

Culture Committee - CC-16-01(p.6)

Date: 7th November 2001
Time: 9.00-12.15pm
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

Purpose

1. To present for Committee consideration the proposed terms of reference for the Quinquennial Review of the National Library that will start later this year. Standing Order 9.7 provides that the subject committee shall keep under review the discharge of public functions in its field by public bodies. Following receipt of the Committee's views, the Minister for Culture, Sport and the Welsh Language and the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities shall agree the final terms of reference and commission the review.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee comments on the proposed terms of reference at Annex 1.

Background

3. The National Library is an executive Assembly Sponsored Public Body (ASPB). It was established under Royal Charter in 1907. The functions of the National Library are set out in its Charter:

The collection, preservation and maintenance of manuscripts, printed matter, maps, photographs, visual and audio-visual material relating to Wales and the Celtic peoples and similar material which furthers the aims of higher education and literacy and scientific research.

4. The National Library is financed primarily by grant-in-aid from the National Assembly for Wales, **£7.2 million in 2001-2002.**

5. The Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities made a statement to plenary on 10 May on the policy and programme for the review of executive Assembly Sponsored

Public Bodies. The policy is that:

- subject to the legal frameworks concerned, 'quangos' should only be retained where they are the most appropriate and cost-effective means of carrying out the functions concerned;
- where a sponsored body or agency is the right solution, the requirement must be to ensure that the body is properly accountable to the Assembly and the public; that it is making good use of public funds and conducting its business in line with the Assembly's values and principles; and that it is contributing as appropriate to the Assembly's vision for Wales;
- each executive ASPB should be subject to a quinquennial review by 2003. As well as the question of whether or not there is still a need for the functions of the body, the Quinquennial Review will examine accountability, strategic effectiveness, financial management and means of securing continuous improvement.

6. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with published Quinquennial Review guidelines and will involve inputs from partners, customers and staff as well as the senior management and board of the sponsored body.

7. In her statement, the Finance Minister gave a commitment that the relevant subject committee will be consulted on the terms of reference for each review and will be invited to comment on the reviewer's draft report before a final version is submitted to Cabinet.

Consideration

8. The Quinquennial Review of the National Library is scheduled to take place in 2001-02. It is planned that the review will start by December with a view to its completion within 6 months. An interim report is anticipated by Easter. The proposed terms of reference for the review are at Annex 1. These have been discussed with the National Library and take account of the policy outlined in paragraph 5.

Financial implications

9. The arrangements for appointing a reviewer are currently in train. The cost of conducting the review is provisionally estimated at £50,000.

Action for subject committee

10. The Committee is asked to give its views on the proposed terms of reference for the Quinquennial Review of the National Library.

Contact Point

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW - TERMS OF REFERENCE (DRAFT)

Introduction

The Quinquennial Review of the National Library of Wales is being undertaken in the context of the Assembly's published Quinquennial Review Guidelines. The Guidelines set out the process for conducting the reviews. This includes self-assessment by the sponsored body, discussion with Members of the Council and senior managers, inviting views from major stakeholders including staff and their trade unions, partners and customers.

The Terms of Reference sets out the key questions that the Review has to address. The issues common to all reviews are identified in the Guidelines, but the Terms of Reference also take account of issues specific to the National Library of Wales.

The key output of the review is a single report, which will be in three parts. The first part of the report on functions will be considered at an interim stage, which will also set out emerging issues for the rest of the review.

The context for the review is the Assembly's strategic plan, *Plan for Wales 2001*, and related Assembly strategic documents such as A Platform for Fulfilment a Cultural Strategy for Wales. The review will also take account of the full Financial Management and Performance Review carried out by the Welsh Office in 1993/94.

Part 1 Functions

In the light of the Charter objects of the National Library of Wales, the objectives of the National Assembly and models of good practice elsewhere, is there a continuing need for all the functions of the National Library of Wales and, if so, is the current organisational framework for delivering those functions the most appropriate?

- What is the legal framework governing the National Library of Wales?
- Are the functions of the National Library of Wales still necessary?
- Do they need to be carried out by an Assembly Sponsored Public Body – are other options for undertaking the functions likely to be more effective?
- Are they best carried out by a single body? Is there a need to rationalise functions

between the National Library of Wales and other public bodies engaged in the provision of like services in Wales?

Part 2: Strategic effectiveness

Subject to the findings in the Interim Report: are there improvements which should be made to the way in which the National Library of Wales' functions are delivered, taking account of its Charter objects, how these have been translated into the aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan and the values and objectives of the National Assembly. Are there ways in which the functioning of its relationship with the National Assembly could be improved ?

This should take account of any independent studies, for example by the National Audit Office, and the actions taken following the FMPR in 1993/94.

- What have been the main strategic achievements of the National Library of Wales since 1993/94, to what extent has it met its objectives, what has been its performance against targets, how does its performance compare with that of comparable bodies, are there performance issues which need to be addressed?
- How effective is the strategic relationship between the National Library of Wales and the National Assembly, including the Assembly's strategic guidance and the National Library's arrangements for responding to the National Assembly's strategic objectives, guiding themes and values (including equal opportunities, tackling social disadvantage and sustainable development)? How might they be improved?
- How effective has been the National Library of Wales' corporate planning in developing clear strategic direction, setting targets and allocating resources to objectives and priorities?
- Does the corporate planning process reflect an integrated approach to the functions delivered by the National Library of Wales?
- Is there an effective mutual understanding of the roles of the members of Council and the senior management team in setting corporate objectives and monitoring their implementation? Are the processes for decision-making by members clear and efficient and the delineation between what is for Council and management clear?
- Is the National Library of Wales sufficiently responsive to its partners and customers, does it understand the nature of its relationships with them and does it have their confidence as a body with which they can do business, are there ways in which relationships might be strengthened?
- Are reporting arrangements adequate between the National Library of Wales and the National Assembly, does the National Library of Wales need different freedoms and flexibilities?

Part 3 Corporate governance

Do the arrangements for governing the National Library of Wales continue to be appropriate? Is the National Library of Wales managing its finances effectively and in accordance with the requirements of regularity, propriety and value-for-money? What progress has the National Library of Wales made in improving operational efficiency? This should take account of the evidence from the existing control framework, as set out in Annex 2 of the Guidelines.

- Do the current arrangements for governing the National Library of Wales continue to be appropriate? Is there sufficient public accountability for the conduct of the National Library of Wales?
- Do the financial and managerial control arrangements between the National Library of Wales and National Assembly meet established requirements?
- Do internal and external audit reports provide confidence that the National Library of Wales is managing its finances in line with the Assembly's expectations of public bodies? Is the Library's internal Audit Committee working effectively?
- Is the National Library of Wales managing its finances and assets effectively, are value-for-money issues, including policy evaluations, being rigorously pursued?
- Does the National Library of Wales' conduct of business meet the standards of practice expected of public bodies in relation to procurement, openness and the handling of complaints?
- Are the National Library of Wales' running costs and staffing levels being controlled and scrutinised. Can useful comparisons be made with the operating costs of similar bodies?
- Does the National Library of Wales have good arrangements for monitoring the quality and efficiency of its service delivery?
- Does the National Library of Wales have a good track record in and robust plans for improving efficiency?