

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

STRATEGIC FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME MAY 2002-APRIL 2003

Introduction

1. The Local Government and Housing Committee is one of the National Assembly's seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in Standing Orders, as reproduced at **Annex A**.

2. Standing Order 9.9 requires subject committees to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The Committee must consult other committees and the Assembly Cabinet on the programme before notifying plenary. The Panel of Chairs has agreed that committees' work programmes should be strategic and cover an 18 month to 2 year time frame, supported by more detailed work programmes covering a three month period. This work programme sets out the Committee's strategic priorities between May 2002 and the next Assembly elections in May 2003. A detailed work programme for the period May-July 2002 will be finalised later on in the term

Remit

3. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for

Finance, Local Government and Communities, Edwina Hart, which embraces local government policy and finance issues, housing, community regeneration and crime reduction. The remit does not cover Edwina Hart's responsibilities as Finance Minister

Aims

4 The Committee's aim is to achieve a better quality of life for the people of Wales and to promote better, simpler government. Its objectives are:

- To help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good facilities and a high quality environment, which is non threatening and free from crime.
- To deliver value for money for the people of Wales with better and more efficient services.
- To streamline the Assembly's work and give greater weight to the needs and views of its

partners and the public, including under-represented groups

Priorities

5. With such a broad remit, the committee has developed a strategic approach to its work. Priorities for the coming year are as follows:

- Policy development (SO 9.7(i)) - the Committee will focus on those areas of policy development where it may be seen to complement, rather than duplicate policies being developed by the Minister. In the coming year it will continue its review of Community Regeneration and continue to contribute to policy development of ministerial strategies and initiatives across the full range of the Minister's local government and housing responsibilities. In particular:
 - the development and implication of the National Housing strategy, including the recommendations included in the Homelessness Commissions report;
 - the development and implementation of the Communities first Programme;
 - local government modernisation; and
 - local government policy and finance;

It will receive regular presentations from the Welsh Local Government Association and other interested organisations from the public, voluntary and community sectors to enhance its appreciation of all matters included in its remit.

- *Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(ii))* - the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities will provide a written report to the Committee monthly on current developments within her portfolio. At the intervening meetings, she will also provide an oral report of developments that have taken place. Once a year the Committee will scrutinise the Minister on performance against targets, but may also undertake thematic scrutiny sessions from time to time. The Committee also intends to carry out the

following 'scrutiny':

- the Social Inclusion Report.

The Committee also wishes to examine the possibility of carrying out a scrutiny of the implementation of the Waterhouse Report insofar as this affects local authorities. The Committee recognises that the implementation of Waterhouse is outside the remit of the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities. It also recognises that the implementation of the report also has a significant impact on local authorities.

- Scrutiny of sponsored bodies (SO 9.7 (iii)) - there are very few ASPBs within the Committee's remit. However, it will continue to receive reports on the work of the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- *Other items (SO 9.8)* - the Committee will continue encourage the co-ordination of local services through its links with the Welsh Local Government Association and the developing Wales Local Council's Forum. The Committee will also consider each year a report reviewing the implementation of the Local Government Partnership Scheme, prior to the consideration of the report by plenary.
- *Proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 22)* – each term the Minister will outline forthcoming secondary legislation to enable the Committee to identify areas where it wishes to be consulted. Following the National Assembly's consideration of the Queen's speech, the Committee will consider any draft primary legislation remitted to it by plenary. The Committee will also consider draft secondary legislation referred to it by the Business Committee.
- *Proposals for the Assembly's budget (SO 9.8(ii))* – the Committee will indicate its budget priorities in the summer term and comment on the draft budget in the autumn term.
- *Complaints (SO 9.8(iii) and 21)* – the Committee will consider any complaints referred to it.
- *Public appointments (SO 9.8(iv) and 20)* – the Committee's two public appointment nominees will take part in the process of appointments to public bodies as vacancies arise.
- *Other matters referred by the Assembly (SO 9.8 (v))* – the Committee will consider other matters referred to it by the National Assembly, but would ask Members to consult the Committee Chair before tabling motions inviting plenary to remit work to the Committee.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUBJECT COMMITTEES

1. Standing orders 9.7 and 9.8 set out the responsibilities of subject committees.

"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
- iii. 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 standing order 22;
- 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."