

By email.

09/03/2018.

Response to National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee Scrutiny of Accounts 2016-17.

Dear Nick,

Thank you for sharing the work of the Public Affairs Committee in producing the Scrutiny of Accounts 2016-17 report and recommendations. I have read these with interest, both in terms of how the recommendations can support successful implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act as well as to how I can continually improve the reporting process of my own office.

Responses to specific recommendations raised by the Committee after consideration of my first Annual Report and Accounts are shown below and I would also like to take this opportunity to respond to two of the cross-cutting recommendations and themes within the report

Cross-cutting theme of Evaluating Schemes and Measuring Impact

Paragraph 26: *“The evaluation and monitoring of schemes was raised primarily as an issue with Sport Wales but there is a wider principle that all publicly funded bodies should apply value for money principles to projects they undertake”*

The introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act places a duty on many Public Bodies to set well-being objectives to contribute to our National Well-being goals, to use the sustainable development principle, and to set out the steps it will take to meet these objectives. It seems to me that the sustainable development principle therefore needs to be embedded into the design of evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. This fits well with consideration of Value for Money where this is thought of in its widest sense and not misinterpreted as short-term cost savings.

My team are supporting and encouraging Public Bodies to embed the sustainable development principle into the design phase of projects and services. Two guidance documents have been produced – the Future Generations Frameworks for projects and infrastructure and a joint framework with Welsh Government for service design. Both are aimed at supporting Public Bodies (and others) to design projects and services that help evaluate and maximise contribution to our national Well-being Goals and together with Value for Money considerations provide a solid basis for evaluating and measuring the impact of schemes, using the five ways of working set out within the Sustainable Development principle.

Cross-cutting theme of Reserves/Cash Policy

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the Welsh Government give consideration to the different approaches to reserves policies for its sponsored bodies particularly given the greater flexibility afforded to it by the new Wales Reserve from 2018-19.

We welcome and support this recommendation which aligns with the Well-being of Future Generations Act requirement for Public Bodies to adopt the sustainable development principle and, in particular, demonstrate how they are budgeting and planning for the long term. Allowing greater flexibility would support this approach.

Recommendations specific to the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales

Recommendation 5: The Committee recommends that the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales includes in future annual reports and accounts information about the performance of their office against objectives.

Accepted. Year one was primarily concerned with setting my strategic vision and I reported on my progress against the four strategic purposes as set out in my strategic plan. In future annual reports I will provide information on my organisation's performance against five strategic performance measures.

Recommendation 6: The Committee recommends that the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales provides the Committee with an update on the implementation of her recommendations to other organisations in future annual reports to enable monitoring implementation.

Accepted. An update will be included in my 2017-18 Annual Report.

Recommendation 7: The Committee recommends that the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales's office evaluates the high proportion of secondments within her workforce within two years (January 2020) to consider whether it is impacting on the organisation's outputs and efficiency.

I have a very broad statutory remit and a modest budget with which to resource my Office. I elected to make permanent appointments to core roles where I believe there is a clear and ongoing business need for continuity. Secondments and collaborative partnerships are proving to be a smart way to resource efficiently because they allow me to draw in knowledge, skills and experience for projects and programmes of work that have a finite lifespan, they bring fresh perspective into the mix and deepen our collective understanding and connections with partnership organisations. Secondments can also be a good way to resource shared agendas, sometimes without financial cost to my Office.

Working with others through partnerships, collaborations and secondments is a long-term policy and will be a key way in which I will discharge my statutory duties (and is a key element of the Sustainable Development principle defined within the Act). I will evaluate and update on its impact on my organisation's outputs and efficiency as part of the annual reporting process.

Recommendation 8: The Committee recommends that the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales illustrates to the Committee the impact of her agile working environment and promotes any good practice she identifies.

Noted. I will include an illustration in my 2017-18 Annual Report.

Recommendation 9: The Committee recommends the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales revisit the disclosure of remuneration for senior staff, ensuring that it sets out information to enable direct comparison of the level of remuneration paid to the Directors within the Office of the Future Generations Commission for Wales and employed by other bodies.

Accepted and noted for 2017-18 note to the Accounts.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the report.

Yours sincerely,



Sophie Howe