

Culture Committee CC-11-01(min)

MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 20 June

Time: 9.00am

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly

Attendance:

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Plaid Cymru, Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, Chair)

Jenny Randerson (Liberal Democrat, Cardiff Central, Assembly Minister)

Owen John Thomas (Plaid Cymru, South Wales Central)

Lorraine Barrett (Labour, Cardiff South and Penarth)

Dafydd Wigley (Plaid Cymru, Caernarfon))

Rosemary Butler (Labour, Newport West)

Delyth Evans (Labour, Mid & West Wales)

Jonathan Morgan (Conservative, South Wales Central))

Alison Halford (Labour, Delyn)

Officials

Julia Annand (Committee Clerk)

Stephen Thomas (Deputy Committee Clerk)

Richard Davies (Director, National Assembly's Education and Training Department)

Russell Thomas (Head, Culture, Sport and Welsh Language Division)

Introductory remarks

The Chair reminded members that the Committee was meeting in Denbigh on the morning of 4 July and would then travel on to the Llangollen International Eisteddfod where a programme of events has been arranged.

Item 1: *A Culture in Common* – Action plan

Paper: CC-11-01(p.1)

The Chair made some introductory remarks. He commented that this Committee inherited the report *A Culture in Common* from the Post-16 Education and Training Committee, the Assembly subsequently noted the report and the Minister volunteered to respond to the document. He expressed concern that there was no mechanism under standing orders which compelled Ministers to respond officially to Committee reports. He would raise this point in a meeting of the Panel of Chairs and also agreed to write to the Assembly Review of Procedures Group.

The Minister introduced her Culture Strategy. She said that the strategy was a response to *A Culture in Common*, a detailed report which listed over 100 un-costed and unprioritised recommendations. The strategy is in draft form and aims to show how the cultural scene in Wales has moved on since the publication of *A Culture in Common*. The Minister sought the views of the Committee, cultural ASPBs and other interested organisations.

The following points were made in discussion:

- The Minister was asked why the strategy included sport when there was no direct reference to sport in *A Culture in Common*. She replied that this was a matter that she had given much consideration to and had decided that sport was an integral part of our culture. She also pointed out that the UNESCO definition of culture which was quoted in *A Culture in Common*, included sport. The Chair reminded members that the Committee was due to embark upon a review of sport in 2002. The Committee debated whether sport should be included in a culture strategy and whether the strategy before the Committee was a culture strategy or an arts strategy. The Committee concluded that this was essentially an arts strategy, but that sport, or indeed the Welsh language could not be completely divorced from such a strategy.
- The Chair was concerned that the strategy omitted any reference to the proposals for a

National Youth Arts Fund and to a Chair in Community Arts. The Minister said she would take on board these comments and give consideration to these recommendations over the summer.

- Concerns were voiced that the Minister's strategy was not an action plan, lacked targets and a timetable for implementation and that the first fourteen pages of the strategy added very little to the overview of the arts scene as described in *A Culture in Common*. The point was also made that much of the good work highlighted in the strategy was carried out by ASPBs and there was little about what the Assembly itself was doing for the arts. The Minister responded by saying that the targets and timetable set out in the strategy were deliberately vague, because the priorities for next year's budget have not yet been set. She pointed out that the cultural ASPBs work to the agenda set out in the annual remit letter.
- The Minister was asked about the purpose and cost of the proposed Arts Development Fund for schools. In reply, she agreed that the aims of the Fund needed to be much more specific and well developed. One member made the point that such a fund should be for young people in general and not targeted specifically at schools.
- The Chair and other members emphasised the importance of cultural tourism to the Welsh economy and stated that the Wales Tourist Board should be accountable to this Committee rather than the Economic Development Committee. There was also some debate about whether the work of CADW should be brought under the culture portfolio.
- The Committee agreed about the importance of fostering links with the British Council to help promote Welsh artists abroad. The Chair mentioned that the respective political groups within the Assembly had recently each nominated a representative to sit on a group which fostered links with the British Council. He requested an agenda item about links with the British Council, before the end of this session. The Minister added that she had recently held two meetings with the British Council and was committed to strengthening the Assembly's links with that body.
- There was some discussion about the importance of the Music Development Fund and whether the fund was located in the arts or education budget lines. Officials replied that the fund was currently within GEST. The Minister added that the Education Minister was committed to replacing the fund once the current scheme had run its course.
- Members drew attention to the importance of the role of local government in delivering culture and sport. The Minister agreed and said that she was anxious that local authorities should re-engage with culture. She was conscious that many local authorities lessened their cultural commitments in the wake of local government reorganisation.

Other points raised during the discussion were:

- The fact that no HE institution in Wales offered a degree in dance
- In the lifelong learning context, the importance of arts and continuing education

opportunities for pensioners

- The varying amounts of VAT that are charged on cinema seats etc, continues to be a concern. The Chair indicated that this was an issue which the European Committee could usefully consider.
- Broadcasting issues were raised, particularly the current staffing and resource problems facing HTV Wales if Carlton decided to lessen the regional character of their output. The Minister stated that she had held three meetings with Clive Jones, the Chair of Carlton and had received assurances that the company would not operate a centralisation agenda. She also informed the Committee that she had written to Kim Howells MP, the new broadcasting minister seeking an early meeting.
- The Minister agreed that in a future Minister's report, she would inform members of the European funding that came to the arts in Wales via the Culture 2000 programme.
- A plea was made to Radio Wales to save "Station Road", its morning soap opera from abolition.

Members requested that during the autumn session, the Committee receive and discuss a revised strategy which would include a plan listing each recommendation contained in *A Culture in Common*, the action proposed by the Minister on each recommendation, the organisations responsible for implementing the proposals and the financial implications of each. The Minister agreed to do this by November. The Chair mentioned that the Culture Division in Cathays Park was seriously under-resourced and needed considerable bolstering if the Assembly was to give culture the importance it deserved. The Minister welcomed these comments and said that the Division has grown immeasurably in recent months and is now able to respond to the needs of the arts and the culture sector, the Committee and the Assembly.

Item 2: Presentation from RESOURCE

Paper: CC-11-01(p.2)

The Minister briefly introduced this item. She said that before establishing our own arrangements for Museums, Archives and Libraries, it was essential to consider the development of Resource in England and how this has impacted on Wales. Work is progressing on a consultation exercise about arrangements in Wales and this consultation paper will be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Minister introduced Mr Neville Mackay, Chief Executive of Resource. Mr Mackay gave a presentation on the role and work of Resource. The main points were as follows:

- Resource was established in April 2000. Its main aims are to:

- Provide strategic leadership and promote change
- Act as an authoritative advocate and champion for the new, combined sector
- Advise government on best practice and the delivery of specific issues such as standards and ICT
- The organisation has already made huge progress; it has established close links with central government and its agencies; it has begun to produce policy documents, given a new direction to research and the gathering of statistics and has continued to manage a number of tasks inherited to it.
- There is a willingness on the part of Resource to define its relationship with the Assembly and the cultural sector in Wales, and a concordat is being developed to address this.
- Since its existence, the organisation has learnt several useful lessons:
 - It is unrealistic to set up an organisation with an expanded remit, without increasing the budget to it.
 - It is important to give a new body enough headroom to enable it to change existing priorities and appoint new staff. It is important that such a new body is able to break the mould.
 - It is important to clarify the geographical scope of a new organisation and to consider what is meant by the term "strategic".
 - Don't expect instant results from a new organisation.
 - It is important that a new organisation should have a dynamic Chair and a Board drawn from a variety of interests and sources

The following points were made in the subsequent question and answer session:

- In reply to a question about Resource's relationship with the Council of Museums Wales (CMW), Mr Mackay replied that Resource provides CMW with the same range and quality of service as enjoyed under the Museums and Galleries Commission. Resource has helped CMW establish a cultural diversity network within Wales and is willing to involve all Welsh cultural organisations in consultation and decision making processes.
- In reply to a question about whether Resource could be extended to include membership from Wales, Mr Mackay felt strongly that there were substantial benefits to be derived from exploiting areas of commonality already in existence. If an organisation was set up on a Wales-only basis, there would be an argument for giving it a more broadly defined remit which could perhaps encompass the built heritage.
- Mr Mackay stated that he was content with Resource's current terms of reference, but pointed out that the organisation has no control over the funding that goes to museums; that is still administered from Whitehall.

The Minister concluded by stressing the importance of making sure that good ideas derived in

England flowed through to Wales and that there was much to be said from joined-up thinking in this field. She promised to bring the consultation paper to Committee early in the next session.

Item 3: Budget Priorities

Paper: CC-11-01(p.3)

The Minister introduced this session by saying that she wanted to gauge the Committee's priorities in respect of next year's budget. She informed members that ASPBs would be issuing their corporate plans at the end of the month and that these will be circulated to members. The ASPBs' bids for funding were likely to far outstrip budgetary provision. Mrs Randerson reminded members that this was not a spending review year; additional funding would have to be found from existing indicative budgets.

The following comments were made in discussion:

- There was some discussion about the possibility of having an arts fund (along the lines of GEST), for specific projects which the Committee would want to promote eg bursaries for individual artists.
- The National Youth Arts Fund was considered to be a funding priority.
- The Minister updated the Committee about last year's expenditure. She said that of the £56m in the culture budget, £2.8million (5%) was left unspent. The bulk of this related to monies originally allocated to the Wales Millennium Centre. If the WMC was excluded from the figures, the underspend is only 1.8% of the total budget. An additional £250k can be accounted for by the grant to the FA Cup Final because the grant conditions and clawback arrangements were not finalised before the end of the financial year. However, this money will be spent as originally intended.
- The Committee discussed the £2m earmarked for the WMC and the additional £2m for the arts across Wales. The latter would enable the rest of Wales to benefit from WMC activities once the Centre came onstream. Some members thought that compared to the amount of money spent on the WMC, the additional £2m was a paltry figure. The Minister referred members to a paper from the Finance Secretary on this issue, recently taken in Plenary, which would be re-distributed to Committee members.
- The stabilisation of the Welsh National Opera (WNO) currently being undertaken by the Arts Council of England was thought to be an issue worth considering as part of next year's budget round. Several members felt it important that ACW should contribute fully to the stabilisation process. The WNO's recent outreach project, "Katerina" was widely praised and the Chair stated that he would write to WNO congratulating them on this venture.
- There was some support for the idea of developing ACW as an agency to promote the arts, with a strong emphasis on community art.

- The Minister informed members that her remit now covered the National Botanic Gardens and that this would be reflected in next year's budget.
- In response to a question about the cost of ACW's restructuring, the Minister stated that current indications are that the costs would be broadly revenue neutral.
- Several members felt that the development of studios and rehearsal facilities for young artists was a priority. The Minister mentioned that a joint-conference between ACW and WTB would soon be held to discuss the creative industries.
- Communities First monies are available for sporting and artistic activities if they are linked to community regeneration projects.
- In response to concerns raised about the plight of Welsh language drama, the Minister said that ACW were aware of the concerns and were giving a high priority to this area.

Item 4: Assembly Minister's report

Paper: CC-11-01(p.4)

The Chair mentioned that he'd attended the first two meetings of the steering group on the European Capital of Culture 2008 bid and would circulate the minutes to Committee members. He mentioned that there was a sticking point over the Assembly's financial allocation to the bid, but he viewed that as being a matter between the Lord Mayor and the Minister.

The Minister drew the Committee's attention to the establishment of a Football Forum. She said that she had long been considering the establishment of such a forum to examine Welsh football's structures, specifically in terms of football development. She had met with representatives of football in Wales about the need to define clearer roles amongst the various footballing bodies. The Forum will aim to establish a strategy for the development of football in Wales, especially for young people, both male and female. The terms of reference and membership will be finalised over the next few weeks with the first meeting pencilled in for the end of summer. Members welcomed the Minister's announcement.

Item 5: Minutes of the meetings held on 24 May and 6 June

Papers: CC-9-01(min) and CC-10-01(min)

These were agreed without amendment, although Rosemary Butler stated that she had sent her apologies for being absent on 24 May.

Committee Secretariat
June 2001