

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**
DATE: **TUESDAY, 21 MAY 2013**
REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**
SUBJECT: **PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION**

1.00 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To advise Cabinet of the terms of reference and membership of the Public Services Commission announced by the First Minister and the timescale for the Commission to produce an initial report.

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.01 The Welsh Government has made commitments in the Programme for Government to further review and reform public services in Wales. On 30 April the First Minister Carwyn Jones, AM made the following statement:-

“Strong, efficient and accessible public services are essential for the well-being of Wales and its people.

We know that current resources available to provide public services are limited at best, while the need for them continues to grow. Increasingly, public service organisations are struggling to meet the challenges that this presents. This is not sustainable or acceptable in longer term, given the scale of the public sector cuts which are yet to come.

This is why we have established a Commission of look hard at the way our public services are delivered, and how we might improve that now and for the future. I expect it to examine all the available evidence, including from those who deliver and use public services, and to be wide ranging in its scope and in developing proposals for reform.

We need a solution which works for Wales and meets the needs of our citizens and communities. This is an opportunity to build better, more efficient and more accountable public services for Wales, I hope we can all work together to support that.”

2.02 The First Minister has since confirmed the terms of reference of the Commission and its membership as follows:-

Remit

Purpose

- 2.03 The Welsh Government is committed to values of fairness and equality. We do not accept poverty and inequality, or the erosion of public services which we believe need to be fit for our times and sustainable. Our Programme for Government set out a clear framework to strengthen the delivery of effective, efficient and accessible public services, including in particular, those that are the responsibility of local government. The importance of protecting and supporting our public services is crucial as we know that in particular our most vulnerable individuals and communities rely heavily on these services which impact so directly on the day to day quality of their lives. These services could not exist without the dedicated public service workforce we have and we are committed to developing and supporting those who work in public services.
- 2.04 We do not consider that the market is the solution to the challenges facing these public services. The needs of individuals, families and communities can be complex or simple, are often met through a range of organisations – including non devolved services – and do not neatly fit into organisational boundaries. Since public sector budgets are likely to continue to tighten, and demand pressures grow, in the medium to long term, there is a clear need to examine how services can be sustained and standards of performance raised, so that people in Wales can continue to receive and influence the public services they need and value.
- 2.05 The Welsh Government's commitment to establish an independent Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery provides an opportunity to examine how public services are governed: that is, held accountable for their performance and delivered most effectively to the public.
- 2.06 The aims of the Commission will be to:
- Gather and provide an objective, authoritative assessment of the extent to which current arrangements for public service governance and delivery in Wales meet the needs and aspirations of people today and provide a sustainable basis for the future;
 - Propose an optimal model of public service governance and delivery for Wales, that will ensure that efficient, effective and accessible services are provided to the citizen; and support continuous improvement in those services against the background of financial and demand pressures;
 - And, as part of this, to engage with those who provide and use public services.

Context

2.07 The Commission is asked to consider the above, taking account of the Welsh policy context, including:

- The current structure of Local Health Boards within Wales is already supporting the move to integrate services more effectively and to put services on a sustainable footing for the medium to long term. The Welsh Government would not, therefore, expect LHB configuration to require consideration by the Commission.
- The action already underway in developing the provision of public services including, but not limited to, the work of the Public Service Leadership Group as overseen by the Partnership Council for Wales; the Welsh Government's footprint for collaboration in public services; and the range of legislative measures such as the Social Services Bill, the Sustainable Development Bill and the Planning Bill
- The need for greater simplicity in governance and delivery arrangements for services in order to enable effective integrated planning and delivery for people in Wales, including through the work of Local Service Boards
- The recommendations of the Hill Review into education improvement
- The proposals put to the Silk Commission by the Welsh Government (and any emerging outcomes from the Silk Commission)

Scope

2.08 The Commission will consider arrangements for the governance and delivery of all devolved services. It is encouraged to reflect the contribution made to integrated delivery by non-devolved services and to report any conclusions relevant to the current considerations of the Silk Commission.

Outcome

2.09 The Commission is asked to collect and consider evidence; engage widely; and to produce findings and a final report, which makes clear recommendations for action by the Welsh Government and public sector partners on:

- The optimal arrangements for the organisation, governance and delivery of efficient, effective and accessible public services in Wales, including
 - Scale of delivery;
 - Scope for integrated and cross-sectoral working.
- A timescale for any changes
- A consideration of any associated changes to the financing arrangements of the public services under consideration

Timing

- 2.10 The Commission should report by the end of 2013.

Approach to its work

- 2.11 The Commission will determine and plan the work necessary to produce an evidence-based report. In undertaking that work it should engage those who use and provide public services, including the voluntary sector, and those who are politically accountable for service delivery.

Membership of the Commission

- 2.12
- Sir Paul Williams (Chairman)
 - Nick Bennett
 - Nick Bourne
 - Nerys Evans
 - Juliet Luporini
 - Garry Owen
 - Cllr Alun Thomas

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 The Public Services Commission is likely to be the most significant review of the public services in Wales since devolution. The Council should be ready and prepared to make a full contribution to the review as a corporate body, through political representation and through professional advice. Major reform will be required for the public services partners to sustain key services to improve the economy, health and social well being of Wales in a worsening UK national fiscal environment. The Council is awaiting contact from the Commission over the role that the Council and its peer bodies can play and how.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 The Cabinet is invited to make first contact with the Commission to offer to make a full contribution to the review as a corporate body, through political representation and through professional advice.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 None

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 None

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 As outlined within the remit.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 As contained within the report.

12.00 APPENDICES

None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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