

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 14 February 2001
Time: 2.00 to 5.00 pm
Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

SUBJECT COMMITTEES: STRATEGIC WORK PROGRAMMES 2001-02

Purpose

1. To seek the committee's views on the draft strategic work programmes of other subject committees for May 2001 to December 2002.

Background

2. Subject Committees are required to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months (SO 9.9).
3. Each committee is required to take other Subject Committees' (during February) and Cabinet's comments (during March) into account, before their programme is notified to plenary in May.

Conclusion

4. Members are invited to comment on the draft work programmes attached. Draft programmes for the remaining subject committees will be circulated when available.

Committee Secretariat

February 2001

ANNEX A

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: MAY 2001 TO DECEMBER 2002

Introduction

1. The Local Government and Housing Committee is one of the Assembly's seven subject committees. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of Edwina Hart, the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities. It covers local government policy and finance issues, housing, urban regeneration and crime reduction. The remit does not include Edwina Hart's responsibilities as Finance Minister.
2. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in Standing Orders, as reproduced at **Annex 1**.
3. Standing Order 9.9 requires each subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The Committee must consult other committees and the Assembly Cabinet on the programme before notifying plenary.
4. The Panel of Chairs has agreed that committees' work programmes should be strategic and cover an 18 to 24 month time frame. This strategic programme is supported by a more detailed programme covering at least a three month period.

Aims and objectives

5. The Committee's aim is to achieve a better quality of life for the people of Wales and to promote better, simpler government. Its objectives are:
 - To help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime;
 - To deliver value for money for the people of Wales, with better and more efficient services;
 - To streamline the Assembly's work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups.
6. These aims and objectives correspond with those set out in *betterwales.com*, the Assembly's strategic plan.

Priorities

7. In taking forward its responsibilities for contributing to policy development (Standing Order 9.7 (i)), the Committee attaches particular importance to:
 - The development of a national housing strategy, with a view to ensuring that everyone has a decent home and homelessness is eliminated;
 - The modernisation of local government, including the development of new political management structures, the introduction of policy agreements with local government and the development of the best value regime;
 - The implementation and development of the revised standard spending assessment formula, so that revenue support for local authorities is allocated on the basis of a fairer assessment of need.
8. The Committee will play a major role in progressing many of the issues for early action which are identified in Chapter 4 of *betterwales.com*. These are set out at **Annex 2**.
9. To date, the Committee has given priority to contributing to the development of emerging strategies and initiatives across the full range of the Minister's local government and housing responsibilities. It has also undertaken a review of the policy of transferring local authority housing into community ownership, which is due for completion by the end of the spring term. This review has examined the emerging model for community ownership, as well as wider issues such as whether alternative approaches could generate the finance necessary to overcome the backlog of repair and essential modernisation work for council housing.

10. Following the policy review of housing stock transfer, the Committee intends to undertake a review of the role of community groups in community regeneration. The precise terms of reference for the review will be developed over the spring term, taking account of the work which has already been undertaken in the context of developing the *Communities First* concept. One area which may be examined is how best to empower both individuals within communities and local organisations, to ensure that local people can work effectively within the partnerships which are tackling the problems of social exclusion and disadvantage in their areas.

Other issues

11. The Committee will also need to:

- consider proposals for the Assembly's budget (Standing Order 9.8 (ii));
- consider secondary legislation as appropriate (Standing Order 9.8 (i) / 22);
- undertake scrutiny of the Minister (Standing Order 9.11);
- review cross-cutting issues such as equal opportunities and sustainable development.

Method of working

12. In taking forward its work programme, the Committee intends to continue to work in an open and participative way. It will liaise closely with all of the Assembly's partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors, particularly those in local government. The Committee will continue to develop its relationship with the Local Government Partnership Council.

Detailed work programme

13. The Committee's detailed work programme for 2001 is attached at **Annex 3**.

Committee Secretariat January 2001

Annex 1

ROLE OF SUBJECT COMMITTEES

EXTRACT FROM STANDING ORDERS

9.7 Each subject committee shall

(i) contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;

(ii) keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and

(iii) keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

9.8 Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

(i) advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under Standing Order 22;

(ii) provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19;

(iii) perform its function under Standing Order 21 (complaints);

(iv) perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and

(v) consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields.

Annex 2

***betterwales.com*: ISSUES FOR EARLY ACTION**

[NB To be revised in the light of the updated version of *betterwales.com*]

Table 7: Better quality of life

'Help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime.'

- *Communities First* - community-led action to improve our most deprived communities
- A reduction in the proportion of people who feel very worried about safety on the streets to below the 1998 figure of 11 per cent, by supporting local Crime and Disorder Partnerships, the Crime Reduction Programme and other community development strategies
- A reduction in the temptation for young people to engage in anti-social behaviour by using the £25 million Children and Youth Partnership Fund to provide constructive activities
- To reduce the number of occupied houses in serious disrepair to less than 4 per cent of the stock, by 2002, and to extend the Care and Repair

Scheme to all parts of Wales

- To use more private funding to improve poor quality housing estates; for all new social housing to be of good quality with high standards of safety and energy efficiency and located in attractive, non-threatening environments designed to reduce crime
- The proportion of vacant social housing to be cut to less than 3 per cent, the number of homeless families living in temporary housing to be below 500 and the need for rough sleeping to be eliminated
- 30,000 'fuel poor' households, receiving income or disability benefits, to be covered by the new Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Table 9: Better, simpler government

'Deliver value for money for the people of Wales, with better and more efficient services'

- To improve the accountability, responsiveness and decision making of local councils, by working with the Welsh Local Government Association on the development of new political management arrangements, by April 2001
- To develop, and put in place by April 2001, the first Policy Agreement between the Assembly and all local authorities, within a national framework developed in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association: the Agreements to focus on the specific and measurable improvements required to achieve shared policy objectives
- 50 per cent of local authority services to have been subject to best value reviews with best value inspections demonstrating improvements in the standards of services. No local authority directly provided services to run at a deficit, by March 2002
- A fairer formula for distributing revenue support grant to local authorities, from April 2001

'Streamline our work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups'

- The role of the Commission for Local Administration in Wales to be extended to include that of a Housing Ombudsman for registered social landlords and a Standards Board for local government, by 2001
- Better co-ordination of local services by working with the Welsh Local Government Association to agree a framework for community planning (compatible with their Local Agenda 21 strategies), by April 2001, with a review being completed, within the same timescale, of the requirement on councils to produce plans

DETAILED FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: 2001

Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
<p>Wednesday 24 January</p> <p>9.30am</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Minister's Report (Written)</p> <p>Home Energy Conservation Act Report</p> <p>Preserved Right to Buy – Consideration of responses to proposals to change the 'cost floor rule'</p> <p>Homes Bill – Implications for Wales</p> <p>Policy review of housing stock transfer – Consideration of list of key recommendations</p> <p>Forward work programme – Consideration of strategic forward work programme</p>
<p>Wednesday</p> <p>7 February</p> <p>9.30am</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p> <p>6</p>	<p>Minister's Report</p> <p>Voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness –</p> <p>Consideration of report of review of core funding</p> <p>Low demand for social housing – Study of tenants' views</p> <p>Play – Consideration of results of study of play in Wales</p> <p>Police authorities – Consideration of funding arrangements</p> <p>Presentation by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust</p>

Thursday 15 February 2.00pm		Scope for informal Committee activity
Wednesday 28 February 9.30am	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Minister's Report (Written) Local Government Finance Consultation Paper - Consideration of responses Political management structures - Consideration of results of consultation exercise Best Value Performance Indicators – Consideration of results of consultation exercise Annual Report on Social Disadvantage Policy review of housing stock transfer - Consideration of first draft report Forward work programmes – Consideration of other subject committees' strategic forward work programmes

Meeting	Item	Agenda Items

<p>Wednesday 14 March</p> <p>9.30am</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Minister's Report</p> <p>Local authorities' general power to promote economic, social and environmental well-being – Consideration of draft guidance</p> <p>Social housing – Consideration of rent levels, including links to Social Housing Grant and Housing Benefit</p> <p>Best Value and Registered Social Landlords – Consideration of consultation paper</p> <p>[Presentation from the House Builders Federation]</p>
<p>Wednesday</p> <p>28 March</p> <p>9.30am</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Minister's Report (Written)</p> <p>Assembly Local Government Bill</p> <p>Local tenants organisations – Consideration of draft code of practice</p> <p>Policy review of housing stock transfer – Committee to sign off draft report</p> <p>Presentation from the Building Regulations Advisory Committee</p>
<p>Wednesday</p> <p>2 May</p> <p>9.30am</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p> <p>5</p>	<p>Minister's Report (Written)</p> <p>Homelessness Commission - Progress report</p> <p>Communities First – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise</p> <p>Community strategies – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise</p> <p>Forward work programme – Consideration of final strategic forward work programme</p>

Wednesday	1	Minister's Report
16 May	2	Business rates – Results of first year review of transitional rate relief scheme
9.30am	3	Report from the working group on improving fire safety
	4	UK Fuel Poverty Strategy – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
Thursday		Scope for informal Committee activity
24 May		
2.00pm		

Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday	1	Minister's Report (Written)
6 June	2	National housing strategy – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
9.30am	3	Supporting People – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	4	The role of town and community councils
Wednesday	1	Minister's Report
20 June	2	'Rethinking Construction' - Progress report
9.30am	3	Review of the local authority Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) system – Consideration of working group's report

Wednesday	1	Minister's Report (Written)
4 July	2	Budgets – Consideration of Minister's issues paper
9.30am		
Wednesday	1	Minister's Report
18 July		
9.30am		
Wednesday	1	Minister's Report (Written)
24 October	2	Review of the local authority Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) system – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
9.30am	3	Homelessness Commission – Consideration of final report
	4	Service and investment pressures facing local government – Presentation from the Welsh Local Government Association
Wednesday	1	Minister's Report
7 November		
9.30am		
Thursday		Scope for additional Committee activity
15 November		
2.00pm		

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Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 21 November 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
Wednesday 5 December 9.30am	1 2	Minister's Report Communities First – Progress report on implementation

Committee Secretariat

16 January 2001

ANNEX B

EDUCATION and LIFE-LONG LEARNING COMMITTEE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME - STRATEGIC January 2001 - April 2002

Duties of the Committee

The Education and Life-Long Learning Committee is one of seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's Standing Orders:

"9.7. each subject committee shall

- i. contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;
 - (ii) keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
 - ii. keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.
8. Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,
- i. advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under SO22;
 - ii. provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19;
 - iii. perform its function under Standing Order 21 (complaints);
 - iv. perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and
 - v. consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields."

Standing Order 9.9 requires the subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months.

The Committee's Aims and Objectives

The Committee will seek to contribute to the achievement of the aims and objectives set out in "Better Wales", the National Assembly for Wales's strategic plan and "Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales", the First Partnership Agreement of the National Assembly for Wales. In particular, to make Wales 'prosperous, well educated, skilled, healthy and environmentally rich' a country where the people of Wales be given 'every chance to fulfil their potential.'

The Statutory Schemes

The Committee will also take account of the National Assembly's statutory schemes for relations with the local authorities and the voluntary sector, and the sustainable development scheme.

The Committee's Priorities

"Better Wales" sets out in Chapter 4 'Better opportunities for learning' a number of issues for early action by the Assembly.

"Putting Wales First: A Partnership for the People of Wales" established a number of principles for education and lifelong learning that will guide the Committee as it takes forward its programme of work. The Committee will play a major role in progressing the actions identified in both papers, in particular these include:

- o a fresh approach to provision for the under-fives throughout Wales;
- o no infant class with more than 30 pupils;
- o a new fund to lift youngsters' educational achievement and engage them in creative activities;
- o establish a rural schools policy to encourage federation;

- o action to combat disadvantage in schools, reduce exclusions and raise relative performance;
- o more investment to improve school buildings;
- o a strengthened teaching profession which is valued and rewarded;
- o a National Grid for Learning, with links to museums and libraries;
- o the pilot of a new qualification a 'Welsh Bacculaureate';
- o an increase in the number of students in further and higher education;
- o an independent investigation into student hardship and funding in Wales;
- o advice on learning, assessment and careers through Careers Wales and the Youth Gateway Scheme; and
- o a new National Council for Education and Training to implement the Education and Training Action Plan.

The Committee has decided to spend a large proportion of its time developing policy for specific identifiable issues that will help improve the provision of education in Wales so as to ensure that the potential of all children is realised and that Wales' status as a learning country is enhanced.

The Committee is to consider adopting revised framework principles for education policy in Wales to cover its full remit. This will build on the framework principles paper agreed by the Pre 16 Education and Early Years Committee, set out in paper PRE 16 03-99(p.4) the overarching principles of which are to:

- Ensure that education is of high quality for all;
- Inclusive;
- Based on a partnership approach.

Specifically the Committee intends to undertake the work outlined below. In relation to Policy Development the Committee has expressed an interest in each of the specific areas identified. The final selection and timing of reviews will depend on information available to provide background to the review, the impact of the legislative timetable, new developments in education and the Committee's wish to be responsive to current needs as they arise. A revised timetable including specific policy development reviews will be put to the Committee for agreement at least once a term.

Policy Development (SO 9.7(i))	Timescale	Better Wales' and Partnership Targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early Years Provision for 3 Year Olds ● Information and Communication Technology in Schools ● Supply of School Places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To present its Report to Plenary on 6 March ● To present its Report to Plenary on 13 March ● September 2000 to April 2001 	<p>A fresh approach to provision for the under-fives throughout Wales by providing nursery education to all children from the age of three, whose parents want it</p> <p>A National Grid for Learning with links to museums and libraries</p> <p>No infant class with more than 30 pupils</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building effective communities and the School of the Future • Higher Education Review • Youth Strategy • Skills and Training (attitudinal approach e.g. enterprise, team working links to the needs of the economy) 	<p>May 2001 – April 2002</p> <p>November 2000 – November 2001</p> <p>To be agreed</p> <p>To be agreed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A National Grid for Learning with links to museums and libraries. • Action to tackle inequalities across the board. • Action to combat disadvantage in schools, reduce exclusions and raise relative performance • More investment to improve school buildings through the " School Buildings Upgrade Fund" and to phase out all substandard mobile classrooms <p>Action to combat disadvantage in schools, reduce exclusions ad raise relative performance</p>
<p>Monitoring of ASPBs</p> <p>(SO 9.7(iii))</p> <p>No full review is planned but meetings to look at annual report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACCAC • Estyn • Higher Education Funding Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 2001/October 2002 • March 2001/March 2002 • To be agreed 	

Legislation (SO 9.8(i) and SO 22)	As necessary	
Budget (SO 9.8 (ii))	Annually <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • – initial views on priorities • – views on preliminary draft budget • – views on allocated resources. 	
Public Appointments (SO 9.8(iv))	As necessary	
Scrutiny of Assembly Secretary	Monthly	

