

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT ON SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE – CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT

1. Purpose

1.1 The Committee's views are invited on the enclosed draft of the Assembly's Annual Report on Social Disadvantage. Building an Inclusive Wales, the social inclusion policy document, committed the Welsh Office and, subsequently, the National Assembly to preparing such an annual report on Social Inclusion. The commitment to a report also features in the Social Inclusion Action Plan.

2. Summary

2.1 The attached draft report sets out activity since the Assembly's inception and proposes targets against which the Assembly's progress will be measured in a year's time.

Text

2.2 It is proposed to begin the report with a foreword by Mrs Hart, reiterating the importance of social disadvantage as one of the Assembly's main themes and tying it in with the other main themes of sustainable development and equal opportunities.

2.3 The latest draft of the Report defines social disadvantage and it explains the problems which contribute to and perpetuate it. It explains what the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation is and the background of Better Wales. It discusses designing and delivering the policies and our partnership approach to dealing with the problems identified. The report shows how important Assembly programmes are to tackling social disadvantage and gives practical examples of how they have worked to dates. These include:

- People in Communities
- The Social Inclusion Action Plan
- Building Healthy Communities (Local Health Alliances, SHARP, Healthy Living Centres)
- Policies to support young people (Extending Entitlement, Youth Inclusion, On Track)
- Children (Surestart, The Children and Youth Partnership Fund)
- New Opportunities Fund

2.4 The Report also discusses UK Government initiatives which impact on Wales such as the Welfare to Work programmes, and the various New Deal Programmes. In addition, it flags up the implementation of Communities First this summer.

Format

2.5 It is intended to publish two versions of the Annual Report. The first would be a more formal report

containing the background and facts and figures (as above). The second would be a less formal summary, presented as a foldout or leaflet style document making it as accessible as possible. The latter document, would be widely available at doctors surgeries, community centres, post offices etc. Further consideration to our target audience and how best to reach them. One suggestion made to us was that we could ask the Post Office to provide a leaflet to every customer they deal with. Account will also need to be taken of the outcome of the recent National Assembly debate on consultation and participation.

3. Timing

3.1 A Plenary discussion on the draft Annual Report is planned for 8 March. Once the full Assembly has endorsed the report, or suggested areas for change, printing in the formats suggested and distribution will go ahead as soon as possible.

4. Background

4.1 Tackling social disadvantage is one of three major themes which the Assembly has adopted in its strategic plan, 'Better Wales'. The Assembly is committed to combating poverty and social disadvantage and to bridging the gap between the most deprived communities in Wales and the more affluent ones.

4.2 The Annual Report will assist in publicising the National Assembly's measures to combat poverty and be a vehicle for setting targets and reporting back on the National Assembly's achievements and areas where further work is needed. The Report will be a focus point from which to plan other, sustainable measures and in particular to report back on the Communities First Programme.

5. Compliance

5.1 Sections 40 and 85 of the Government of Wales Act 1998, conducive to Assembly functions. There are no issues of regularity or propriety. The Assembly Compliance Office is content.

6. Financial implications

6.1 Costs for the printing and distribution of this annual report about £25,000, depending on the formats chosen for printing, will be met from within the Community Regeneration and Social Inclusion Unit Publicity budget and there will be no additional financial implications for the National Assembly. All expenditure on social disadvantage will be accommodated from within budgets approved by the National Assembly. Financial Planning Division have been consulted about this submission and are content with the financial aspects.

7. Cross-cutting themes

7.1 Tackling Social Disadvantage is one of the Assembly's major, cross-cutting themes.

Communities Branch

Community Regeneration and Social Inclusion Unit

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