

## Response to COVID-19: preparation for future recovery

### Cabinet is invited to endorse:

- the Welsh Government's general approach to the work of preparing for future recovery after COVID-19
- the establishment of an Expert Group for Continuity and Recovery.

### Principles and approach

1. Cabinet is invited to agree some key principles to guide our approach in preparing to meet the challenges of recovery after Covid19.
2. First, considerations of social justice, fair work and environmental sustainability must inform the Welsh Government's approach to recovery and it must be compliant with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
3. Second, the Government's recovery programme must have particular regard for those who are economically or otherwise disadvantaged, especially by age, gender, disability or other protected characteristic. It should also seek to identify the sources of economic prosperity in the economy after COVID-19, encourage them and the equitable participation in them by people in Wales.
4. Third, regard should also be had for the current programme of government and for existing delivery structures and stakeholder relationships although these should be challenged where there is strong evidence that their underlying assumptions may have been fundamentally changed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Opportunities should also be sought to maximise any innovative approach to resourcing and delivery, especially those introduced during the period of the current health emergency

### Expert Group for Continuity and Recovery

5. There are significant benefits to drawing on expertise outside of government to inform our work of preparing for the recovery stage after the pandemic. This paper therefore seeks the approval of Cabinet to the establishment of an external advisory group to contribute external perspectives and constructive challenge to the task of planning for the recovery, to inform the development of a work programme, and to support Ministers in their oversight of that programme.
6. The Group is intended to be advisory and not of course a forum for decision-making, but in order to provide the best support it can to Ministers, it would have appropriate access to information and a range of other evidence and analysis to be commissioned as needed. We are proposing that the work programme previously agreed with the Welsh Centre for Public Policy should now be repurposed to focus their work on the impact of COVID-19 and preparation for recovery. Preliminary discussions have already taken place to map out what a revised work programme could include.

7. The External Group will be supported by a small civil service secretariat and by Special Advisers. An internal board will also be established alongside the External Group, to take forward the work of developing a recovery programme, subject to approval by Ministers and which will also be informed by the output of the External Group.
8. The Group is intended to be an important resource to Ministers in responding to the changed circumstances which we face in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic.
9. I have asked the Counsel General to take on the task of chairing the Group and to ensure that Ministerial colleagues and officials can draw upon the advice and output of the Group, to inform their work.
10. Given the range of impacts of COVID-19, the membership of the External Group will need to reflect an appropriate breadth of experience. I will want to ensure that Ministers have the benefit of a range of voices, across aspects of the economy, public services and the environment principally. I am considering a list of potential candidates for membership of the Group which I intend to share with colleagues. I propose that individuals will be appointed for their personal contribution and capacity to offer relevant expertise and insight, rather than as representatives of the organisations for which they work. The membership of the Group will be kept under review and can be supplemented if necessary from time to time, to reflect emerging challenges and Ministerial priorities.
11. I propose that the work of the Group should begin with one or two introductory “virtual roundtable” sessions involving a slightly wider cohort of participants, which will then enable a more tightly focussed work programme for the Group to be devised.
12. It is imperative that advice provided by the Expert Group is informed by our values as a government and our commitment to a more equal, prosperous and greener Wales. I propose therefore that the Expert Group’s work should be organised around our priorities of securing economic, social and environmental justice, aligning with the programme for government.
13. Annex A sets out a draft Terms of Reference and Annex B describes the proposed way of working of the Expert Group and how it interacts with the Welsh Government in further detail.

**CABINET**

**CAB(19-20)50**

**Communications**

14. Last Friday, I announced that the Welsh Government intends to draw on external experts to support its post-Covid19 recovery thinking. Subject to Cabinet's approval of the paper, I will publish a written statement to announce the Terms of Reference for the Expert Group in due course.

**Cabinet is invited to endorse:**

- **the Welsh Government's general approach to the work of preparing for future recovery after COVID-19**
- **the establishment of an Expert Group for Continuity and Recovery**

**Mark Drakeford AM  
First Minister  
April 2020**

**ANNEX A: Draft Terms of Reference**

The overarching remit of the Group is to provide advice to Ministers on their programme for social and economic recovery. Decisions arising from this advice are matters for Ministers.

**Purpose:**

- To provide advice, challenge and direction to the Welsh Government's programme for social and economic recovery, consequent upon the COVID-19 health emergency and to support Ministers in
  - their oversight of the programme,
  - ensuring the continuity of the current programme for Government towards a more prosperous, equal and greener Wales and
  - ensuring that the values and principles of the Welsh Government are translated into effective action to meet Wales' distinctive social and economic needs.

**Principles for the Welsh Government recovery programme:**

- Principles of social justice, fair work and environmental sustainability must inform the Welsh Government's recovery programme, and it must be compliant with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- The recovery programme must have particular regard for those who are economically or otherwise disadvantaged, especially by age, gender, disability or other protected characteristic. It should identify the sources of economic prosperity in the economy after COVID-19, encourage them and the equitable participation in them by people in Wales.
- Regard should also be had for the current programme of government and existing delivery structures and stakeholder relationships although these should be challenged where there is strong evidence that their underlying assumptions may have been fundamentally changed as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Opportunities should also be sought to maximise any innovative approach to resourcing and delivery, especially those introduced during the period of the current health emergency.

**Practice:**

- The Group will advise the Welsh Government on the policies and programmes necessary to drive social and economic recovery and ensure longer term well-being.
- The Group will be chaired by the Counsel General
- It will comprise 6-10 members, determined by the First Minister
- It will receive regular information from the Permanent Secretary or her delegates, as requested.

- The Group will be supported by Welsh Government to ensure access to appropriate data and other knowledge services, and to such other sources of intelligence, expert opinion or research as it determines.
- The Group will be provided with an appropriate secretariat and be supported by Special Advisers, as agreed by the Chair.
- Meetings of the Group will be held in private.
- Members of the Group are invited on an individual basis rather than as representatives of their organisations.

**ANNEX B: Further detail on governance proposals**Expert Group for Recovery and Continuity

The Group will consist of a small number of external experts who will provide advice, challenge and direction to the Welsh Government's recovery programme and support Ministers in their oversight of the programme. The Group will be chaired by the Counsel General.

The work will be organised around the three strategic themes of economic, social and environmental justice – reflecting the three strategic themes of the government.

Ministers will receive regular reports of the work of the Group and its advice to Welsh Government, in order to support their work.

Continuity and Recovery internal governance

The continuity and recovery work will require an agile and flexible approach and an acceleration in the shift to integrated policy making and innovative delivery approaches. This will be a significant change for Ministers and officials requiring a different way of working.

To facilitate this shift, it is proposed that an internal Portfolio Board for Continuity and Recovery, be established to work in parallel with the Expert Group. The Portfolio Board will provide a forum to organise the programme of work, challenge internal barriers, develop cross-government opportunities and embed the operating model needed to deliver at pace.

The internal Portfolio Board will base its work on the evidence, scenarios and assumptions prepared for the external group and take full account of the output of the Expert Group. The Board will undertake discrete pieces of work to inform the Expert Group's consideration and provide an escalation route for issues experienced at the individual programme level.

Support function – secretariat

A shared secretariat will support both the internal and external groups

The secretariat will support the systems of governance and of reporting to Ministers around the continuity and recovery programme, supporting the Counsel General in his role as Chair.

The secretariat will develop and own the forward work programme, on a basis agreed with the Chair and manage the flow of information between the analysts, policy officials, the internal group and the Expert Group.

The civil service will produce work in line with the civil service values and in line with Welsh Government policy. Special Advisers will ensure appropriate political values underpin papers and proposals considered throughout the governance.