cancelled but would be reorganised. It is planned to recruit additional stakeholders to this group who will be short listed in September. The rolling programme of stakeholder recruitment and refresh seems to be working well.

In response to a query from JG regarding the additional risk of a cabinet reshuffle, TE replied that at the moment it was business as usual for all Ministers. Lynne Neagle MS remains Cabinet Secretary for Education and Eluned Morgan MS has taken over Jeremy's Miles's MS responsibility for the Welsh language.

SD thanked TE for a very comprehensive report as always which the Board was happy to accept. TE thanked the Board for agreeing financial support for her

educational doctorate and was pleased to report that she had now submitted her thesis. The Board wished her well with this final stage.

6. Presentation from the Public Bodies Unit

SD was pleased to welcome David Richards (DR), Director of Propriety and Ethics at the Public Bodies Unit. DR gave an overview of his work and highlighted current issues at PBU. DR had been in his current role for 10 years and provided advice on the ministerial code. He confirmed that it was 'business as usual' at the Senedd and things would carry on as usual until the new First Minister was appointed.

DR spoke in general of issues involving ethics, honesty and leaked information. He stressed that public servants were expected to deliver their remit in a way that was compatible with public service values. He referred to the Nolan principles of: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. There should not be any private benefit from public money. DR spoke of how leaders in Wales should set a good example. He warned of the potential pitfalls of social media and advised that this to be used with care.

DR applied these principles to the smooth running and effectiveness of Boards urging respectful behaviour and taking time to listen to each other. Everyone should have a voice and it is important to remember that there are no stupid questions. DR outlined the Board's role in scrutinising, supporting and challenging. He stressed the importance of team work and of looking after the Chair.

DR was aware of the Board's concern at losing so many experienced members at the next refresh. He will take that away for further consideration as he was keen to help all present in being the best performing Board as possible.

In response to a follow up question from JG, DR replied that Boards are intended to reflect the population of Wales in ethnic diversity and gender mix and it is important to ensure that everyone can participate. DN queried ways of attracting more people to Board membership especially younger people. It was agreed that social media would be very useful in this and also acting as a personal ambassador to attract new members..

SD questioned how to make sure that the right gaps are filled when Board members leave and also suggested some sort of handover period. DR believed that would be very valuable as would the practice of buddying and acting as a sounding board for newer members. A full training and induction package should also be available for new members and DR would be happy to help with this. .

MJ explained that he was from the private sector and had never worked in the public sector or in education before. MJ stressed how well this current Board works as a team. MJ was concerned that the next refresh could put at risk that very successful team dynamic and also lose some of the organisational culture. DR agreed with the importance of continuity and maintaining culture and will give this more reflection. MP suggested that having a bigger Board could possibly lessen that risk and reduce vulnerability. DR thought it was hard to standardise but had found smaller Boards to be more effective in his experience as long as the full range of skills are reflected.

SD referred to future plans of PBU recruiting generic Board members and asked how this would work in practice. DR stated that plans had not yet been finalised on this new process but he would keep the Board informed.

SD thanked DR for his overview and agreed that they should be aware of public service values in all they do. SD spoke of how well this Board works together and welcomed the opportunity of meeting face to face four times every year. The scrutiny efforts of the sub-committee were also deemed very useful to the smooth running of the Board. SD looked forward to further discussions with DR regarding the Board refresh over the next few months.

7. Recruitment and Retention Presentation

SD welcomed Dr Chis Lewis (CL) who gave a presentation on the recruitment and retention of senior leaders in Wales which was part of the *Strategic Workforce Development* workstream in the corporate plan.

CL outlined the short, medium and long term outcomes as follows:

Short – collecting useful data on recruitment and retention to be analysed and published

Medium – strategic proposals to emerge from the evidence base

Long – Making leadership roles attractive so that leaders are motivated to remain in post.

Both quantitative and qualitative data has been collected by exploring views, attitudes and perceived barriers. This has been a substantial project requiring a large allocation of resources. The National Institute for Education and Social Research has been carrying out this work and have included Welsh expertise in their team. The principle focus has been the attitude and experience of current leaders. Interviews were carried out and focus groups were held with future senior leaders. A report of findings has been included on the website.

Analysis was also carried out on the number of vacancies vs the number of suitably qualified applicants. It was concerning to note the depletion of the leadership workforce which is in danger of not being regenerated as reflected in turnover rates. This is a particular problem in Welsh medium schools and faith schools, especially at secondary level.

CL shared positive and negative feedback of being a senior leader in education in Wales. Positives included the opportunity to make a difference, taking pride in improvement and achievement, passion for chosen specialism and the opportunity to influence policy. Negative aspects were the high workload and poor work/life balance, sense of isolation in the leadership role, excessive bureaucracy and admin, limited funding, negative impact on health and well-being, insufficient training and development, uncertainty around retirement and pensions. The last one was rather surprising but it was thought dated back to when teachers had been offered the option of making changes to pension provision if they so wished.

School funding has now come up as the main issue for senior leaders. This also included salaries and CL commented on the sometimes small differential between salaries of Headteachers and Deputies, given the considerable additional responsibilities of Headteachers.

A event to launch the paper was held in March with presentations from the research team and headteachers. This received very positive feedback and was followed up with meetings with relevant Deputy Directors in WG. TE gave a presentation on findings at the Belmas conference a few weeks ago.

A number of meetings have been held with Kevin Palmer and a joint action plan will be agreed with WG to address some of the things in the report. Support for Welsh medium schools will be at the top of this action plan.

SD had found this research very interesting and appreciated that funding was coming out as a major issue within a system that was really feeling the strain. PM spoke of how the actions of governing bodies can support schools but recognised the inconsistency across the board. PM advocated more training for governing bodies. MP agreed that often new governors do not appreciate the responsibility of the role they have taken on. CL agreed that there is a piece of work to be done here and talked of the skill set required especially for the Chair of Governors role.

JG stressed the importance of Headteachers building and maintaining a good relationship with the Chair of governors. JG also described education as being unique in not bringing in anyone from outside to senior leadership positions. JG was concerned that there are very few Heads in Wales over the age of 60 which results in the loss of so much experience and knowledge. In Australia retired Headteachers provide systematic mentoring support for newly appointed Heads which seems to work really well.

CL reported that consideration has been given to bringing in senior leaders from FE to the school sector but there is push back to recruiting leaders from outside of education. A strategic approach to executive headship could support the system. Fast track routes to leadership are being considered as it was appreciated that potential leaders could be identified at an earlier point. MP reported that faith schools have already been exploring this option.

SD thanked CL for a very interesting presentation that had sparked some useful discussions.

8. Chair's Update

SD reminded the Board that their role was strategic not operational and involved advising, challenging and supporting the organisation. SD also stressed that not all Board appointments were automatically renewed.

SD was concerned at potentially losing so much expertise with the next Board refresh and reminded Directors that they could apply to be included in PBU's generic Board even if they were members of the current board.

SD also referred to the Terms and conditions of Board membership which advised a time commitment of one day per month. SD stressed the importance of attending meetings on a regular basis. Appointments can be terminated if attendance at meetings becomes unreliable although was accepted that emergencies can arise.

It was agreed that the earlier question regarding the rotation of sub-committee chairs could be decided at the AGM in November although the committees could discuss preferences at their October meetings. Directors were asked to send to SD any expressions of interest for chairing sub committees.

9. Well-being Update

JG, as lead director for well-being, gave staff an opportunity for a confidential discussion on an annual basis.

JG has recently completed this exercise emphasising to staff that this was not only an annual exercise and that they could talk to him at any time. This year's discussions painted a very positive picture of working at the Leadership Academy with feedback indicating that staff liked the flexibility, found team meetings helpful and liked the link between policy and practice. It was noted that staff would also welcome more clarification on the future long term direction of the organisation and would also like to get to know the Board more. Staff were aware that Board members will change and were somewhat anxious that new members may not know the values of the organisation.

JG found staff to be very motivated and highly skilled and very positive about their role in the organisation. KP had taken the opportunity of talking to JG in this way and thanked JG for creating the opportunity of this confidential space for staff. MJ also thought it was an excellent initiative for a Board member to take on this role of speaking to staff.

SD thanked JG for carrying out this role and also commented that it was a very good reflection of TE's leadership to have created such a positive work environment for staff.

10. Date of next meeting, future agenda items and close

The next Board meeting will be held face to face on Thursday 7th November at the Grand hotel in Swansea. This will be preceded by the AGM.

SR thanked everyone for their participation in today's meeting and closed the meeting at 2.30pm.

Action Log

No.		Owner	Deadline	Status
241	Feed back to Mark Isherwood MJ's suggestion of pausing approvals	TE	July 2024	Completed
242	Decide on rotation of chairs and send to SD any expressions of interest in becoming a chair	All	November 2024	Completed