

North Wales Regional Committee NWR 01-99(min)

Minutes of Committee meeting

Date: Friday 2 July

Time: 10.30am to 1pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Conwy County Council, Bodlondeb, Conwy

Attendance

Members

Alison Halford	Delyn
Ann Jones	Vale of Clwyd
Gareth Jones	Conwy
Ieuan Wyn Jones	Ynys Môn
Christine Humphreys	North Wales
John Marek	Wrexham
Tom Middlehurst	Alyn and Deeside
Alun Pugh	Clwyd West
Rod Richards	North Wales
Peter Rogers	North Wales
Janet Ryder	North Wales
Karen Sinclair	Clwyd South
Dafydd Wigley	Caernarfon

Secretariat

Marie Knox	Head of Committee Secretariat
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The meeting began with Marie Knox in the chair. Councillor Graham Rees, Chairman of Conwy Borough Council, welcomed the Committee to Conwy.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Lord Ellis-Thomas who, as Presiding Officer, had decided not to attend meetings of the North Wales Regional Committee but will receive the papers.

Item 1: Election of Chair

Marie Knox asked for nominations for the Chair of the Committee. Dafydd Wigley proposed Gareth Jones and the nomination was seconded by Tom Middlehurst. There were no other nominations and Gareth Jones was duly elected.

Gareth Jones took the chair for agenda item 2.

Item 2: Forward work programme

The Chair thanked Conwy County Borough Council for allowing the Committee to use the Chamber and for its hospitality. He said there were high aspirations and a range of views about what regional committees will do. To avoid confusion among members of the public and external organisations, the committee needed to be clear about its role from the start, especially in relation to subject committees.

Subject committees' primary role would be to examine all-Wales policy issues in a given subject area. A key role for regional committees would be to ensure local voices and concerns are heard. The committee might therefore wish to place particular emphasis on its contacts with local organisations. If, as a result of such contacts, the committee identified that a specific issue is of particular concern in the region, it would need to take account of any work being undertaken in that field by the subject committee, before it decided what to do.

In deciding how to approach a particular issue the committee would also need to take account of the time available to it. The proposal discussed in plenary was for regional committees to meet twice a term (eg October and December). It would not be possible to arrange additional meetings at very short notice because of the need to book venues in advance and advertise meetings.

Proposals for the forward work programme therefore need to be realistic in terms of the time commitment involved. The Chair then invited contributions.

It was generally agreed that:

- the Committee's role was to represent the people of North Wales and make their views and concerns known to the Assembly;
- the Committee should focus on the appropriateness of Government policy as it affected the area;
- the biggest task was to convince people, particularly in North East Wales, of the relevance of the Assembly to them;
- it would be important for the Committee to meet and develop relationships with local bodies, and provide a democratic overview;
- the Committee needed to concentrate on areas where it could add value;
- the Committee should meet the public in open forum from time to time.

During discussion the following, more detailed, points were made:

- at the meeting in October the Committee should invite contributions from the North Wales Economic Forum on the economy and the North Wales Health Authority on the health service. Each session could last for one hour. This could be followed by a session concentrating on constituency matters. In December the Committee could select two different subjects;
- care needed to be taken to avoid duplicating the work of the standing committees, such as the Audit Committee, as well as the subject committees. For example the proposal on the forward work programme to consider the disposal of the North Wales Hospital, Denbigh was one which should be left to the Audit Committee;
- the Committee should be careful not to duplicate, or second guess, the work of local authorities. For example, it was not the Committee's role to consider Gwynedd Council's Welsh language policy has had been proposed;
- a priority for the Committee was to look at north/south rail links. Timetables for next May were being drawn up now and urgent action was needed now if improvements were to be secured. A sub-committee should be set up to look at this;
- it was confirmed that, under section 33 of the Government of Wales Act, the Committee could "consider, and make appropriate representations about, any matter affecting Wales";
- the Committee should submit views on the Single Programming Documents for Objective 1 and Objective 2 to the Economic Development Committee;
- a meeting should be held with the North Wales Fire Authority to discuss local concerns;
- people in north east Wales had difficulty accessing Welsh television stations. This should be looked at to provide the area with better coverage of Welsh affairs.

Summarising the discussion the Chair said that: a draft forward work programme would be prepared and circulated to the Committee before the Recess; a sub-committee made up of one member from each party would be set up to consider north /south rail links as a matter of urgency and report back to the Committee; and the North Wales Economic Forum and the North Wales

Health Authority would be invited to make presentations to the Committee's meeting in October. It was noted that standing order 8.26 required the Committee to resolve to establish a sub-committee on a motion setting out its terms of reference. It was agreed that this would be formally considered at the next meeting but that the sub-committee would take forward its work before then.

Action points

- Prepare and circulate draft forward work programme before Recess - **Secretariat**.
- Invite the North Wales Economic Forum and the North Wales Health Authority to make presentations to the Committee's meeting in October - **Secretariat**.
- Consider north/south rail links and report to Committee as a matter of urgency - **Sub-committee (membership to be confirmed)**.

Item 4: Regional Committees - practical issues

The Chair said that comments had been made during the discussion of Item 3 about the timing and location for Committee meetings. Council offices in Wrexham, Conwy and Caernarfon had been offered for future meetings. He invited further views and the following points were made:

- the Committee should hold two sorts of meetings: formal meetings held usually at a local authority venue and less formal meetings held in school or village halls to meet local groups and individuals;
- time should be made available at every meeting to allow contributions from the public. It would however be necessary to know in advance who would be speaking and it was noted that the North Wales Police Authority had developed a useful procedure;
- it was important to make information available to the public so that they could attend the Committee's meetings;
- the Committee should meet local community groups and voluntary organisations as well as the general public. Some meetings should be held in local venues such as school or village halls and be more informal. Young people should be encouraged to attend;
- possible venues for the informal meetings could be canvassed through advertisements;
- individual committee members or groups of members had a role in canvassing views outside the committee sessions.

It was proposed, and agreed, that the Committee should meet in formal session in Wrexham on a date to be confirmed in October and in Caernarfon on a date to be confirmed in December. On dates to be confirmed in September and November the Committee would aim to hold informal meetings in venues such as schools or village halls.

Action points

- The draft forward work programme should include formal and informal meetings as proposed

- Secretariat.

The meeting closed at 11.45am.

Secretariat

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