

Rural Development Sub-committee

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Scoping paper for the Committee's Rural Service Delivery inquiry

Purpose

To discuss the scoping paper for the Committee's second scrutiny inquiry into rural service delivery.

Background

It has been proposed that the Committee's second inquiry should be into rural service delivery in Wales. The scoping paper at Annex A sets out the proposed scope of the inquiry and suggests ways in which the Committee could conduct the inquiry.

Recommendation

Members are invited to agree:

the scope of the study, including which services should be scrutinised;
the method of conducting the inquiry e.g. should the inquiry focus on service sectors such as health, education etc or be citizen centred, examining such areas as service provision for older people, children, economically active etc.

Members are invited to consider:

content of the terms of reference;
potential witnesses

Committee Service
September 2007

Annex A

Rural Service Delivery Scoping Paper

Scope

Health

Education

Transport

Social services

Financial services (banks and post offices)

Advisory services

Local authority provision (such as leisure centres, refuse collection, recycling facilities, libraries)

Scene setting and a review of existing research to establish the current situation and identify problems

Assessment of ease of access to services in rural Wales and/or the quality of those services (based on existing/ongoing research)

Analysis of Welsh Assembly Government policies and funding taking account of developments associated with the Public Service Reform agenda in Wales

Examination of examples of good practice in other areas

Recommendations to Government on areas of improvement

Definition of rural

Urban - Settlements with more than 10,000 population

Rural - Town and Fringe

Rural - Village

Rural - Dispersed (Hamlets and Isolated Dwellings)

Settlements are also defined according to whether they are in 'sparse' or less 'sparse' areas. This classification is also used by the Commission for Rural Communities in England.

Using this classification, information on the proportion of Wales' population living in rural Wales can be seen as follows:

Population shares by settlement type		
Total Persons ('000s) = 100%		
Settlement type	Context	%
Urban	Less Sparse	62.3
	Sparse	1.9
Rural		
small town and fringe	Less Sparse	12.8
	Sparse	3.3
village	Less Sparse	7.0
	Sparse	5.2
dispersed	Less Sparse	3.2
	Sparse	4.2

Source: Census 2001/ONS

Ranks for the access to services domain

Settlement type and context	Highest 10%					Lowest 50%	Total
	1 to 190	191 to 380	380 to 570	570 to 950	951 +		
large town - less sparse	3	36	79	248	835	1,201	
small town - less sparse	1	25	60	91	88	265	
other - less sparse	63	63	19	9	0	154	
large town - sparsest	1	3	9	8	16	37	
small town - sparsest	2	21	20	22	7	72	
other - sparsest	120	42	3	2	0	167	
Total	190	190	190	380	946	1,896	

Source: Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2005; with the National Statistics classification of settlement type and context at Lower Super Output Area

A survey undertaken by the Wales Rural Observatory in 2004 found that 49% of respondents said that there was someone in their household who had problems getting to local services such as leisure centres, dentists, police stations, doctors' surgeries or banks. This survey also found that income influences relative ability to access services in rural areas. Perceptions of the quality of services differed according to the particular service and geographical area. A further study by the Wales Rural Observatory found that the majority of those respondents that had lived at their properties for more than 10 years considered that the quality of services has not changed significantly over the last five years.

Public Sector Reform

more citizen focused;

responsive to the needs of communities;

driven by a commitment to equality and social justice;

and deliver efficiency.