

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

DRAFT GUIDANCE ON COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

Purpose

1. The Committee is asked to consider the content of the draft guidance on community strategies and the proposed consultation arrangements.

Summary

2. This paper introduces proposed draft guidance on preparing community strategies (see **Annex 2**). It will be sent to every part of local government in Wales and to organisations throughout the public, private and voluntary sector (see covering letter at **Annex 1**). Key questions are being asked of those participating in the exercise which will influence the approach to community strategies and to other plans which are currently produced.

Timing

3. It is proposed to issue the draft guidance for consultation as early as possible in December.

Background

4. The Local Government Act 2000 places a duty on principal local authorities in England and Wales to prepare a community strategy for promoting the economic, environmental and social well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.
5. In preparing a community strategy, local authorities in Wales must have regard to any guidance issued by the National Assembly for Wales. Before issuing guidance, the Assembly is required to consult "such representatives of local government, and such other persons, as it considers appropriate" (a consultation list is attached to the covering letter at Annex 1).
6. While the duty to prepare a community strategy lies with the local authority, it is very important that it is produced in partnership with the community and that it is seen as "owned " by the whole community. The guidance seeks to ensure that a principle of equality across the various sectors and interests of the community is promoted and that the local authority's "leadership" role is one of facilitating the partnership.
7. The draft guidance has been issued to all divisions in the Assembly and comments

received to date have been incorporated in the draft. There may be some further amendments but it is not expected that this will change the direction of the guidance. There will be further discussion of the scope for rationalising plans (see Annex 1 of the draft guidance) before the guidance issues.

8. The Community Strategies sub-group considered the draft guidance on 17 November 2000. Comments relating to the draft have been incorporated.

Consideration

9. The community strategy needs to be seen as an overarching plan for the local community and a first reference point when other plans are being formulated. The advent of community strategies presents an opportunity to rationalise the number of plans and encourage convergence between plans.
10. It is proposed that the planning and review cycle should coincide with the electoral cycle. The strategy should have long term goals looking forward 10 to 15 years with shorter term action plans on which the electorate can judge delivery. The legislation does not lay down any time by which plans should be produced. The draft guidance proposes that all local authorities should have started the process by 1 April 2000 and that a plan should have been produced by the time of the next local government election.

Compliance

11. The Local Government Act 2000 (Part I, s 4.3) states that local authorities must have regard to any guidance issued by the Assembly when preparing or modifying their community strategy. There are no issues of regularity or propriety associated with this paper.

Financial Implications

12. There are no additional financial implications associated with this for the Assembly and no separately identifiable additional costs for local government: local authorities have an existing duty to consult under Best Value and any additional costs of more community involvement and increased efforts at co-ordination should be offset by the greater coherence and rationalisation achieved.

Cross cutting themes

13. This will cut across all sectors and interests and is reflected in the proposed wide circulation. The consultation exercise should ensure the guidance adequately refers to

all relevant themes.

Action

14. The Committee is asked to comment on particular aspects which it believes the draft guidance should address and any key questions it believes should be highlighted in the consultation exercise.

Contact

15. Mary Fraser, Local Government Modernisation 1, Ext 6414

Annex 1

Dear Colleague

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES: DRAFT GUIDANCE

The Local Government Act 2000 has placed a duty on principal local authorities in England and Wales to prepare a 'community strategy' for promoting the economic, environmental and social well-being of their areas and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK.

In preparing a community strategy, local authorities in Wales must have regard to any guidance issued by the National Assembly for Wales. Before issuing such guidance, the Assembly is required to consult "such representatives of local government, and such other persons, as it considers appropriate".

This draft guidance is a key part of that consultation. Community strategies are intended to bring together all those who can contribute to the future of the local authority area, to agree on the key priorities for the area and pursue them in partnership. As such, the preparation and implementation of community strategies will involve and affect not only local communities and the groups that represent them but also a wide range of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, with local authorities playing a key facilitating role.

This consultation exercise is therefore a wide-ranging one. Copies of this paper are being sent to every part of local government in Wales and to organisations throughout the public, private and voluntary sector. The consultation list is attached. We hope that individual local authorities will bring the draft guidance to the attention of the partner organisations and community groups with whom they work, and encourage those bodies to respond – either directly to the Assembly, or through the local authority.

The draft guidance has been prepared on the instruction of the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities, Mrs Edwina Hart MBE AM and on the advice of the Community Strategies sub group of the Local Government Partnership Council, which has a wide ranging membership –see the second list attached. It is important to build up a common view of the purpose of the community strategy process and some common principles governing how to go about it, without unnecessarily restricting local approaches and solutions. We hope that this draft guidance, and the responses to it, will help build that common understanding.

Questions on which views are particularly sought include:

- Whether there should be a common time frame for reviewing and updating community strategies, to coincide with the 4 year terms of local councils
- How the themes of sustainable development, equality of opportunity and tackling social disadvantage can be integral to community strategies
- How other plans prepared by local authorities and others are affected by community strategies. All such plans should relate clearly to the local community strategy (or where they cover more than one local authority area, community strategies). Can any of them be entirely replaced by community strategies? Should some be merged and made to relate more clearly to community strategies? If so, which ones?
- Whether there are other changes to these plans and planning cycles which would help to achieve better links with community strategies. For example, should they cover a similar timescale and be supported by a formative debate between the planning organisations about resource allocation each autumn to encourage longer term joint planning and investment?
- Whether there is scope for simplifying the way in which local authorities and local partnerships can access funding aimed at specific objectives, by relating bids to the community strategy or a sub-set of it

Timetable

We expect to issue the statutory guidance by the end of February 2001. The Assembly's objective is that all local authority areas should have begun their community strategy process by April 2001.

The National Assembly for Wales would welcome responses to this consultation paper by no later than **7 February 2001**. Any response received may be made public, unless the respondent has specifically asked for it to remain confidential.

Responses to this paper should be sent to:

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National Assembly for Wales

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Or e-mail: Marc.Hurford@wales.gsi.gov.uk

If you have any questions, complaints or other views on this consultation exercise, you can contact:

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Principal Research Officer

Local Government Modernisation Division

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Yours sincerely

MRS L C CASSIDY

Head of Local Government Modernisation Division

COMMUNITY STRATEGIES CONSULTATION LIST

Principal Authorities

Police, fire and national parks authorities

Community councils and their associations

Welsh Local Government Association

Syniad

All Assembly Sponsored Bodies (including Welsh Development Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, Wales Tourist Board, Arts and Sports Councils for Wales, Council for Education and Training for Wales)

Voluntary Sector Partnership Council

Business Partnership Council

NHS Wales

Health Authorities

Local Health Groups

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

County Voluntary Councils

Community Enterprise Wales

Business Wales

TUC Wales

Unison

Women’s National Coalition (Wales)

AWEMA (All Wales Ethnic Minority Association)

Race Equality Councils

Disability Wales

General Teaching Council for Wales

National Lottery Charities Board

New Opportunities Fund

Environment Agency

Employment Service Wales

Benefits Agency Wales

Other government offices in Wales

Audit Commission Wales

District Audit Wales

Partnership Council Modernisation Working Group

Membership of Community Strategies Sub Group

Member

Organisation

Brad Roynon

Carmarthenshire County Council

Tim Peppin	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Steve Thomas	Welsh Local Government Association
Phil Jarrold	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
David Cliffe	Health Authority
Gareth Williams	Business Wales (from House builders federation)
Richard Crawshaw	South West Wales Economic Forum
Pam Baldwin	UNISON
Ray Jones	Fire Authorities
Brian Davies	Police Authorities
Nigel Adams	Wales Tourist Board
Ann Watkin	Welsh Development Agency
Fran Medley	Arts Council of Wales
Cath Beaver	Environment Agency Wales
Paula Van Haarlem	Wales TECs
Keith Davies	Countryside Council for Wales
Mair Stephens	Town and Community Councils
Patrick Clackett	Audit Commission
Kate Cassidy	National Assembly for Wales
Ian Thomas	National Assembly for Wales
Mary Fraser	National Assembly for Wales

