Minutes of the CCDG Board Meeting, October 1, 2024  
  
**Present:**   
Erica Cassin (Chair)

Andrew Clark   
Helen White  
James Harvey  
Joni Ayn-Alexander  
Kate Daubney

Azza Ali

Rokib Uddin

Natalie Richards

Aled Jones-Griffith

Dave Mathews

Rhian Roberts

Richard Thomas

**From Careers Wales:**  
Nerys Bourne  
Nikki Lawrence  
Ruth Ryder  
  
**Welsh Government:**Neil Surman

Sam Evans  
  
 **Translator:**  
 Delyth Davies (Cymen)  
  
 **Absent:**

Tony Smith

**Secretariat:**

Donna Millward

## Apologies/Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Tony Smith.

No new declarations of interest were noted.

## Minutes of the Previous Meeting, July 17, 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

## Matters Arising:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Progress** |
| **ACTION 1:** Net zero progress and premises strategy to be discussed in Finance, Audit & Risk Committee meeting. | This will form part of the agenda for the next Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting. The action was therefore completed. |
| **ACTION 2:** Strategic prioritisation in terms of carbon net zero to be brought back to future board meeting. | This action was agreed as being complete. |
| **ACTION 3:** NL to prepare briefing document including key impacts and funding risks. | This action was agreed as being complete. |
| **ACTION 4:** EC to host office visit to introduce new board members to CW staff. DM to support with dates | TM of Cardiff office to contact EC with proposed dates. The action was therefore completed. |
| **ACTION 5:** RR to contact EB to provide board members with a list of CW events occurring/attending in the next few months. | This action was agreed as being complete. |
| **ACTION 6:** RR to circulate management accounts paper to Board members. | This action was agreed as being complete. |

## Chair’s Update – Verbal

**4.1 Board changes**

DH resigned from the Board and RT had been stepping in as interim Chair and will now take over as Chair of the Performance and Impact Committee. A decision regarding a permanent replacement for board member DH is pending final confirmation.

**4.2 WG changes**

The Chair highlighted the key changes within WG including a new First Minister and a new Minister for Careers Wales, Jack Sargent.

## Chief Executive’s Report

Members discussed the previously circulated report.

**5.1 Key Company Risks**

Members noted the four key risks remain unchanged.

**5.2** **Pay Award 2024/25**

The CE explained that there is a remuneration committee meeting scheduled for Friday. Unison had submitted a pay award request that has now been agreed and paid. However, a recent WG statement suggests an increase for an additional uplift this financial year. Discussions with the Union will continue around this.

**5.3** **Stakeholder Engagement**

The CE highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement work, attended a face-to-face meeting in Cardiff with Director, Social Partnerships, Employability and Fair Work and Deputy Director Skills, which strengthened their effective working relationship. The monthly and quarterly meetings with WG now include other key WG colleagues external to the sponsor group. Conversations at both national and international levels continue to ensure Careers Wales remains progressive and informed by learning from others and share our best practices as a leading organisation in the sector.

The next online "all staff" meeting is scheduled next week, where a general update on changes will be provided. A video by Chief Executive/Chair has been recorded and will be released to CW colleagues.

**5.4** **UPDATE ON KEY CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECT**

The report covered various operational improvements and transformational projects.

**5.4.1 Data intelligence hub**

Update provided on the Data Intelligence Hub's progress and impact, with a feasibility study update from Wizard expected by the end of October 2024. Proof of concept to be shared with the Deputy Director Skills from WG.

**5.4.2 Premises**

WG have approved an offer for the Parc Menai office. A business case is being prepared to seek agreement on retaining the proceeds.

**5.4.3 KPIs**

KPIs in the reports are on track, with no concerns about achieving them. Some KPIs will be reported at the next board meeting.

Members discussed and raised if a member of the careers work related experience team (CWRE) could attend a future board meeting.

**ACTION 1:** CWRE to be discussed at next P&I Committee meeting. Director of Customer Strategy and Service Development to update board members in next board meeting.

**ACTION 2:** Update on the progress in a future P&I Committee meeting of the new approach for employer connection in terms of events.

## Welsh Government (WG) Update

**6.1 Budget Process**

Internal budgeting process is ongoing, with ministerial discussions happening to address pressures and priorities. The outcome of these discussions will inform further budgeting steps.

**6.2** **Skills England and Apprenticeship Reforms**

Recent announcements from the Prime Minister regarding apprenticeships and the apprenticeship levy in England, and the formation of Skills England were highlighted. The importance of understanding these changes and their implications for Wales was emphasized.

**6.3** **Welsh Government Priorities**

The First Minister's focus on delivery and impact over the next 18 months was noted, with a clear emphasis on aligning with the government's priorities. It was agreed that Careers Wales had a significant role in supporting these priorities.

Board members discussed the importance of collaborating with other government departments and the potential to work with Skills England to benefit Wales. Ongoing strategic discussions within the Welsh Government were also discussed.

## Board Effectiveness Review/Future Meetings

Board members had received the paper on the results of the Board effectiveness review. The Chair summarised the feedback.

There was consensus on the potential value of an external review of board effectiveness, aiming to benchmark against other organisations

**ACTION 3:** Chair to contact Head of Careers Policy/Deputy Director Skills to discuss possibility of an external board evaluation.

The Chair discussed the effectiveness of the board meetings and decided to move to five board meetings a year, with two being face-to-face and three virtual. This decision was made to comply with their articles regarding the frequency of meetings and to balance operational and governance matters more effectively.

Board members agreed to increase the number of meetings to five per year, with a review of locations and times of meetings

**ACTION 4:** Executive Assistant to survey board members for preferred time slots and locations for the 2025/26 board meetings.

## BF Gap Analysis/Customer Offer

Director of Customer Strategy and Service Development updated Board members on the Brighter Futures (BF) strategy gap analysis, which focused on evaluating the progress and identifying gaps in the implementation of the BF strategy over the last three years, especially considering budget cuts.

Key strengths include comprehensive geographical and demographic reach, strong brand reputation, qualified staff, advanced technology and digital services, and robust partnerships. However, budget cuts have led to reduced services, staffing challenges, and operational strains. Future recommendations emphasise focusing on core objectives, aligning key performance indicators, investing in data analysis and AI, enhancing customer involvement, and ensuring service inclusivity and bilingualism.

**ACTION 5:** Director of Customer Strategy and Service Development to explore with NR - Board member how Careers Wales can align with or support schools' Strategic Equality Plans and PDG (Pupil Deprivation Grant) reporting, potentially enhancing Careers Wales' impact on young people.

## Strategy – SWOT Analysis

The Chief Executive led a discussion on the SWOT analysis conducted by the senior management team, aimed at informing the new strategy and continuous improvement.

Board members contributed their views on the organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to enrich the strategic planning process. This exercise highlighted areas such as data analysis, bilingual staff availability, and operational improvements as key focus areas.

Board members' feedback will be incorporated into the final SWOT analysis.

## Management Accounts

Board members received the draft management accounts which had been discussed and reviewed in the last Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

The accounts brought to board meeting for their information.

## Annual Year-end Report

The Director of Resources and Transformation formally thanked AC - Board member for his significant contributions with this document and highlighted the volume of work done by the finance team. The Finance Audit and Risk Committee had a thorough discussion and review of the accounts. Initial feedback received from Audit Wales indicated only minor changes, with nothing substantial that would alter the draft presented.

The final accounts would be produced incorporating changes. The Board gave delegated authority for the year end accounts to be signed off by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.

## Annual Report

The Director of Customer Strategy and Service Development shared highlights of the annual report with board members. The report emphasises both customer-facing activities and internal efforts, including contributions from the creative and learning and development teams, as well as net zero initiatives.

Board members discussed strategies for distributing the annual report to maximise its impact. Suggestions included creating a shorter version for easier consumption and using it as a tool to engage with multiple ministers who have a vested interest in Careers Wales' work.

Board members emphasised the importance of leveraging the report for strategic communication with key stakeholders.

## Q2: Finance, Audit & Risk Committee – Minutes (Draft) – August 7, 2024

The minutes of the last meeting were shared, and the Chair outlined the key points of the meeting for members.

## Q2: Performance & Impact Committee – Minutes (Draft) – July 11, 2024

The minutes of the last meeting were shared with Board members. The Chair outlined the key points of the meeting for members.

## Q2: People Matters Committee – Minutes (Draft) – September 19, 2024

Minutes of the last meeting were shared with Board members. The Chair outlined the key points of the meeting for members.

## Any Other Business

No other business was noted.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Action Log:** | **Lead** | **Update to be provided:** |
| **ACTION 1:** CWRE to be discussed at next P&I Committee meeting. Director of Customer Strategy and Service Development to update board members in next board meeting. | NB | 11.12.24 |
| **ACTION 2:** Update on the progress in a future P&I Committee meeting of the new approach for employer connection in terms of events. | NB | 11.12.24 |
| **ACTION 3:** Chair to contact Head of Careers Policy/Deputy Director Skills to discuss possibility of an external board evaluation | EC | 11.12.24 |
| **ACTION 4:** Executive Assistant to survey board members for preferred time slots and locations for the 2025/26 board meetings. | DM | ASAP |
| **ACTION 5:** Director of Customer Strategy and Service Development to explore with NR - Board member how Careers Wales can align with or support schools' Strategic Equality Plans and PDG (Pupil Deprivation Grant) reporting, potentially enhancing Careers Wales' impact on young people | NB | ASAP |
| **No further actions recorded** | **No further actions recorded** | **No further actions recorded** |