

Economic Development Committee EDC-01-01(p3)

Date: 17 January 2001
Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales Building
Title: Priorities for strategic forward work programme

Purpose of paper

1. To identify some of the issues to be considered in deciding the Committee's forward work programme for the period Jan 2001 to July 2002. A draft of the work programme is attached as an Annex.

Background

2. Standing order 9.9 requires each subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering at least twelve months. The Panel of Subject Committee Chairs has agreed that forward work programmes should be more strategic in approach. Main priorities for a period of eighteen months should be identified and these should be linked to Putting Wales First and www.betterwales.com. These strategic programmes will be supported by more detailed forward work programmes covering a period of three months.

3. The Committee is asked to:

- consider the priorities set out in the paper;
- suggest further issues to be considered;
- indicate which issues should be given greatest priority;
- consider the topics for the Committee's next review.
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Some points for consideration

a) Scrutiny of Assembly Minister

4. **Timing.** The Committee will shortly undertake its first formal annual scrutiny of the Economic Development Minister. This will be based on the Assembly's performance against the target set in www.betterwales.com covering the year April 1999-March 2000. Normally it would be expected to carry this out in January of the following year when the Departmental accounts and Annual reports, covering performance in the previous year, become available. However, this year this will not be possible because of delays in preparing the latter documents, which are not now expected until late

in January. A second factor is that because the Assembly came into existence part way through 1999-2000, the initial period, prior to July 1999, relates to Welsh Office activities.

5. Members were e-mailed about the timing of this year's scrutiny with the suggestion that in view of the already full agenda, and the need to prepare for the scrutiny, it should be delayed – perhaps until the summer. Those that responded were content with this and it is therefore proposed to hold the scrutiny early in the Summer term.

6. **Format.** The Committee might wish to consider a slightly different format for the session reflecting its nature as a formal scrutiny with the Minister sitting at the end of the table. They will also wish to consider the length of the session, an hour might be appropriate in the circumstances, whether a verbatim record is required of it and what briefing they would require from the Clerk.

b) Next policy review

7. The Committee's previous work programme referred to a possible review of ICT: *"To undertake a review of information and communication technology in Wales, with a view to developing an information age strategy and attracting knowledge-based investment"*. This is clearly a key issue for the development of the Welsh economy and a wide ranging one. Andrew Davies, in his role as Minister for e-commerce has been working with a task group and is to launch proposals for consultation on 17th January. It is proposed that he be asked to present the recommendations to the committee. Further consideration can then be given to whether there is scope for further work by the EDC study on the aspect of ICT infrastructure or business implications.

8. The last work programme also referred to the Development of energy policy and in recent months the Committee, in the context of NEDS, has considered a paper on renewable energy. This a critical and current issue for Wales raising questions about sustainable development, the extent to which we can look to renewable sources of energy, the development of clean technology for non-renewable sources, and against the context of financing, regulation and an ever-changing commercial scene. Commercial opportunities to exploit Wales' potential on renewable energy have been identified in NEDS discussions. There are also concerns about infrastructure, for instance problems over the supply of gas to certain parts of Wales.

9. Reference was also made in the last work programme to tourism *"To maximise the contribution of the tourism industry to economic development"* leading to the strategic integration of the various sectors involved in the tourism industry. The sector constitutes a significant part of the Welsh economy and is one where our future success depends on a getting a wide range of factors right from the actual provision of services locally, to the infrastructure needed to support the sector and the marketing of Wales throughout the world.

10. Members are asked to consider their priorities for future review and whether they require further background information at this stage.

Further development of NEDS – Committee consultation

11. The first draft for consultation of the National Economic Development Strategy will shortly be finalised and issued for consultation. The Committee has a commitment to assist in the continuing development of the strategy and one way it could do this is by arranging a series of meetings with bodies representing strategic interest groups to discuss the draft strategy. These might look not so much at the detail of the strategy but at broader issues targeting sectors such as the automotive sector, electronics sector and also, perhaps reflecting the 3 cross-cutting themes. Such an approach would build on the successful meetings the Committee has had in the past with particular groups and offer an additional dimension to the consultation which will otherwise be paper or electronically based.

Action

12. Members are invited to consider the issues above and to comment on the work programme attached.

Committee Secretariat

DRAFT Annex

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Duties of the Committee

1. The Economic Development Committee is one of seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's 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

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 SO22;
- 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."

2. Standing Order 9.9 requires the subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months.

The Committee's Aims and Objectives

3. The Committee will seek to contribute to the achievement of the aims and objectives set out in "Better Wales", the National Assembly for Wales's strategic plan. In particular, 'To build a better, stronger economy.' Therefore the Committee's aim is "to build an advanced, dynamic and more diverse economy in which everyone has a chance to prosper".

The Statutory Schemes

4. The Committee will also take account of the National Assembly's statutory schemes for relations

with the local authorities and the voluntary sector, the sustainable development scheme, and arrangements for consultation with business.

The Committee's Priorities

5. www.betterwales.com sets out the Assembly's priorities. The Committee will play a role in 2 key action areas: "A better, stronger economy" (Paras 4.6-4.9) and "Better opportunities for learning".

6. In particular, it will contribute to the achievement of results in the following key areas:

- build an advanced, competitive and a more diverse economy with a dynamic small and medium enterprise sector;
- increase the number and quality of jobs and reduce economic activity particularly in less prosperous areas;
- raise the international profile and influence of Wales and establish it as a first class place to live, study, visit and do business;
- stimulate development that conserves natural resources and respects the environment;
- put more of our investment in people and lifelong learning so that everyone, and particularly our youth, can gain the range of knowledge and skills required to fulfil their potential and prosper in the new economy;
- promote active citizenship, creativity and entrepreneurship.

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

7. The Committee's work falls broadly into 2 categories – scrutinising the work of the Administration and the Assembly Secretary, and contributing to the development of Assembly policy through policy reviews and keeping abreast of, and responding to, issues as they arise. In practice Agenda items often contain aspects of both of these.

8. Alongside this the Committee has a range of 'ongoing' business:

- receiving and considering the Assembly Secretary's regular reports to it;
- annual reviews of the performance of the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales Tourist Board and advising on their strategic development;

- considering proposals for the Assembly's budget;
- consider secondary legislation as appropriate;

Programme for the Spring 2001 term

a) Scrutiny

- The Committee will receive and discuss reports on current and critical issues from the Assembly Minister at each of its meetings.
- It will obtain regular reports from him on progress on the various European programmes of support and will keep a close watch on the performance of the programmes.
- It will consider the performance of the WDA and the WTB alongside considering their forward plans. It will examine the business plan for the new Cardiff Harbour Authority.

b) Development of Policy

- The Committee will publish its Review of Business Support and Development and assist the Economic Development Minister in the consultation exercise prior to its implementation.
- It will advise on the WTB's forward plan and the Minister's strategic guidance letter to the WDA.
- It will maintain an overview of and advise on, developments in the Welsh economy - responding to urgent and significant issues as necessary.
- It will advise further on the development of the National Economic Development Strategy by arranging a series of meetings with bodies representing strategic interest groups to discuss the draft strategy as part of the consultation exercise.
- Give consideration to its next strategic review – decide the subject matter and the method of working.
- Advise on budgetary, financial, legislation, appointments and other matters as necessary and as required under Standing Orders.

Programme further ahead

a) Scrutiny

The Committee expects to continue the broad programme of ongoing work detailed above and to maintain its close scrutiny of the Administration and the Economic Development Minister. This will include carrying out the first ‘annual’ scrutiny against the ‘Better Wales’ targets.

b) Development of Policy

It will assist the development of policy by

- contributing to the ongoing development of the National Economic Development Strategy.
- oversee the ongoing work of implementing the conclusions of its Review of Business Support and Development.
- undertaking a new policy review on [.....]
- consider the draft action plans and monitor progress (with other committees) for Valleys Action Plan and Communities First.

DETAILED PROGRAMME

(to be filled in)