

DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU

**GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
3 MARCH 2026 VIA MS TEAMS (10:00 – 11:40)**

GAC Members Present: Andrew Blackmore (Independent Chair), Kalwant Grewal (Independent Member), Jassa Scott (Independent Member), Diane Bevan (Member), Bethan Price (Member)

MIAA Representative Present: Gary Baines

Audit Wales Representative Present: Julie Rees

DBCC Officers Present: Shereen Williams (Chief Executive), David Burley (Head of Business), David Carr (Finance Manager), Cher Cooke (Review Manager)

Guest: Kiran Uppal

The Chair welcomed Kiran Uppal, who would be joining the DBCC as Senior Governance and Finance Manager from 5 March 2026, to the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health).

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 18 February 2026

3.1 The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 18 February 2026 were agreed subject to an amendment at paragraph 8.3 to clarify that final consideration of the that the GAC Chair's Annual Report would be after the current financial year end.

4. Chief Executive's Update

4.1 Shereen Williams reported that the Welsh Elections Information Platform (WEIP) had gone live the previous day and was functioning fully as intended with no issues or problems being experienced.

4.2 The Chair thanked Shereen Williams for her report.

5. Issues Arising from Previous Meetings.

- 5.1 The Committee noted the issues arising from the meetings held on 18 February 2026 that had been actioned and those that were not yet completed.
- 5.2 There was an amendment to the Corporate Risk Register raised at the last meeting which had now been actioned.
- 5.3 In respect of the issue of ICT Security training for members, it was reported that a date of 24 March had been set for members to undertake the training.
- 5.4 In respect of the mapping of DBCC risk registers, it was reported this would be completed as part of the review of the DBCC's Risk Management Policy.
- 5.5 Shereen Williams said that she was currently in discussion with the DBCC's legal advisor on scenario planning to cover all the key decisions made by the DBCC and what the legal liability was for them and that a report on the outcome would be tabled at the DBCC's March meeting and shared with GAC members.
- 5.6 In respect of the outstanding issues of reviewing the GAC Self-Assessment exercise it was reported that this would be considered further under agenda item 9.

6. ICT Security Report.

- 6.1 It was noted that that there had been no DBCC cyber security incidents since the last Committee meeting.
- 6.2 Sean Gaffney reported that there were no significant security issues to report. DBCC's Cyber Security posture continued to increase due to incrementally added additional controls being put place, and the number of unsuccessful phishing emails being blocked was gradually increasing as well. The only real issue of note was that 4 staff / DBCC members had still not completed the ICT security awareness training. David Burley said that this issue would be raised with members at the next DBCC meeting.
Action: Head of Business **By:** 25/03/26
- 6.2 Sean Gaffney drew the Committee's attention to the update on the threat landscape regarding credential abuse and identity compromise cyber attacks which were increasing. He reported that Qualifications Wales (QW) had been targeted by such an attack recently, which thankfully had not been successful. He drew the Committee's attention to QW's Incident Report on the 'Near Miss' cyber attack at Item 7.2.
- 6.3 The Committee enquired whether the DBCC had any additional IT controls put in place as a result of the recent attack. Sean Gaffney said that the QW controls that prevented the cyber attack from being successful had not been in place for DBCC at the time, but had subsequently been put in place. These controls involved preventing DBCC staff and members from accessing the DBCC's Microsoft 365 account system using personal devices. It was also proposed that a review of QW and DBCC's systems would be carried out to identify any other areas where there might be a divergence in terms of security posture and controls.
- 6.4 The Chair thanked Sean Gaffney for his report.

7. EMB Welsh Elections Information Platform (WEIP) Project Progress and Internal Audit WEIP Checkpoint Two / Three Report

- 7.1 Gary Baines presented the Checkpoint Two / Three assurance report on the WEIP and explained that it covered the build, final test and an operational readiness of the Platform. The report covered key criteria within the two checkpoints which were areas drawn out for the project steering group last week when it met to make the go live, no go live decision and to provided the project steering group with independent confirmation of what had been achieved against each of these key criteria within the two crucial checkpoints.
- 7.2 Shereen Williams said that there were still a small number of low level risks but a number of those would be resolved prior to the Senedd election in May 2026 and one risk that which would be resolved prior to the site being used for the local government elections in 2027.
- 7.2 The Committee enquired what the criteria was for deciding whether the WEIP would go live and what the top delivery risks were. Shreen Williams said that it was a matter of seeing whether the platform worked, which included user acceptance testing by DBCC and electoral services managers, and also making sure that the Platform was fully bilingual. In terms of security, the DBCC had an independent external company to do security tests and penetration testing on the site.
- 7.3 The Chair thanked Gary Baines for his report which was noted by the Committee.

8. Governance and Audit Committee Self-Assessment Exercise.

- 8.1 The Committee considered the revised self-assurance questionnaire that had been updated with additional relevant questions taken from the HMT Audit Committee handbook. Gary Baines said that MIAA would be willing to facilitate a session on the audit committee self-assessment process if members considered that it would be helpful.
- 8.2 The Committee considered that some of the self-assessment questions focused too much on operational issues rather than qualitative issues, and also on issues which Committee Members may not be readily able to answer. It was also noted that there was no comparison with the prior year's responses.
- 8.3 It was agreed that the current version of the questionnaire would be distributed to members who would then include their views on the process, and which questions did not add value or were not particularly applicable, in their responses.
- Action:** Finance Manager **By:** 06/03/26

9. Review of Corporate Risk Register.

- 9.1 The Committee noted the report on the Corporate Risk Register and the changes DBCC members' requested at their February meeting, the main one of which was reinstating the list of existing controls for each risk. The issue of DBCC members

being risk owners was to be postponed until after the appointment of new members.

- 9.2 It was proposed that the ICT cyber security threat that had targeted Qualifications Wales discussed by Sean Gaffney in his report at agenda item 6 should be included on the DBCC's Corporate or Operational Risk Register depending on how serious officers considered it to be. It was **agreed** that a new cyber security risk should be added to one of the DBCC risk registers.

Action: Finance Manager **By:** 25/03/26

- 9.3 The Committee considered the Corporate Risk Register report would benefit from a covering page giving a summary of all changes made to the risk register since the last Committee meeting. It was agreed that future Committee reports for the Corporate Risk Register would have a covering page giving details of changes to the Register since the last meeting.

Action: Finance Manager **By:** 01/06/26

10. Audit Recommendations Progress Report.

- 10.1 The Committee noted the current status of the implementation of audit recommendations. It was noted that the majority of the outstanding recommendations related to the internal audit of Risk Management and the need to update the DBCC's Risk Management Policy and that officers would try to implement these recommendations by the end of March.

Action: Finance Manager **By:** 27/03/26

11. Budget Monitoring Report.

- 11.1 The Committee noted the minutes of the budget report presented at the Commission meeting of 28 January 2026. The Committee queried whether the current underspend would impact on the next year's budget. Shereen Williams said that as the DBCC had delivered all their functions Welsh Government requested during the current year there would be no impact on next year's budget.

12. Whistleblowing and Fraud Report.

- 12.1 The Committee noted the nil report on instances of Whistleblowing and Fraud for 2025-26 to date.

13. Fixed Assets Verification Report.

- 13.1 The Committee noted the outcome of the verification of fixed assets exercise which had confirmed that all fixed assets were accounted for with the exception of an item of IT equipment issued to a Commission member who could not currently be contacted. It was expected that this asset would be confirmed soon.

14. Business Continuity Report.

- 14.1 The Committee noted the Business Continuity test report from the Head of Business. The report highlighted that the DBCC were no longer dependent on having a physical office and therefore, in most instances, could be flexible in meeting the day to day business for which critical functions had been identified.
- 14.2 During times when the DBCC was conducting review work there would be additional critical functions which would need to be identified and prioritised and a more detailed list would need to be produced. This would depend on the type of review being undertaken and the critical functions would be identified closer to that time

15. Audit Wales Reports Update.

- 15.1 The Committee noted the report from Audit Wales giving details of the recently published reports they had issued. Julie Rees said that Audit Wales were currently planning the Audit of the 2025-26 annual accounts.

16. GAC Workplan 205-26

- 16.1 The Committee noted the Governance and Audit Committee Workplan for 2025-26.

17. Any Other Business

- 17.1 The Chair extended his gratitude to David Carr for all his hard work and assistance as Secretary for the DBCC's Audit Committees and wished him all the best on his retirement on behalf of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be 1 June 2026 at 09:30 a.m.