

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: JANUARY 2001 TO DECEMBER 2001

Introduction

1. The Local Government and Housing Committee is one of the Assembly's seven subject committees. The Committee's remit matches that of Edwina Hart, the Assembly Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities. It covers local government policy and finance issues, housing, urban regeneration and crime prevention. It does not, however, cover Edwina Hart's responsibilities as Finance Minister.
2. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in Standing Orders, as reproduced at **Annex 1**.
3. Standing Order 9.9 requires each subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The Committee must consult other committees and the Assembly Cabinet on the programme before notifying plenary.
4. The Panel of Chairs has agreed that committees' work programmes should be strategic and cover an 18 to 24 month time frame. This strategic programme is supported by a more detailed programme covering at least a three month period.

Aims and objectives

5. The Committee's aim is to achieve a better quality of life for the people of Wales and to promote better, simpler government. Its objectives are:
 - To help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime;
 - To deliver value for money for the people of Wales, with better and more efficient services;
 - To streamline the Assembly's work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups.
6. These aims and objectives correspond with those set out in *betterwales.com*, the Assembly's strategic plan.

Priorities

7. In taking forward its responsibilities for contributing to policy development (Standing Order 9.7 (i)), the Committee attaches particular importance to:

- The development of a national housing strategy, with a view to ensuring that everyone has a decent home and homelessness is eliminated;
- The modernisation of local government, including the development of new political management structures, the development of policy agreements with local government and the implementation of the best value regime;
- The adoption of a revised standard spending assessment formula, so that revenue support for local authorities is allocated on the basis of a fairer assessment of need.

8. The Committee will play a major role in progressing many of the issues for early action which are identified in Chapter 4 of *betterwales.com*. These are set out at **Annex 2**.

9. As it becomes more familiar with its remit, the Committee will be seeking to develop a strategic approach to its work programme, and in particular to identify specific issues on which it wishes to focus in detail.

10. For the immediate future, the Committee plans to undertake a review of the policy on transferring local authority housing into community ownership. The review will examine the emerging model for community ownership, as well as wider issues such as whether alternative approaches could generate the private finance necessary to overcome the backlog of repair and essential modernisation work for council housing.

Other issues

11. The Committee will also need to:

- consider proposals for the Assembly's budget (Standing Order 9.8 (ii));
- consider secondary legislation as appropriate (Standing Order 9.8 (i) / 22);
- undertake scrutiny of the Assembly Secretary (Standing Order 9.11);
- review cross-cutting issues such as equal opportunities and sustainable development.

Method of working

12. In taking forward its work programme, the Committee intends to adopt an open and participative style of working. It will liaise closely with all of the Assembly's partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors, particularly those in local government.

Detailed work programme

13. The Committee's detailed work programme for the summer and autumn terms is attached at **Annex 3**.

Committee Secretariat

January 2001

Annex 1

ROLE OF SUBJECT COMMITTEES

EXTRACT FROM STANDING ORDERS

9.7 Each subject committee shall

- (i) contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;
- (ii) keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and
- (iii) keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

9.8 Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- (i) advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under Standing Order 22;

- (ii) provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19;
- (iii) perform its function under Standing Order 21 (complaints);
- (iv) perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and
- (v) consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields.

Annex 2

betterwales.com: ISSUES FOR EARLY ACTION

Table 7: Better quality of life

'Help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime.'

- *Communities First* - community-led action to improve our most deprived communities
- A reduction in the proportion of people who feel very worried about safety on the streets to below the 1998 figure of 11 per cent, by supporting local Crime and Disorder Partnerships, the Crime Reduction Programme and other community development strategies
- A reduction in the temptation for young people to engage in anti-social behaviour by using the £25 million Children and Youth Partnership Fund to provide constructive activities

- To reduce the number of occupied houses in serious disrepair to less than 4 per cent of the stock, by 2002, and to extend the Care and Repair Scheme to all parts of Wales
- To use more private funding to improve poor quality housing estates; for all new social housing to be of good quality with high standards of safety and energy efficiency and located in attractive, non-threatening environments designed to reduce crime
- The proportion of vacant social housing to be cut to less than 3 per cent, the number of homeless families living in temporary housing to be below 500 and the need for rough sleeping to be eliminated
- 30,000 'fuel poor' households, receiving income or disability benefits, to be covered by the new Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Table 9: Better, simpler government

'Deliver value for money for the people of Wales, with better and more efficient services'

- To improve the accountability, responsiveness and decision making of local councils, by working with the Welsh Local Government Association on the development of new political management arrangements, by April 2001
- To develop, and put in place by April 2001, the first Policy Agreement between the Assembly and all local authorities, within a national framework developed in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association: the Agreements to focus on the specific and measurable improvements required to achieve shared policy objectives
- 50 per cent of local authority services to have been subject to best value reviews with best value inspections demonstrating improvements in the standards of services. No local authority directly provided services to run at a deficit, by March 2002
- A fairer formula for distributing revenue support grant to local authorities, from April 2001

'Streamline our work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups'

- The role of the Commission for Local Administration in Wales to be extended to include that of a Housing Ombudsman for registered social landlords and a Standards Board for local government, by 2001
- Better co-ordination of local services by working with the Welsh Local Government Association to agree a framework for community planning (compatible with their Local Agenda 21 strategies), by April 2001, with a review being completed, within the same timescale, of the requirement on councils to produce plans

ANNEX 3

LOCAL GOVERNEMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

DETAILED FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: JANUARY 2001 - DECEMBER 2001

Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 24 January 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Home Energy Conservation Act Report
	3	Preserved Right to Buy – Consideration of responses to proposals to change the 'cost floor rule'
	4	Homes Bill – Implications for Wales
	5	Policy review of housing stock transfer – Consideration of list of key recommendations
	6	Forward work programme – Consideration of strategic forward work programme

Wednesday 7 February 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness – Consideration of report of review of core funding
	3	Low demand for social housing – Study of tenants' views
	4	Play – Consideration of results of study of play in Wales
	5	Police authorities – Consideration of funding arrangements
	6	Presentation by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust
Thursday 15 February 2.00pm		Scope for informal Committee activity
Wednesday 28 February 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Local Government Finance Consultation Paper - Consideration of responses
	3	Political management structures - Consideration of results of consultation exercise
	4	Best Value Performance Indicators – Consideration of results of consultation exercise
	5	Annual Report on Social Disadvantage
	6	Policy review of housing stock transfer – Consideration of first draft report

	7	Forward work programmes – Consideration of other subject committees' strategic forward work programmes
Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 14 March 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Local authorities' general power to promote economic, social and environmental well-being – Consideration of draft guidance
	3	Social housing – Consideration of rent levels, including links to Social Housing Grant and Housing Benefit
	4	Best Value and Registered Social Landlords – Consideration of consultation paper
	5	[Presentation from the House Builders Federation]
Wednesday 28 March 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Assembly Local Government Bill
	3	Local tenants organisations – Consideration of draft code of practice
	4	Policy review of housing stock transfer – Committee to sign off draft report
	5	Presentation from the Building Regulations Advisory Committee
Wednesday 2 May 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Homelessness Commission - Progress report

	3	Communities First – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	4	Community strategies – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	5	Forward work programme – Consideration of final strategic forward work programme
Wednesday 16 May 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Business rates – Results of first year review of transitional rate relief scheme
	3	Report from the working group on improving fire safety
	4	UK Fuel Poverty Strategy – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
Thursday 24 May 2.00pm		Scope for informal Committee activity
Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 6 June 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	National housing strategy – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	3	Supporting People – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	4	The role of town and community councils

Wednesday 20 June 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	'Rethinking Construction' - Progress report
	3	Review of the local authority Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) system – Consideration of working group's report
Wednesday 4 July 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Budgets – Consideration of Minister's issues paper
Wednesday 18 July 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
Wednesday 24 October 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Review of the local authority Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) system – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	3	Homelessness Commission – Consideration of final report
	4	Service and investment pressures facing local government – Presentation from the Welsh Local Government Association
Wednesday 7 November 9.30am	1	Minister's Report

Thursday 15 November 2.00pm		Scope for additional Committee activity
Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 21 November 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
Wednesday 5 December 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Communities First – Progress report on implementation

Committee Secretariat

16 January 2001