

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

BLACK AND MINORITY ETHNIC HOUSING STRATEGY - CONSIDERATION OF CONSULTATION PAPER

Purpose:

1. The Committee is invited to discuss and comment upon the draft consultation document on the adoption of a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy for Wales and the proposed consultation and monitoring arrangements (see **Annex 1**).
2. The issue forms part of the Committee's agreed forward work.

Summary:

3. The draft consultation document describes the National Assembly's proposed strategic approach to identifying and meeting BME housing needs, as part of its wider National Housing Strategy. The consultation document "Better Homes for People in Wales" which sets out the Assembly's proposals for housing policy in Wales makes specific reference to equality of opportunity in housing and recognises the need to take forward the BME housing agenda.
4. The BME Strategy provides a national framework capable of being applied by all social landlords (local authorities and registered social landlords) in all areas of Wales, regardless of the proportion of ethnic minority people in the local population. It aims to help social landlords build on existing services, develop new initiatives and services where appropriate, and to ensure equality of opportunity and the empowerment of BME individuals and communities.

Timing:

5. The consultation document will be issued to all social landlords, BME representative organisations and housing bodies, as well as to all delegates who attended the Assembly/ Commission for Racial Equality conference "Breaking Down Barriers" on 25th October 2000. BME individuals and communities must be involved in the development of this Strategy from the outset. As well as direct consultation with BME representatives by the Assembly, social landlords are asked to work with their tenants and local community groups to ensure this involvement at a local level.
6. The document is being presented to the Committee so that its views can be incorporated within the draft consultation document prior to it being issued on 5th April for a twelve week consultation period.

Background:

7. The development of the BME Strategy has taken place against a backdrop of concerns about how well the housing needs of ethnic minority groups are currently being met by Welsh local authorities and registered social landlords. It is also timely in the light of the Lawrence Inquiry report (MacPherson) which highlighted the need for an overall aim to eliminate racial prejudice and disadvantage and to demonstrate fairness in all areas of public life.
8. The BME Strategy seeks also to address the findings of the Assembly-commissioned report "From the Margins to the Centre – Assessing the need for a Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy in Wales" by Mutale Nyoni. The report found that whilst most social landlords have adopted policies on equal opportunities, only a small number have adopted specific strategies to meet BME housing needs. The BME Strategy also aims to take forward the recommendations of the National Housing Strategy Task Group and the proposals on equality of opportunity contained within the consultation document "Better Homes for People in Wales".
9. The consultation document has been developed in conjunction with the Commission for Racial Equality, Mutale Nyoni and the Assembly's Equality Policy Unit.
10. The consultation seeks views on the inclusion of 11 key areas for action in the BME Strategy:
 - Development and dissemination of guidance and good practice;
 - Identifying BME housing needs;
 - Development of housing provision;
 - Service delivery;
 - Local BME housing strategies;
 - Tackling racist harassment;
 - Empowering people from BME communities;
 - Communication and consultation;
 - Developing networks and forging partnerships;
 - Supporting BME-led housing organisations.
11. It is proposed that a partnership approach will be adopted to implement the BME Strategy,

involving key agencies such as the Commission for Racial Equality, the All-Wales Ethnic Minority Association, the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations, the Welsh Local Government Association, the Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru and the Welsh Tenants' Federation. These organisations will also be invited to be represented on the proposed BME Housing Strategy Review Group which will review the progress and success of the BME Strategy on an annual basis.

Compliance:

12. Under Sections 36 and 169 of the Housing Act 1996, the Assembly may give guidance to registered social landlords and local authorities respectively, regarding housing allocations and aspects of management. The relevant powers under the Housing Act 1996 have been delegated to the Assembly Minister.

Cross-cutting themes:

13. The BME Strategy complies with the Assembly's duties under the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and under the Government of Wales Act 1999 in respect of discharging its functions with due regard to the principles of equality of opportunity and sustainable development. The BME Strategy is also fully consistent with the three major themes of Better Wales – sustainable development, tackling social disadvantage and equal opportunities.

Action for LGH Committee:

14. The Committee is invited to note and comment on the consultation document on the adoption of a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Strategy for Wales. In particular the Committee is asked to comment specifically on the 11 key areas for action contained within the draft BME Strategy, on the proposed consultation arrangements and on the establishment of the proposed BME Housing Strategy Review Group.

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