

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE STRATEGIC FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2003/4

Introduction

1. This work programme sets out the strategic priorities of the Committee for the next twelve to eighteen months.

Remit and responsibilities

2. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Assembly Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services and covers local government, the development of a strategic approach to the delivery of public services and the Wales Spatial Plan. It does not cover the Minister's responsibilities in respect of the Assembly's finances or policy or financial matters falling solely within another portfolio.

3. The responsibilities of subject committees, as set out in Standing Order 9, are principally: policy development; scrutiny of Ministers and relevant bodies; and scrutiny of legislation.

Aims

4. The Committee will develop a strategic approach to its work and aim to balance consideration of subjects across the portfolio and its range of responsibilities.

Priorities

5. Priorities for the coming period will be:

- *Policy development (SO 9.7(i))* – the Committee will focus on those areas of policy development where it can make the greatest impact. In the coming period the Committee proposes to review topics from the following policy areas:
 - *the operation of new scrutiny arrangements in local government;*
 - *the role of town and community councils;*
 - *encouraging more candidates to stand for local election.*
- *Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(ii))* - the Minister will report to the Committee at alternate meetings on current developments within the portfolio. The Committee may also undertake inquiries into particular topics in greater depth.
- *Scrutiny of relevant bodies (SO 9.7 (iii))* – the Committee will consider the work of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Local Government Equalities Unit, the Local Government Data Unit of Wales, Syniad and the Audit Commission.

- *Scrutiny of proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 22)* – the Minister will regularly outline forthcoming secondary legislation and the Committee will be informed of relevant proposed primary legislation. The Committee will identify for scrutiny those items of legislation where there is scope to influence content and will also consider draft secondary legislation referred by the Deputy Presiding Officer as appropriate.

The Committee will consider the following items as they arise:

- *proposals for the Assembly's budget (SO 9.8(ii))* – the Committee will indicate its budget priorities in the summer term and comment on the draft budget in the autumn term;
- *complaints (SO 9.8(iii) and 21)* – the Committee will consider any complaints referred to it under Standing Order 21;
- *public appointments (SO 9.8(iv) and 20)* – the Committee's two public appointment nominees will take part in the process of appointments to public bodies as vacancies arise;
- *other matters referred by the Assembly (SO 9.8 (v))* – the Committee will consider other matters referred to it by the National Assembly, but would ask Assembly Members to consult the Committee Chair before tabling motions inviting plenary to remit work to the Committee.

The Assembly's Statutory Duties

6. The Government of Wales Act 1998 places certain duties on the National Assembly, the Committee's work will be guided by the following:

- *Equality of Opportunity (s.48 and s.120)* - Committee meetings will be held in public and on occasion away from the National Assembly building to increase the accessibility of its business to people across Wales. Over the range of issues within its portfolio, the Committee will have regard to equality of opportunity;
- *Sustainable Development (s.121)* - throughout its deliberations the Committee will focus on the need to balance economic and social growth with the conservation of the environment, through sustainable development. Its own policy review recommendations will reflect this principle.

Local Government and Public Services Committee

June 2003

Key issues for consideration by the Local Government and Public Services Committee

July 2003

- Budget priorities for the local government main expenditure group;
- Council tax revaluation and rebanding;
- Draft The Local Authorities (Allowances for Members of County and County Borough Councils) (Past Service Awards) (Wales) Regulations 2003;
- Draft Local Authorities (Pensions) (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Priorities for consideration in the Autumn term 2003

- Secondary legislation flowing from the enactment of the Local Government Bill;
- Evidence gathering for Committee-led inquiry into the operation of new political management structures in local government;
- Local Government Revenue Settlement 2004-05;
- Progress on the implementation of recommendations of the Report of the Commission on Local Government Electoral Arrangements in Wales (*the Sunderland Report*);
- The results of the survey into the role and functions of town and community councils.

Other issues to be included in the programme as appropriate:

- Implementation of the Wales Spatial Plan;
- The work of the Welsh Local Government Association.
- Monitoring the success of community strategies, local government spending patterns and policy agreements in delivering national policy objectives;
- The work of the following bodies:
 - i) Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales;
 - ii) Local Government Equalities Unit;
 - iii) Syniad;
 - iv) Local Government Data Unit;
 - v) *One Voice* – the single town and community council association for Wales;
- Monitoring the performance of local authorities and the impact of the Wales Programme for Improvement;
- Consideration of the results of the *Local Voices* survey of public perceptions of local government services;
- The operation of the Local Government Partnership Scheme;
- The operation of PFI schemes in Wales.