

North Wales Regional Committee NWR 01-99(p.2)

Date: Friday 2 July

Time: 10.30am to 1pm

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

Title: FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORKING

Background

1. The Assembly has now established four regional committees , covering the geographical area of the regional economic forums, in accordance with Standing Order 10. This means that the North Wales Regional Committee covers Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Isle of Anglesey, Wrexham and the area of Gwynedd made up of the former districts of Arfon and Dwyfor.

2. The role of the regional committees, as specified by Standing Order 10, is to advise the Assembly on:

- matters affecting their regions;
- the effect of Assembly policies in those regions; and
- the work of public bodies in the regions.

Note that, unlike the subject committees, in accordance with the Government of Wales Act, the regional committees' role is purely advisory.

3. Standing Order 10 also specifies that each regional committee shall meet in its region at least twice in each year, and that it shall have the power to elect its chair and to determine its programme of work. A regional committee may also resolve to include an item of business on the agenda of a specified future meeting, at the request of any two of its members.

Forward work programme

4. Unlike subject committees, there is no formal requirement for regional committees to maintain a rolling forward work programme. Nevertheless, it is proposed that the North Wales Regional Committee should adopt this discipline, to assist both Members and officials in planning the Committee's future business and to inform outside bodies of forthcoming business.
5. The contents of the forward work programmes are for the regional committees to determine. However they will need to avoid duplicating the work of subject committees and to focus on local issues. In establishing its forward work programme, the Committee will want to take account of the work programmes which are now being developed by subject committees. For example Regional committees will be well placed to complement the work of subject committees in by considering the impact of all-Wales policies on the local area and evaluating their effectiveness This will include local economic development, health, social services, education, transport and environmental issues. Regional committees will also be well placed to consider cross-cutting issues, for example, sustainable development, at the local level.
6. This means that the Committee might wish to try to identify one or two issues of particular significance to the region, which it could consider in depth over more than one meeting. In selecting these issues the Committee may wish to take account of the forward work programmes which are now being developed by subject committees. In this way the Committee will be able to contribute most effectively to the development of the Assembly's policies by making an input to the work of the relevant subject committee.
7. This suggestion is intended to focus rather than to restrict the Committee's deliberations. Members will still have the opportunity to discuss all the issues which are important in the area. These will no doubt span the full spectrum of the Assembly's responsibilities.
8. The Committee will also want to consider its relationship with the public bodies operating in its area. Again it will be necessary to ensure that the Committee's work complements that of the subject committees, which will be monitoring the effectiveness of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies operating within their subject areas.
9. The attached draft forward work programme*, which takes account of the helpful suggestions already made by Members, is put forward for consideration by the Committee. It is based on the assumption that the Committee will hold formal meetings six times a year, that is in October, December, January, March, May and July.

Methods of working

10. Regional committees will form a crucial link between the Assembly and local communities. It is proposed that the Committee's formal meetings should be held throughout the region.

11. The Committee may also want to hold other sessions, either with the public or local organisations, throughout the region. These sessions could be arranged during the months in which formal Committee meetings are not being held. There are any number of formats which could be adopted for these events. One possibility would be to create 'sub-regional committees', creating a number of sub-sets of Members who would form groups of Committee Members to hold informal meetings in their areas, in local venues such as community centres, village halls or even schools.

12. In discussing how best to forge links with local communities, the committee will need to consider whether such links should be arranged on a fairly formal basis, with Committee Clerk support (which would restrict events to the monthly Friday morning session), or informally with individual Members attending local events as part of the constituency role and reporting back to the Committee.

Committee Secretariat
June 1999

* The draft forward work programme will be circulated as soon as possible.