

COMMITTEE ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Date: 3 February 2000

Time: 9.30am

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly Building

Title: Chair's Report

1. Immigration and Asylum Issues

1.1 A number of Members and officials attended the Briefing Session presented by the UNHCR and the Home Office on the integration of Asylum seekers and refugees on 20 January. The briefing session was highly commended and is the first of a number of such sessions to be held in Wales providing factual information on the plight of refugees to assist in the process of integration of the dispersed asylum seekers.

1.2 At the last Committee meeting, Members requested information on the number and destination of asylum seekers expected in Wales. At the briefing session we were advised that somewhere in the region of 5000 Asylum seekers per annum would be coming to Wales from April 2000 of which it was expected that the majority would be young adults.

2. Global Cultural Diversity Congress

2.1 Following the last meeting of the Committee, Members had been requested to indicate which of a number of workshops they felt the Assembly should support at this event. Since that time, proposals had changed and it was now planned to sponsor a number of individual members and officials to attend a number of workshops.

2.2 The Secretariat had written to George Craig, Assembly Senior Director, to advise him of Members' concerns about the involvement of the Chinese government in the Congress and to offer advice on the accessibility of venues. He has raised these matters with the organisers. The Chinese Minister for Ethnic Affairs is no longer a keynote speaker. In addition, the event organisers have advised that they are contacting Disability Wales about access issues.

3. Equality Audit - Preliminary Results

3.1 The results of the audit are now being analysed. Some 28 of the 55 interviews have been analysed. Whilst the analysis is taking a little longer than originally expected, we are still on course to report back to the March meeting of the Committee.

4. Equality Awareness Raising for Assembly Members

4.1 A questionnaire was issued to AMs asking them to indicate their requirement for information on equality issues. To date 21 questionnaires have been returned and the Equality Policy Unit is working on a timetable for the awareness raising sessions requested. From the responses it is likely that a number of short interactive sessions on recruitment and general awareness (lasting between 1 to 2 hours) will be arranged. This is seen as a start to the process of ongoing awareness raising. The training for people making public appointments is to be offered before the Easter recess. The rest of the training will be offered before the Summer.

5. Stephen Lawrence Enquiry

5.1 I have now received a response to my letter to the Assembly Secretary for Education and Children on the education recommendations in the Enquiry Report. A copy of the response will be circulated. There remain some outstanding curriculum issues to consider. A meeting of the Committee's sub-group on the recommendations of the Enquiry Report was held on 19 January. We will be discussing that later on the agenda. The committee should also note that the Assembly Secretary for Pre-16 education and ACCAC are also due to appear before this Committee in March about this issue.

6. Other Matters

6.1 **Assembly Representation at Beijing Plus Five** - Members raised the issue of how the Assembly would be represented at this event at the last meeting. Officials have made representations to the organisers and are waiting for a written response to those representations.

6.2 **Invitation to the European Social Affairs Commissioner to visit Wales** - We will be writing to invite Anna Diamantopoulou to visit the Assembly later this year in conjunction with the First Secretary and the Economic Development Secretary.

6.3 **Equality Awareness Week** - Following our discussion about having an 'equality week', I

believe it would be best to arrange something to coincide with the annual debate on equal opportunities in July. The following considerations were taken into account:

- The Committee will have considered the results of the Equality Audit and decided on an action plan.
- The Annual Report on the Committee's activities will be available and will indicate the Committee's/Assembly's equality achievements in its first year
- The Debate will highlight equality issues
- Members will have participated in awareness raising sessions and the overall knowledge level of the Assembly will have been raised

If Members agree with my proposal, I would welcome ideas for relevant activities at the meeting.

6.4 National Assembly Women's Network Group - I spoke at this event on 'Women in Politics' on 26 January. The group is for female Assembly officials in middle management roles and women at similar levels in other organisations, both public and private. It aims to help women develop their potential and achieve promotion into higher management positions. The Network was joined by the Business in the Community mentoring group with the South Wales Police.