

Huw Vaughan Thomas, Auditor General for Wales

Governance is incredibly important to us in the Wales Audit Office. If we know that an organisation has good governance, we can have reasonable confidence that the board, that those who are responsible for the organisation are on top of the issues. And if people are on top of the issues, they usually understand where there are problems. Every organisation has a problem, we've never come across and don't think it is possible to come across an organisation that is 100% perfect. But knowing what the problems are, is important to us because on that basis we can have confidence that the organisation governs itself well. And we hope that these seminars are a means by which people can reflect on where they are at present and how they can improve.

Jessica Crowe, Centre for Public Scrutiny

So the main thing that I'm trying to ask delegates and attendees to take away with them, is the importance of reflecting on what they do, and I had 4 key lessons from some experiences that I'd had that I'd reflected on that were important for good governance. And that was the importance of having some courage – moral and political courage. The importance of political and managerial leadership in ensuring the right culture for an organisation to have good governance. The importance of having evidence based challenge and scrutiny available to you, and the importance of really tackling a culture that says 'realpolitik' and cynicism is ok. We need to put in some moral purpose in to our public services. I think all of those 4 points together add up to thinking about your culture as an organisation and how you make decisions.

I think culture can be seen as soft and fluffy and a bit intangible, like nailing porridge to the wall. But I would say it's actually about the way we do business around here. So it's really about how you go about your business, what's the accepted norms of behaviour, how do your leaders behave, how do people interact with customers on the front line. So it goes right through an organisation, and it is all about the stories it tells about itself, the images, the self-image, how we go about our business in this organisation.

Claer Lloyd-Jones, Claer Lloyd-Jones Ltd.

My presentation is about using ethics as a way of determining whether or not contractors, whether that's other public sector contractors or private sector contractors, are delivering the services in a way which meets your values, and which is understood in terms of the behaviour that you expect staff to have when they're delivering those services.

The one key message that people need to take away from my presentation is that you can't have good governance without good ethics.

Rebecca David Knight, Centre for Public Scrutiny Wales

My presentation is about making use of respective roles within organisations. So it's about identifying the different levers of power that executive members have, non-executive members have and how this comes together to improve the governance of an organisation overall.

The one key message I want delegates to take away from the presentation is to make best use of their personal power as well as their positional power. So this is about having the courage to

challenge and it's about the 'just do it' approach to governance. So seeing it as a business tool for the achievement of an organisation's objectives, not as something that people are afraid to do, or think that it's bad manners, it's the 'just do it' – just get on with it.

David Richards, Welsh Government

Well what we've found in the Welsh Government is that we start off with the best intentions of the proper values of public services and doing everything right and proper, and things get in the way. There are time pressures, there are people not knowing what they should do, there are occasionally people who know what they should do but are not doing it. And there are just trolls, which just trip you up. And monsters and trolls is all about identifying the governance trolls which get in the way, and slaying them. And this is all about how you take out the governance monsters and trolls, get them out of the way, so we can get on with the really important business of serving the people of Wales.

Well governance is like dieting. Because you can go into WH Smith and you can buy loads and loads of books on diets, but the thing is you don't lose weight by going into WH Smith and buying a book, that's not what does it. Because the theory of dieting is dead easy, the tricky thing is applying it and living it out. And governance is like that. The theory is not hard, and there's lots of governance frameworks, and they're all good and they're all useful. But the hard thing, and the challenge and the reward is applying it, making it work, living it out, sticking to it. But when you do that the rewards are you achieve your objectives, you live up to your values.

Omer Tauqir, Grant Thornton

The main objective is to help scrutiny and audit committee members understand how they can get the assurance that is really critical to the organisation and from the best source, and do so in a very clear and planned way, rather than passively receiving assurance information from sources which they don't fully understand and can't relate to an overall picture.

Gary Devlin, Grant Thornton

The one key message I'd want delegates to take away from my workshop is that it's not enough to have systems and processes in place for managing risk. The most important thing is you need the cultures and behaviours in your organisation to be focussed on the right areas and to be driving that performance change in your organisation.

So an example of the cultures and behaviours I have in mind are organisations that believe they are excellent or believe that they have good governance or believe they have good risk management. But those beliefs are not necessarily based on evidence. And when you break down the assumptions that are leading to that belief, you can often find that actually that belief is not well founded and driving cultures and behaviours so that the organisation tolerates the right areas and doesn't tolerate acts appropriately when it's not behaving in an appropriate and responsible way. Those are the correct cultures and behaviours to be relentless about in your organisation.