

National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Commission

Assembly Commission Strategy 2014 – 2016

May 2014

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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Introduction

Statement of Purpose

The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales and holds the Welsh Government to account.

The Assembly Commission serves the National Assembly to help make it a strong, accessible and forward looking democratic institution and legislature that delivers effectively for the people of Wales.

Strategic goals

The Assembly Commission's strategic goals provide the focus for our work during the Fourth Assembly and are unchanged. They are that we will:

- Provide outstanding parliamentary support
- Engage with the people of Wales and Promote Wales
- Use resources wisely

Achieving the Commission's Strategy for the Fourth Assembly

This document sets out our priorities for the remaining two years of this Assembly. It updates and builds on the document "Our Plan to deliver the Commission's Strategy for the Fourth Assembly" which we published in March 2013.

Commissioners met on 3 April 2014 to discuss progress and achievements against the Commission's strategic goals and priorities for change, innovation and investment since 2011, and to share their thoughts on what more needed to be done for them to be satisfied that they have provided a strong legacy before dissolution of the Fourth Assembly in 2016. Their conclusions have been incorporated into our strategic priorities to provide this revised strategic plan for the remainder of this Assembly.

In support of the Commission's strategic goals, we have five updated priority areas for change, innovation and investment for this Assembly:

- Enabling the Assembly to be as effective as possible through the support we provide, including through the impact of the next stages of our ICT Strategy
- Enhanced bilingual services
- Better engagement with people in Wales
- Making the most of our Estate
- Complete readiness for the transition to, and new challenges of, the Fifth Assembly

To achieve the strategic goals, we also need to continue to deliver the full range of day-to-day business to high standards. Service Plans and PMDRs need to describe the activities, actions and projects required to deliver both the regular business activities and work on the five updated priority areas. We have an ambitious programme of change, which in some areas is complex and significant. We are establishing a Strategic Transformation Programme to lead and manage the change necessary to deliver some of the

Commission's key strategic goals. This will enable us to prioritise our work in a more strategic and targeted way to deliver with pace, while taking account of our day-to-day business priorities and other key projects.

Budget Strategy

In 2011, the Commission set a clear budget strategy for enhancing the capacity and capabilities of Assembly services through investment in: support to Members and their new legislative responsibilities; the estate as a venue for Wales; communications and technology; and in how we work as an efficient corporate body. In the final two years of this Assembly, the Commission will deliver strong, cost effective services for Assembly Members within a tighter budget, whilst planning a smooth, professional transition to the Fifth Assembly.

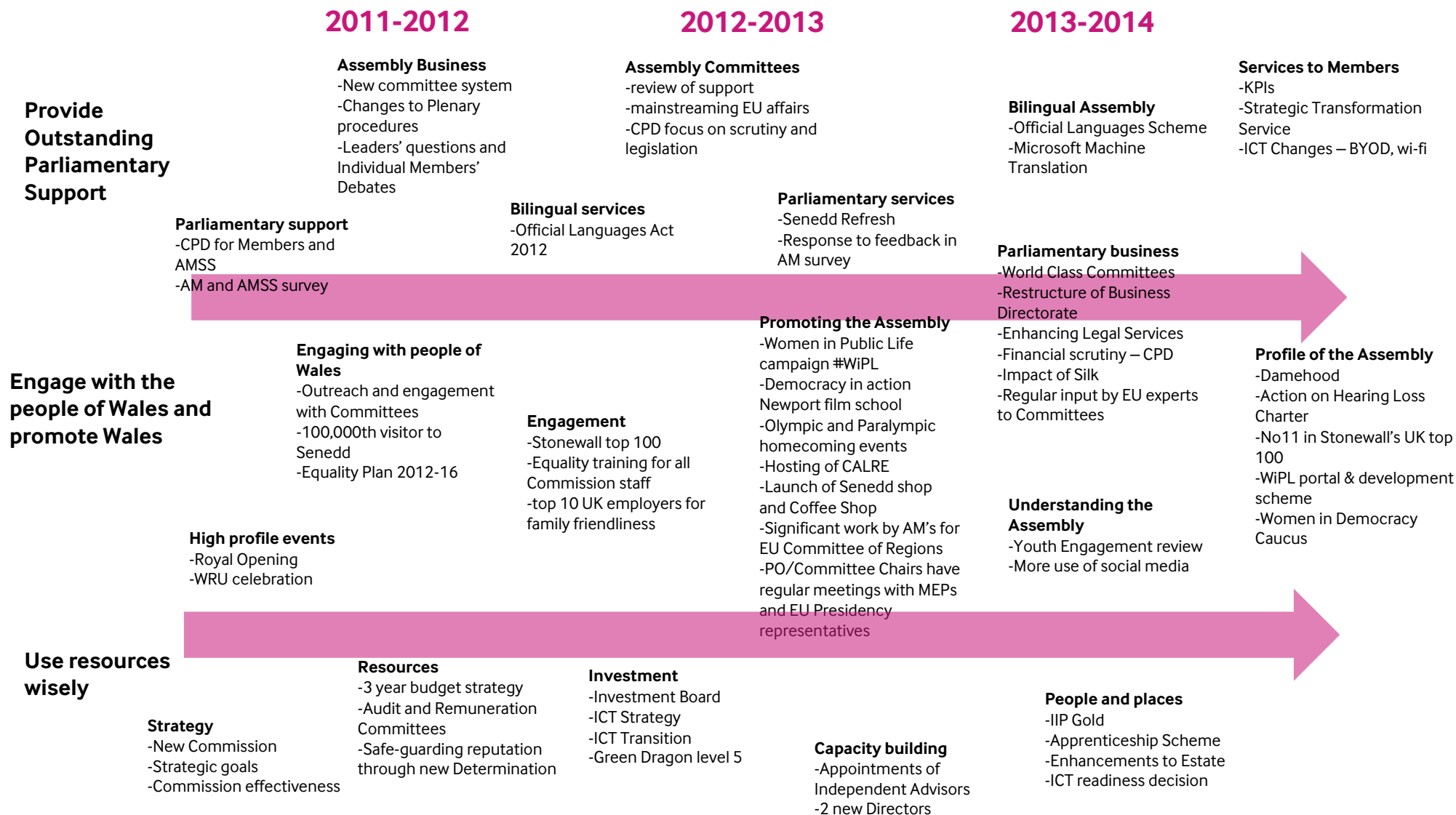
Value for Money (VfM)

We have a strong record in delivering value for money, exceeding our annual target for each year of the Fourth Assembly to date. We have delivered significant savings through procurement and robust contract management, found areas to maximise our service delivery effectiveness and continued our improvement of management information. So far, most of our savings have been achieved through staff vacancy management, though with a growing percentage of non-staff savings (20% in 2013-14). In the coming years we expect this to continue to be a challenge and we need to develop further our management information to help drive this forward.

Progress 2011- 2014

Impressive progress has been made so far this Assembly, with significant achievements across all of our strategic goals. Some highlights are shown in the following diagram.

Highlights of achievements against our Strategic Goals



The five updated priority areas

01. Enabling the Assembly to be as effective as possible through the support we provide, including through the impact of the next stages of our ICT Strategy

Strategic Goal: Provide Outstanding Parliamentary Support

Progress has been significant. Since 1999, confidence in the work of the Assembly has grown tremendously. We should be proud of our approach, and we are an exemplar for others to follow. That said, there is considerably more to do and some big challenges for us over the next two years to provide consistently strong support that fully meets the needs of individual Assembly Members and Committees, in order to enable them to operate as an outstanding Parliament for Wales.

What we need to do

Committees

Embed the vision for world class Committee support thoroughly in all aspects of our support, including:

- tight alignment of the support we provide, driven emphatically by the priorities identified by Members;
- flexible, tailored services and delivery that reflect the demands on Members and enable them to make the most efficient and effective use of their time;
- bilingual service delivery including the provision of written briefing material for Members in English and Welsh according to their needs as the norm in all committees, allowing Members to operate in the language of their choice (see also goal 2 below);
- high levels of confident, professional expertise and accessible, high quality, timely information;
- integration of the services we provide and a complete absence of silos or unhelpful internal practice;
- expanded CPD for committee Chairs and members; and
- work with the Presiding Officer and Business Committee to provide options for improving processes and support for scrutiny and legislation, for implementation beyond May 2016.

When

By Autumn
2014

What we need to do

Plenary

Following the consultation on the use of technology in the Siambr, the refit of ICT facilities will be delivered incrementally where possible with any significant changes carried out during the 2015 summer recess, subject to engineering constraints.

We will review our Plenary business support system, from the tabling of business, running of Plenary through to reporting of Plenary proceedings, to exploit new ICT platforms to work smarter and make our information more easily accessible to enable us to better serve Members' needs and engagement with the public.

Reporting Proceedings

We will undertake a review of the way in which we report Assembly proceedings, to better meet the needs of Members and stakeholders. We will explore different ways of working, including the use of technology to improve efficiency and make best use of resources. We will assess the opportunities that are available to use technological products in different ways, building on the progress made on Senedd.TV, and making the Assembly's activities more transparent, open and easier to engage with in a digital world.

Working with Assembly Members and AMSS

We will:

- build on the strengths of our relationships with AMs and consider further how to achieve the most effective professional relationships with AMs based on mutual respect and a clear understanding of their pressures and priorities;
- invest time and effort in communication with AMs to raise awareness of the Commission's services and achievements, and to ensure that we understand and respond to AM requirements;
- give staff opportunities to gain a greater insight into the needs of Assembly Members; and
- build on existing connections and work more closely with AMSS, to ensure that their needs and our outputs are as effectively aligned as possible.

Providing legal expertise

When

Incrementally if possible – major change 2015 summer recess

By end of April 2016 at the latest.

By May 2015

By March 2016

What we need to do

Maintain activities in place to build capacity in drafting of non-government Bills including:

- keep current arrangement with Daniel Greenberg to train Commission lawyers in legislative drafting on-the-job and provide drafting services himself when necessary to meet Members' deadlines;
- actively seek other opportunities to develop drafting skills, in particular secondments during periods of lower Assembly activity; and
- aim for two Commission lawyers to be highly proficient in legislative drafting by the end of the Fifth Assembly;

Training and knowledge-sharing internally to improve drafting skills of most other Commission lawyers and the efficient use of current systems (e.g. the current legislation workbench software).

Other ICT developments

ICT Service Transition to be complete by the end of July 2014.

At this point, the Commission will have full management responsibility for the delivery of ICT services and will have completed the exit from Atos and separation from WG.

The Commission's new website will be the first application to be delivered using Microsoft SharePoint – the platform we will use for developing and delivering the Assembly's business applications in future.

A significant refresh and replacement of the Commission's ICT infrastructure will be complete, putting the Commission in the right place to deliver a much improved and more flexible ICT service.

A particular outcome will be the improvement of services to Constituency and Home Offices, e.g. through a re-provision of internet connectivity.

We will procure and implement a new telephony system.

When

By April 2016

Summer 2014

By end
September
2014

By end March
2015

By end March
2015

02. Enhanced bilingual Services

Strategic Goal: Provide Outstanding Parliamentary support and Engage with the people of Wales

The ability to engage freely in either language in a truly bilingual institution is an important aspiration for the Commission. People should be able to choose whether to use Welsh or English in every element of their work. We are on the right track and progress in the last year has been significant. If we are to meet the expectations of Assembly Members and the public, more needs to be achieved before the end of the Fourth Assembly. By the end of this Assembly, we will have transformed our operation as a truly bilingual organisation through our use of technology, by putting in place and implementing our Bilingual Skills Strategy, refocus of our staffing resources, and the commitment of all Commission staff to the delivery of the highest standards of parliamentary support for Members and the public in both languages.

What we need to do

Official Languages

The priorities identified in our Official Languages Scheme will all have been delivered including:

- piloting of tailored bilingual briefing for committee work;
- all HR policies and documentation available in both official languages;
- all front line staff members (including catering contractors) to be able to “meet and greet” in both official languages; and
- a review of language tuition provision (including contractual arrangements) to enhance and tailor the services to Members, support staff and Commission staff.

New priorities will be identified between now and the Fifth Assembly that move us on from the traditional mind set of document translation being the dominant indicator of functional bilingual delivery e.g.

- investigate the potential of making meeting rooms within the Assembly estate interpretation ready i.e. inbuilt infra-red emitters installed on a permanent basis, and ensure that simultaneous translators are available, so that Members could hold bilingual discussions with constituents, cross-party groups, social events etc. ;

When

July 2014

On-going

July 2014

July 2014

March 2015

What we need to do

- consider establishment of buddy system (between bilingual Commission staff members and Assembly Members/ AMSS) in order to provide support and advice on bilingual working;
- implement a clear method across the Assembly for bilingual emails so that English and Welsh speakers can access their preferred language text quickly and easily; and
- taking further the tailoring of support for bilingual briefing for some members so that we meet individual needs which vary from AM to AM.

We will be seen as the exemplar bilingual organisation in Wales through:

- perceptible change in staff organisational culture where bilingual working is the norm;
- language awareness training for each individual Commission staff member –via a combination of e-learning and face to face delivery;
- commissioning of a permanent official languages training tool;
- continued investigation of, and investment in, machine translation and language technology to enhance and streamline bilingual working; and
- investigate options for further bilingual support for Members' Plenary work in collaboration with the Table Office, Chamber Service and TRS.

When

July 2014

April 2016

July 2014

November
2014

On-going

03. Better engagement with people in Wales

Strategic Goal: Engage with the people of Wales and promote Wales

Commissioners felt that there had been great progress in specific areas. Work to further engage young people and the Women in Public Life campaign are really positive examples. However, the Commission wants to achieve further engagement with the general public beyond specific groups. Across Wales, and for all groups, they would like us to establish the Assembly's purpose in the hearts and minds of the people of Wales.

What we need to do

When

Launch our revised youth engagement offer – based on three core principles of reaching out, enabling debate, and giving feedback – and recruited people with specific youth work skills to the youth engagement and education team.

July 2014

Consider commissioning a review of the Assembly's brand and our marketing and PR to sell the brand more proactively.

December 2014

Continue to develop public-facing events to ensure professionalism befitting a modern democracy.

December 2014

Continue to challenge national media outlets and engage with developing media to enhance reporting on the Assembly's work under our Democratic Deficit campaign.

April 2015

We will continue to develop our public relations programme to promote the Assembly more effectively to the people of Wales. We will learn from our experiences of engaging with young people and focus on:

December 2014

- delivering our business outreach programme working with Wales' leading companies to raise awareness of the Assembly;
- developing the piloted programme of pre-legislative workshops to improve participants awareness and understanding of the legislative process and encourage participants to engage with the process;
- engaging hard to reach groups in the Assembly's work through various activities such as committee based outreach work, community visits and partnership work, consistent with our equalities objectives; and
- delivering the Assembly's major events programme, including the Women in Public Life campaign, an enhanced summer events and WW1 programme (including exploring possibilities of events in Brussels at the European Parliament and/or Committee of the Regions as part of the WW1 five-year programme).

We will also review the effectiveness of the Assembly bus for public relations purposes, and consider alternative methods to raise awareness of

What we need to do

When

the Assembly and its work across Wales.

We are reviewing the way in which we report our work and shifting the way we package and disseminate information so that high interest content is more widely shared and our output is trusted and respected. Examples are:

On-going

- making changes to the way we engage with young people, in light of the results of the Youth Engagement consultation. Changes to the way we work with young people will be supported by developing the www.yourassembly.org website into an online hub for people to find out what's happening in the Assembly and contribute to Assembly business;
- assessing the opportunities that are available to report proceedings to make the Assembly's activities more transparent, open and easier to engage with in a digital world;
- using social media - through existing and new channels - to engage with new audiences and find new voices to contribute to Assembly business;
- working with ICT to re-design Senedd.TV to make it more accessible and easier to navigate. We also want to make it easier for users, such as journalists and bloggers, to share our content on their own platforms and find the information that matters to them and their area. A clipping feature will enable users to choose and embed specific questions, items, speeches etc.; and
- making increased use of visual formats such as info-graphics and videos to share information.

We will continue to monitor and review the impact of our media relations activity, including our fledgling partnership with Welsh hyper-local media hubs, and adapt our strategy as necessary.

We will continue to promote Wales and the Assembly's work through extensive contacts in the EU and internationally, including work directly in Brussels and related work in Wales and other parts of the UK. This includes the work of the Assembly's representatives on the Committee of the Regions, the Welsh MEPs, the EU Institutions (including close relationships with the European Commission Office In Wales, and European Parliament's UK representation), participation in CALRE, EC-UK Forum, BIPA and CPA; through other bilateral contacts with parliaments, legislative assemblies, and EU networks and representations.

On-going

We will make the most of opportunities to raise awareness of this work, including participation in EU/international conferences and other fora. We will look to use our UK, EU and international contacts to benchmark the work of the Assembly, to enable us to meaningfully deliver on the objective of establishing world class committees.

What we need to do

We will explore opportunities for joint working with other organisations in Wales (and beyond) on initiatives that promote devolved democracy, as a way of raising the profile of the work of the Assembly in Wales as well as providing scope for mutual learning/benchmarking.

We will meet the British Council to look at possible funding opportunities under the Erasmus+ EU programme.

When

July 2014

04. Making the most of our Estate

Strategic Goal: Use Resources Wisely

Again, tremendous achievements have been delivered and the Assembly Estate already presents a significantly enhanced, professional image. Key challenges going forward will be on sustainability and ensuring that AM and AMSS accommodation is of a consistently high standard.

What we need to do

We have achieved a 32% carbon reduction (on our 2008/09 base line) against a target of 40% (by 2015). We remain optimistic that existing plans will mean we will be close to reaching the 40% target by 2015.

Present a carbon reduction route map to the Commission in June 2014 setting out future options (to take us beyond 2015) for the Commission to consider in support of its commitment to achieving carbon neutrality.

Develop a long term (rolling), prioritised, investment programme for the estate endorsed by the Investment Board. This will seek to ensure that our estate remains fit for purpose, reflects the Assembly's position nationally and internationally and positions the Senedd and the Pierhead at the heart of Welsh public life.

Deliver proposals (through the use of external expertise) to enhance our visitors' experience, to: complement the Commission's wider engagement strategy; make appropriate use of ICT; ensure that the information we deliver is relevant, interesting and regularly updated; establish better retail opportunities for the Assembly shop.

Address issues in the accommodation for AMs and AMSS, including:

- review sound-proofing options for AM offices;
- ensure all office furniture in AM offices is fit for purpose; and
- consider creative options for overhauling the office facilities for AMs and their staff in future.

When

Dec 2015

June 2014

July 2014

Oct 2014

March 2015

05. Beyond the Fourth Assembly

Future planning including transition to the Fifth Assembly, Royal opening, Remuneration Board, future budget strategies, future constitutional change.

What we need to do

The Remuneration Board's package of decisions in respect of remuneration and financial support of Members in the Fifth Assembly will be known by spring 2015. The Commission will make representations to the Remuneration Board to make them aware of the Commission's priorities for the strategic development of the Assembly, reflecting matters of importance to AMs such as communicating locally with their constituents.

Our response to any change in the constitutional position of the Assembly will be thorough and well planned. We will have expertise and capacity in place in readiness for the exercise of new powers and responsibilities. We will not simply be responsive - we will work with key stakeholders and ensure that the Assembly's interests are promoted to influence the changing constitutional landscape of the UK and the devolution of new powers to the Assembly.

We will have reviewed all key areas so that we are ready to provide the next Commission and Business Committee with the operational and procedural advice they need to hit the ground running. A specific example would be the work Business Committee will carry out in reviewing specific areas of procedure and Standing Orders.

Planning for Fifth Assembly induction and CPD will be tailored to individual AMs' needs and mandatory training for office holders will be established.

Options will be developed for introducing new formalities or traditions to Assembly proceedings and appropriate branding and symbolism to convey the authority of the Presiding Office.

Decisions about the Royal Opening will be delegated to officials and the Presiding Officer.

The Commission wishes to publish a Legacy Report, including ideas that the Fifth Assembly Commission can consider for the future.

When

Spring 2015

By Spring
2016

By April 2016

By April 2016

Financial management across the organisation

We will facilitate a smooth transition to the next Commission by having strategies in place for resourcing in the Fifth Assembly including:

- workforce and capacity planning early enough to deliver right skills, right place, right time with minimal costs;
- improving option appraisal through cost analysis of service levels and demand;
- emphasising VfM to show how we deliver more with less and to show benefit realisation managed, monitored and reflected in budgets;
- maintaining a transparent approach and being clear where we have spent our funding over the Fourth Assembly; and
- emphasising our track record of maximising the use of available resources through financial outturn, KPI targets and flexible planning.

By April 2016

How we will perform and deliver success

We have a reputation for delivering high quality performance. Our priority areas are designed to keep it that way and to ensure that we are meeting expectations of Members, staff and the public.

The way in which we do our jobs is also very important. Through our work, all of us will be expected to:

- act with full regard for our equalities responsibilities, respecting everyone and treating all people fairly;
- deliver all aspects of the Commission’s responsibilities with pace, professional expertise and a strong service ethos;
- set high standards and keep our promises;
- be open and transparent, expose ourselves to the most intense scrutiny, and provide measurable evidence of our achievements; and
- demonstrate our absolute commitment to Welsh parliamentary democracy and our pride in the Assembly.

Service Plans are prepared annually which are directly linked to the achievement of the strategic goals of the Assembly. They include consideration of the risks to achieving objectives as well as opportunities to improve service delivery through collaborative working with other service areas. They provide the basis for developing individuals’ Performance Management and Development Reviews (PMDRs) so that everyone is clear about how their objectives fit into the aims and objectives of the organisation.

May 2014