

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 17 October 2001
Time: 2.00 to 4.30 pm
Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

DRAFT FINAL REPORT ON THE QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW OF THE COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES

Purpose

1. To consult the Committee on the draft Final Report on the Quinquennial Review of the Countryside Council for Wales. Standing Order 9.7 provides that the subject committees shall keep under review the discharge of public functions in their field by public bodies. Following the receipt of the Final Report and the Committee's views, the Minister for Environment will advise the Cabinet on the Report's findings and then announce the Government's response. The intention is that there should then be an opportunity for Plenary debate before the review is finally concluded.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee comments on the findings of the draft Final Report at Annex A. The Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix 2 of the Report.

Background

3. The Quinquennial Review of the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) was formally announced by the Environment Minister and Minister for Finance, Local government and Communities in September 2000 following consultation with the Committee on the Terms of Reference.

4. The review has been carried out by Ian Thomas, a member of the Assembly's staff, the first stage of the Review resulted in an Interim Report (see Appendix 1 of the Final Report) that was presented to the Committee in March. The Environment Minister and the Minister for Finance Local government and Communities subsequently agreed that they would not come to any final decisions on the review recommendations until the second stage of the review was completed. That any major changes to current arrangements were, if desired, be for the medium-to-long-term as this would require detailed planning as well as primary legislation. CCW should therefore continue to function as an Assembly Sponsored Public Body for at least the next five years.

5. Ministers also commissioned the second stage of the review, covering strategic effectiveness and corporate governance. The terms of reference for the second stage of the review were amended at the request of the Committee to strengthen the reference to sustainable development and to joint working and partnership.

The Final Report

6. The draft Final Report is attached at Annex A. It makes 49 recommendations, included in the Executive Summary. It sets out the findings of the reviewer following a wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders and partners as well as within CCW. It picks up a number of issues from the Interim Report and includes information requested by EPT when the Interim Report was considered - a note on the implications for options of the Human Rights Act (Para 9.6) and a diagram setting out functions and links between related ASPBs (Appendix 9). The Report broadly concludes that CCW is a well-governed organisation that is responding to the Assembly's guiding values and is pushing forward the Assembly's sustainable development Agenda.

7. As with any organisation, there are aspects of its operation, which could be strengthened. The report looks at CCW's strategic planning, performance and monitoring; communications within CCW and with external organisations and the working relationship between CCW and the Assembly.

Compliance

8. The Review has been undertaken in accordance with the published Quinquennial Review guidelines. In addition to its participation in the Review, the CCW has been consulted on all matters of fact.

Action for Committee

9. The Committee is asked to comment on the draft final Report before submission to

Ministers.

Contact point

Financial Planning Division.