

**Extract from the Council Members' Workshop, 22 October 2009  
The Village Hotel, Cardiff**

**Session 2: Council Effectiveness Survey**

Bethan Owen presented the Session, and the results of the survey as summarized in the tabled paper were discussed.

**It was noted generally that:**

- overall the responses from members were very positive
- there was great value in private Council sessions which allowed for open discussion between members without the presence of observers.
- the Governance Review Report due from the Assembly could also contain additional useful commentary on the operation of Council meetings.
- there is a difficult balance to achieve in trying to minimise and manage the volume of papers provided for Council meetings with the need to keep members fully informed (particularly new members).
- further use could be made of the Extranet to replace distribution of some or all of the hard copy documents (or to provide an alternative for members who preferred this option to paper). Further noted that members were to be consulted by officers during a forthcoming review of the Extranet.
- the forward plan for future Council meeting agendas was presented at each meeting for members' information rather than as a discussion item though members could raise as an AOB item any changes or additions that they would like to make to the plan
- the input from HEFCE and SFC representatives was very useful as they can contribute to discussion with their experiences from the rest of the UK.
- members found the HE news bulletins to be very useful and informative

**The following action points were agreed in response to matters raised in each section of the questionnaire:**

**Council meetings**

- make more use of the Extranet to file copies of background information and reference material and reports that are referred to in Council papers
- review the structure and content of the Chief Executive's Report with an aim to simplifying the document and reducing the number of items brought to Council for approval in this paper;
- minimise the number of additional budget approval items that are presented to Council by including sufficient detail in the funding and budget approval papers presented to Council normally in January and March for most budget lines to be approved by Council for the following financial and academic year.

### **Policy and Strategy**

- continue to invite contributions from HEFCE and SFC representatives at Council meetings to bring their experience of policy and processes in other parts of the UK to the Council discussion
- continue to bring the Corporate risk register and risk management paper to Council as a discussion paper (rather than a matter for approval without discussion)
- develop further (following completion of the Assembly's HE action plan and HEFCW's corporate strategy) Council strategies for specific topics and regions against which future Council actions and HEIs' proposals to Council can be considered

### **Council committees**

- review the distribution of Council members on Council committees (in particular Audit & Risk) once the new members have been appointed
- review volume of papers presented to Committees and look to make more use of executive summaries and of the Extranet to file more detailed reports or reference material
- consider the scope for more frequent meetings of the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Committee than currently timetabled and also scope for appointing an additional external member to the Committee.
- investigate options for providing more institutional level information and analysis in strategic committee papers

### **Council membership**

- confirm that if members identify training following their initial induction in any area that they would find helpful to assist them in their role as Council or Committee members they should communicate their needs to the Clerk and/or the Chair.
- the Chair will consult with Council members on the required Council skills matrix when this is being considered next (prior to preparing for new Council member appointments by November 2011).
- consider including background information of the 'history' in strategic discussion papers to inform members (in particular newly appointed members) of 'how we got to where we are'.
- extend the information provided to new members at their induction to include more background information about HEFCW itself i.e. 'Who we are and how we got here'.

### **Council stakeholders**

- Invite the Chief Executive of Fforwm (recently re-named as Colegau Cymru Colleges Wales CCCW) to meet with Council at a pre meeting session to provide the FE stakeholders' perspective of HE provision in Wales.

**Closing notes:** It was noted that **Welsh Assembly Government Report of the Citizen-centered Governance Review of HEFCW** had not yet been received and therefore the Session could not be held as scheduled. A confidential draft of the report was due to be sent to the Chief Executive by the end of the week.