

MINUTES LGH-05-03 (min)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Date: WEDNESDAY 5th MARCH 2003

Time: 09.30am - 12.35pm

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 3 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING

Attendance:

Members

Gwenda Thomas (Chair)	Neath
Peter Black	South Wales West
William Graham	South Wales East
Edwina Hart (Minister)	Gower
Pauline Jarman (from 10.02am)	South Wales Central
Peter Law	Blaenau Gwent
Janet Ryder	North Wales

In attendance

Adam Peat	Director, Local Government, Housing and Culture Group
David A'Herne	Crime Reduction Director for Wales
Kate Cassidy	Head of Local Government Modernisation Division

Frank Cuthbert	Local Government Modernisation
Lynne Schofield	Communities Directorate
Aneurin Owen	CAIS
Emlyn Jenkins	DARE
Alistair Lang	DARE
Roger Duncan	Swansea Drugs Project
Dr Mel Bagshaw	Cardiff Addictions Unit
Richard Pates	Cardiff Addictions Unit
Rhoda Emlyn-Jones	Cardiff Addictions Unit
Andy Evason	West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drugs

Secretariat

Roger Chaffey	Clerk
Claire Griffiths	Deputy Clerk

09.30am to 09.32am

Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed the Committee and members of the public.

2. The Chair said she had received apologies from Tom Middlehurst and Dai Lloyd but had not received any notice of substitutions. She added that she understood Pauline Jarman would be late arriving.
3. The Chair asked Members for declarations of interest, in accordance with Standing Order 4.5.

None were made.

Item 2: Minutes of the meetings held on 12 February 2003.

LGH-04-03(min)

2.1 The minutes were ratified.

09.32am –09.34am

Item 3: Policy Review on Capacity Development and Training: Consideration of final draft report.

LGH-05-03(p.1)

3.1 The Chair said following the informal meeting held on 11 February, the amendments suggested had been incorporated into the revised version of the report which was circulated last week for comments. As a result of that exercise, further comments were received which had also been incorporated into the report. The Chair asked Members if they were content for the report to proceed to publication. She advised that the report would be debated in Plenary on 19 March and it was planned to have an official launch on 3 April.

2. It was requested that Recommendation 10 be strengthened to include a reference to "all lottery bids".

3.3 The Report was endorsed.

09.34am – 09.57am

Item 4: Minister's Report

LGH-05-03(p.2)

4.1 The Minister presented her report and highlighted the following:

- **Licensing Bill** – this is a moveable feast at the moment and an update will be provided at the next meeting, if there have been any changes.
- **DAATs** – Advised that paragraph 2 should read – "Officials are in consultation with staff undertaking DAAT duties and trade unions..."

2. Members made the following points:

- **Licensing Bill** – welcomed the amendment regarding entertainment at unlicensed venues. Concern expressed over community safety and the Minister was asked if she would consider issuing guidance to local authorities with the aim of ensuring people living in the vicinity of premises seeking licenses considered. It was noted that some local authorities were unclear about what councillors need to declare and advice was sought.
- **Community Safety Partnerships** – the Minister was asked to consider bringing forward a paper on race hate. She was also asked to highlight how the new funding streams will operate and whether funds could be carried over from this financial year. It was noted that funding had previously been available for the installation of CCTV systems and the Minister was asked to expand on what grants and conditions applying to any schemes would be available in the new financial year. The Minister was asked if the proposed Assembly Police Scheme would interlink with the work of Community Safety Partnerships?
- **Welsh Housing Quality Standard** – The Minister was asked how she saw the way forward.
- **DAATs** – concern was raised that current co-working and development structures in place by existing organisations may be lost with the new regime. The Minister was asked how she envisages interface between the various organisations. She was asked to expand on the future work of the Audit Commission and Local Health Boards with the reorganisation of DAATs.
- **Residential Rehabilitation Facilities for Substance Misuse** – The Minister was asked to provide further details.
- **Community First Partnerships** – how many of the 79 embryonic Community First Partnerships extend over 1 ward and how are they interlinked with other community regeneration schemes?
- **Substance Misuse** – the initiatives were welcomed and Members noted that there a sense of uniformity being formulated and driven by the NAW. The drug and alcohol national occupational standards were welcomed and it was suggested that the Gwent Police Substance Abuse Team be invited to Committee to give a presentation on the work they undertake in this area.
- **Communities First** – further detail was sought on the future Co-ordinator Meetings arranged for later this month.
- **Homeless Pregnant Women** – The Committee were pleased that immediate action had been taken to re-house these vulnerable people.
- **Community Mutual Model** – is there any evidence of the level of interest in the model?

3. In response, the Minister said:

- **Licensing Bill** – it was not her responsibility to issue guidance to local authorities on this area but was content to write to the appropriate Westminster Minister reflecting Committee's concerns in deciding applications for licensed premises. Councillors will

have to abide by the current Code of Conduct and would not be involved in any applications that they have an interest in. It had also been suggested that up to 25% of applications be dealt with by officials and the Minister said that this raised an important issue for local government and if Committee agreed, she would write to the Department of Culture expressing the Committee's concerns.

- **Community Safety Partnerships** – she agreed to consult with Chief Constables and others, including the Equal Opportunities Minister, and produce a paper for future Committee on hate crime. She said she would provide information to the Committee on the availability of and criteria for CCTV grants. She said she would look at the suggestion for interlinking the Assembly Police Scheme with the work of the Community Safety Partnerships.
- **Welsh Housing Quality Standard** – she said the report illustrated initial assessment by local authorities.
- **DAATs** – she emphasised that the current interface and good work practices will continue under the new arrangements. The aim of involving the Audit Commission is to help track where the allocated funding goes and provide an audit trail.
- **Residential Rehabilitation Facilities for Substance Misuse** – she agreed to provide a note at the next meeting.
- **Community First Partnerships** – she agreed to provide a note at the next meeting.
- **Substance Misuse** – she said she was still concerned as to how the policy would be developed. She agreed that the Gwent Police Substance Abuse Team would provide an excellent example of good working practice.
- **Communities First** – she agreed to provide details of the impending Community First Co-ordinators meetings.
- **Community Mutual Model** – she said some local authorities had expressed an interest in following the model and she was hopeful the model would emerge in Wales.

4.4 The Chair thanked the Minister for her report and asked Members if they had any comments on the two draft SI's listed in her report - The Local Authorities (Capital Finance) (Rate of Discount for

2003 - 2004)(Wales) Regulations 2003 and Leasehold Reform Collective Enfranchisement) (Counter Notices) (Wales) Regulations 2003 and the Leasehold Reform (Notices) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2003. No comments were received and it was noted that the SIs would proceed to the Business Committee.

Action Points

- The Minister to write to her Westminster colleague on providing guidance to local authorities, which reflects the committee's concerns, in deciding applications for licensed premises and the possibility of Officers determining Licensing Bill applications
- The Minister to provide the Committee with a note on how Community Safety Partnerships intend to address hate crime
- The Minister to provide information to the Committee on the availability of and criteria for CCTV grants
- The Minister to look at the possibility of linking the Assembly Police Scheme with Community Safety Partnerships
- The Minister to provide a note on residential rehabilitation facilities for substance misuse in her next written report
- The Minister to provide a note on the number of Communities First Partnership which extend over more than one ward
- The Minister to provide Members with details of Communities First Co-ordinators meetings
- The Clerk to invite the Gwent Police Substance Abuse team to a future committee meeting

09.57am to 10.16am

Item 5: Consideration of the Welsh Assembly Government's Third Annual Report on Social Inclusion LGH-05-03(p.3)

1. The Minister introduced the report advising that its content and presentation was much improved following comments last year and she wished to record her thanks to officials for the tremendous amount of work put into compiling the report. She added that she would be happy to receive comments today and in writing up to 14 March.

5.2 Members welcomed the report which they added was an excellent reference document on how the NAW was tackling social deprivation in Wales. Members suggested that the draft Report should be strengthened in the following areas:

- One-third of children in Wales are living below the poverty line and it was suggested that a link be included between Section 3 – *Tackling Poverty* and Section 5 – *Children and Young People*.
- Race hate crimes and domestic violence in Section 4.

- The Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse
- References to support for older people and people with disabilities.
- Members returned to the issue of Post Offices in relation to the proposed changes to the benefits payment arrangements and the steps being taken by the Assembly Government to alleviate the position of post offices affected by the changes. It was also suggested that the Assembly should express its position more clearly in non-devolved areas such as this where it has concerns but is also taking action. Members sought clarification on the definition of an urban post office. Members also sought further clarification on the Post Office Deprivation Fund and the Post Office Development Fund.
- Pharmacies in deprived areas - like Post Offices these are vital community services, often providing first point of call in terms of advice, thereby freeing up GP time.

3. The Minister said:

- She would ask officials to look to strengthen the areas on child poverty, hate crime, the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse and references to support for older people and people with disabilities.
- She said that the issue of domestic violence was being reviewed.
- She undertook to write to both Postwatch and DWP about concerns raised regarding the service being provided by the Post Office Helpline which, it was claimed, was providing inaccurate and misleading information. She said she would also seek clarification of how Post Office Ltd classified branches as either urban or rural. She also agreed to update members on the Small Retailers in Deprived Areas Scheme and the Post Office Development Fund.
- She said the Minister for Health and Social Services had raised concern over the pharmacy issue and she agreed to write to Jane Hutt expressing the Committee's concerns.

5.4 The Chair said she would write to the Minister with the Committee's views.

Action Points

- The Minister to write to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Post Watch and Post Office Ltd in relation to the designation of urban post offices and their role in handling

benefit payments.

- The Minister to write to Committee on the Small Retailers in Deprived Areas Scheme and the Post Office Development Fund
- The Minister to report to Committee, representations made by the National Assembly Government on the possible threat to local pharmacies of pharmacies being incorporated into out of town supermarkets
- The Chair to write to the Minister conveying the Committee's comments on the draft Social Inclusion Report

10.16am to 10.30am

Item 6: Local Government Electoral Arrangements in Wales

LGH-05-03(p.4)

1. The Minister introduced the paper.
2. Members made the following points:

- Any changes would require UK legislation.
- There was a consensus that there was a moral case to lower the voting age to 16 years and the candidacy age to 18 years. It was felt that this change could inject new dimension into politics.
- Noted that there were a growing number of youth councils and school parliaments and that young people were interested in both politics and their future.

1. The Minister suggested that as there was a consensus in Committee to this issue and to her earlier paper - LGH-04-03(p.1) – that she prepares a draft report in readiness for her Plenary Statement scheduled for 19 March and circulates to Members for comments. Members agreed to this suggestion.

Action Point

- The Minister to circulate to Members a draft of her proposed statement to Plenary on those issues in the Sunderland Report which receive cross-party support

10.30am to 10.50am

The Committee agreed to break for 20 minutes.

10.50am to 10.54am

Prior to Item 7, the Chair asked Members if they were content for the Minister to make a presentation to the Children's Commissioner on the implications of the Waterhouse recommendations on local authorities bearing in mind the Committee's interest and findings. Members were in agreement but suggested that the Chair also attend. The Minister said she would report on the way forward at the next meeting.

10.54am to 12.35pm

Item 7: Presentation from Drug Agencies

7.1 The Chair welcomed the representatives from the organisations connected with the prevention and treatment of substance misuse who had been invited to today's meeting. She added that the Committee attached huge importance to this serious issue. The organisations represented were:

- **Richard Pates and Rhoda Emlyn-Jones** representing **Option 2**, a small project working with families in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan where there are serious child protection concerns and parents are misusing drugs or alcohol. The Project recently won the Community Care Award for Child Protection and is considered to be a fine example of preventative work. Richard Pates is also Chair of the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse.
- **Emlyn Jenkins and Alistair Lang** from the **DARE** project (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) which is a school-based project being run by South Wales Police in 22 Primary schools in the Rhondda Valleys.
- **Dr Mel Bagshaw** represented The Cardiff Addictions Unit which runs a GP shared care scheme and is considered to be very innovative.
- **Roger Duncan** represented **The Swansea Drug Project** which is a positive parenting project which employs a full-time family worker and includes supporting families and identifies the needs of clients who have substance misuse problems, in particular those parents with children between the ages of 0-4 years old.

- **Aneurin Owen** from **CAIS** will discuss The DAWN Project that builds on the current excellent Drug & Alcohol and Offender Rehabilitation Service that exists in North Wales, by bringing together the leading agencies in these fields and providing a seamless service. This effectively bridges the gap from treatment to mainstream further education, training and employment for these hard to reach and often excluded client groups.
- **Andy Evason** from the **West Glamorgan Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse**. A voluntary agency providing information; advice; counselling; groupwork; home visits; aftercare; drop-in; training; youth work. Operates a total abstinence philosophy.

Copies of all the presentations are attached at Annex 1.

2. Members were unanimous in their support for the excellent work undertaken by all the organisations represented today and felt it was reassuring to see what work was being done in the front line to tackle the drug and alcohol misuse problems affecting Wales. The following specific points were made:

- Appreciate the request for additional funding.
- Stigma and perception of misuses is a barrier to some groups obtaining treatment.
- Very impressed with the GP Shared Care Scheme. Asked if the service covers the whole of the Bro Taf Health Authority and how many patients were on the scheme.
- On Option 2, how does corporate parenting fit into the scheme? What influences the decision at the end of the 4-6-week period or within it, whether a child/ren need to be entered on the Child Protection Register?
- What consideration has been given to adopting the Option 2 scheme throughout Wales?
- The presentation displayed depth and different variety of numerous projects being undertaken. Perhaps the Committee could consider how to progress the development and extension of services throughout Wales and disseminate the good practices.
- Clarification was sought on the recent review.

2. In response, the Panel said:

- The GP Shared Care Scheme was initially rolled out across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan but a satellite scheme is opening in Rhondda Cynon Taff. There are currently 54 patients on the scheme with a further 5 waiting to join. The Scheme also owes its success to the support of the local pharmacists.
- Option 2 currently has two therapists based in Cardiff and two based in the Vale of Glamorgan. Interest has been received from other authorities in Wales and Manchester recently introduced a scheme modelled on Option 2. It has proved to be cost-effective by leaving children at home and enabled families to remain together. The service has to be commissioned by an active Social Worker and full risk assessments are carried out. At the end of the period, the case transfers back to the Social Worker for maintenance

and monitoring.

- The intention of the recent review was to audit not evaluate the current treatment systems schemes in place. Results have not yet been analysed. Evidence was gathered via the five existing DAATs in Wales with the assistance of professional researchers. A lot has been learnt from a similar exercise initiated by the Scottish Executive 18 months ago whose aim was to ensure that common standards and good management of funding was paramount.

2. In conclusion, the Chair said that the suggestion that the Committee undertake a review had been noted and would be considered by the post-election Committee.
3. The Chair thanked all the presenters for attending Committee and also for the excellent work they all undertake in the area of prevention and treatment of substance misuse.

Committee Secretariat

March 2003