

Communities and Culture Committee

CC(3)02-07 (p2): 26 September 2007

Forward Work Programme ""

1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to set out topics that the Committee might wish to consider during the autumn 2007 and spring 2008 terms; and also to consider various procedural issues.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee considers the general issues at Section 4 and the specific issues at Section 5; and indicates priority areas, to enable the Clerk to prepare a forward work programme.

3. Background

At an informal meeting on the 11 July, the committee discussed possible scrutiny topics; a list of these topics is at annex A. During this meeting, the Committee identified two possible subjects for a scrutiny inquiry. The scrutiny inquiry is addressed in a separate paper CC(3)02-07(p1). During informal discussion, the Committee agreed that initially it would meet at fortnightly intervals; but that the frequency might vary, depending on the work in hand. The meeting timetable has been agreed by Business Managers; relevant dates - 26 September, 10 October, 24 October, 7 November, 21 November and 5 December. Meetings will start at 9:30am and finish by 11:30am.

4. General Issues

The Committee might wish to consider whether spare capacity should be built into the work programme to respond to urgent issues; whether there are any particular bodies or individuals that it would wish to scrutinise at regular intervals; for example, Ministers, relevant public bodies, professional and representative associations. Members might wish to consider the following matters;

Questioning of witnesses; the use of prepared and agreed questions and the extent to which witnesses are given advance notice of questions.

The use of informal meetings, or private sessions, to agree the approach to questioning for scrutiny inquiries.

Visits and meetings outside Cardiff.

The use of 'rapporteur' groups to collect evidence outside formal meetings.

The Committee's relationship with Ministers; it is assumed that Ministers will appear before the Committee to give evidence on specific inquiries; but the Committee might want a more general opportunity to scrutinise Ministers.

As the remit is wide-ranging, the Committee could, in due course, consider establishing sub-committees to focus on particular areas of the remit. Any sub-committees would work in the same way as the full Committee, meeting in public with published papers and evidence. Reports from sub-committees would have to be presented to the full Committee, for approval.

5. Specific Issues

During the autumn term, it is assumed that the Committee will wish to focus on gathering evidence for the scrutiny inquiry on the funding of voluntary organisations. It is suggested that The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government is invited to the 10 October meeting, to explain the current policy of the Welsh Assembly Government; together with representatives of the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). Other witnesses will be invited to subsequent meetings, in accord with the draft inquiry programme. It is suggested that the Committee might wish to scrutinise the Minister for Housing during the autumn term and the Minister for Heritage during the spring term (or vice-versa), on relevant policies with the Committee's remit. It is suggested that space is reserved on the agenda for **24 October** for this purpose. It is suggested that space is reserved on the agenda for **7 November** to consider the draft budget. It is anticipated that the draft budget will be laid early in November; and committees will need to respond swiftly. During the summer recess, Janet Ryder AM wrote to the Chair, enclosing copies of correspondence with Gwynedd County Council, concerning the funding of library services; and suggesting that the Committee might wish to carry out a scrutiny inquiry of this subject. It is suggested that the Clerk prepares a schedule of possible topics for future scrutiny inquiries, for consideration by the Committee before the current inquiry is completed. This could form the basis of a rolling programme of scrutiny inquiries.

Committee Service

Annex A

Topics discussed at the informal session on 11 July 2007

Funding

Lottery Funding
Review of funding of Library services in Wales

Housing

Council house building programme
Lack of social housing
Affordable housing
social housing strategy include need for new social housing and budgeting in local authorities

Social Justice

Substance misuse - prevention and multi agency working
Youth Justice - alternatives to custody
Child poverty strategy
Communities First - Communities next
Post Offices - Consultation response on area plans
Prisons
Involuntary homelessness - review youth homelessness policy review
Domestic Abuse
Community Safety - building on sure start
Impact of incapacity benefit changes

Culture

Film Wales
Youth Theatre
Funding projects - National Botanical Gardens review
Added value of art: local areas

Welsh Language

Welsh Language Act
Right to Welsh medium education
Review of funding of Library services in Wales

Sport

Sport funding and participation of sport
Olympics - benefits to Wales
'Climbing Higher' report - following the Welsh Audit Office report
Consultation on draft directions for the Sports Council for Wales and Heritage Lottery funding
European White Paper on Sport - published on 4 July 2007