

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

**MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Date:** Wednesday 12 June 2002

**Time:** 2.00pm to 5.00pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

**Attendance: Members**

Gwenda Thomas (Chair)	Neath
Peter Black	South Wales West
William Graham	South Wales East
Edwina Hart (Minister)	Gower
Pauline Jarman	South Wales Central
Peter Law	Blaenau Gwent
Dai Lloyd	South Wales West
Janet Ryder	North Wales

**In attendance:**

Kate Cassidy	Local Government Modernisation
Lisa James	Local Government Finance
John Bader	Housing Directorate

Francois Samuel	Housing Directorate
James Watkins	Housing Directorate
Carol Kay	Director, TPAS - Cymru
Pam Every	Chair of Management Committee, TPAS - Cymru
<b>Secretariat:</b>	
Roger Chaffey	Clerk
Claire Griffiths	Deputy Clerk

## **Item 1: Apologies and Substitutions**

1.1 Apologies had been received from Tom Middlehurst and Professor Dave Adamson. There were no substitutions.

## **Item 2: Declaration of Interests**

2.1 The following declarations were made:

Peter Black: a Member of Swansea City and County Council.

William Graham: a Member of Newport City and County Borough Council.

Pauline Jarman: Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council and a member of the Welsh Local Government Association.

Dai Lloyd: a Member of Swansea City and County Council.

Janet Ryder: a Member of Ruthin Town Council.

## **Item 3: Minister's Report**

3.1 The Minister presented her report. In doing so, she made she following points:

- She advised Members that she had agreed to report back on discussions that had taken place between the Home Office and the Treasury on funding for the Communities Against Drugs initiative. She said that discussions were still on going but Wales had been assured of

£2.780m for 2002-2003. Wales will also receive funding to Counter Terrorism, the majority will be allocated to Cardiff International Airport. The Minister agreed to write to members with the specific details.

- She said that she is waiting for the report on the Targeting Alcohol Related Street Crime project undertaken in Cardiff but advised Members that the Home Office had agreed to continue funding this project on a 3-monthly basis. She added that she is minded to write to the Home Office requesting continued funding. She asked members to consider whether they would wish to receive a presentation from Inspector Tony Rees of the South Wales Police on this scheme. Members agreed to this and the Clerk was asked to arrange.
- She advised members that due to an oversight by DTLR, she would have to legislate under the Goods and Services Order on Local Authorities' trading with the National Assembly. She agreed to provide an update on this in her next written report.
- The Minister referred to the recent correspondence regarding the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 which had been made under the Executive Procedure. She said she was surprised that Legislation Committee had been concerned with this Order as she had advised members of her intention in her last written report and had also written to party business managers.

### 3.2 In discussion, Members raised the following points:

- Members welcomed the funding that had been targeted for Wales under the Counter Terrorism scheme but asked whether the Port of Holyhead had been considered for funding.
- Members were concerned about receiving reports of where planning permission had been refused for residential homes, refuges and other forms of accommodation for vulnerable people and asked the Minister if she would consider commissioning an assessment to gain the true picture of the situation.
- Concern was expressed about the capital and revenue spilt in administering the Community Against Drugs Fund.
- Members noted the proposed legislation on the Goods and Services Order but asked what the situation would be if local authorities had undertaken any expenditure.
- Members discussed the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Decisions, Documents and Meetings) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2002 and the fact that the Executive Procedure has been used. They agreed that this had been the correct course of action. The Chair said that as a member of Legislation Committee, there had been a general discussion on the increased use of the Executive Procedure and that there was no reflection that that procedure had been used incorrectly for this piece of legislation.

### 3.3 The Minister made the following response and offered to take the following action:

- The Minister agreed to enquire as to whether Holyhead had also been considered for funding under the Counter Terrorism Scheme.
- The Minister agreed to liaise with other Ministers and consult with the WLGA and the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations on evidence of refusal of planning permission for residential centres or all vulnerable groups.

- The Minister agreed to raise with the Home Office the question of capital/revenue split in administering the Community Against Drugs Fund.

#### **Item 4: Local Government Policy - Consideration of responses to the Local Government paper "Freedom and Responsibility on Local Government" LGH-10-02 (p.1)**

1. The Minister introduced this paper which informed the Committee of the outcome of the extensive consultation undertaken on the Local Government paper "Freedom and Responsibility on Local Government". She sought the views of the Committee on the responses to the Policy Statement.
2. Members welcomed the paper which they agreed was constructive for local government. They raised the following points:
  - Members were concerned about the proposed age limit of 60 for serving councillors and felt that it was too young. They felt that a programme to attract younger people from all areas of society into local government was needed.
  - The move towards audit committees was welcomed although more information on their role was requested.
  - The issue of business rates returning to local authority control was discussed. Members expressed concern that the National Assembly must be seen to be business friendly but also expressed sympathy with the position of local government.
  - Members discussed the dual standards of the declaration of interests issue between local and national government and felt that clarification was required. They also requested that the Code of Conduct be reviewed.

1. The Minister thanked members for their views and said:

- She would reconsider the proposed retirement age and was mindful that a promotional campaign was required to encourage new people into local government.
- She agreed to update Committee before the summer recess on her discussions with audit bodies concerning audit arrangements.
- She said that the majority of local authorities were in favour of the return of business rate control to them. She added that this was a complex area requiring detailed consideration.
- She agreed to present a paper on the declaration of interests issue and review the Code of Conduct.

#### **Item 5: Community Fire Working Safety Group Report LGH-10-02(p.2)**

1. The Minister introduced this paper advising that it was an update on the progress of the work of the Community Fire Safety Working Group and taking the recommendations continued in "Wired for Safety" forward. She reminded Members that the "Wired for Safety" report was endorsed at Committee in November 2001.

2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- Members welcomed the positive report.
- Members felt that the majority of the report dealt with the implication of social housing and suggested that the installation of sprinkler systems should be included in all new properties, both public and private. It was also suggested that a requirement be made for all houses in multiple occupation and halls of residence to be included in the programme to install this system.
- Members sought clarification on the technical issues relating to water supply for domestic sprinklers.

1. In reply, the Minister said:

- She agreed to provide a paper on the Community Fire Safety Trust.
- She agreed with the view that all new properties should be built with sprinkler systems in place and she would make representations to the UK Government for the inclusion of fire safety measures in building regulations.
- The Minister agreed that her officials would provide a paper on the technical issues affecting water pressure for the sprinkler systems.

#### **Item 6: Home energy efficiency in rural areas LGH-10-02 (p.3)**

1. The Minister introduced this paper adding that the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme had been very successful in Wales and had benefited a lot of people to date. She added that more research had been commissioned and she intended amending the relevant regulations in the autumn term.
2. In discussion, Members agreed that the scheme had been successful particularly in rural areas. The point of advocating the use of renewable energy was emphasised and the use of the environmentally friendly LPG was stressed.
3. In reply, the Minister said that she would take all comments into account in determining her future course of action.

#### **Item 7: Presentation by Tenants Participation Advisory Service - Cymru**

1. The Chair introduced Carol Kay, Director of TPAS - Cymru and Pam Every, Chair of the Management Committee of TPAS -Cymru and invited them to make their presentation.
  2. The salient points of the presentation were:
- TPAS Cymru represents a wide ranging membership of tenants and social landlords throughout Wales, plus a number of All Wales National Housing Organisations who were involved in the preparation for, and consideration of, the recommendations of the National

Assembly for Wales' review of TPAS.

- TPAS is an organisation committed to the promotion of Tenant Participation and to the provision of the advice, information and training needed to support effective participation to both tenants and landlords.
- The world of housing is changing fast. The change has implications for tenant participation and for TPAS Cymru as the only all Wales organisation supporting and promoting tenant participation. Over the last year, TPAS has undertaken an internal review of its future role and is pleased that the Assembly's independent review reached the same conclusions on the issues to be addressed, .
- Tenant participation, which is at the centre of the National Housing Strategy, is about engaging as many tenants as possible and offering opportunities for them to participate in the management of their homes to a level that suits them.
- Looking to the future, there are many issues and policies on which joint working with the Welsh Assembly Government would be useful – in particular the Assembly promoted Community Mutual Model for Stock Transfer. TPAS believe that this model offers exciting opportunities for tenant empowerment and effective community regeneration, and that TPAS can make an important contribution to the process.
- In the wake of the work already in hand and in response to the recommendations of the review, TPAS are planning to carry out three major reviews notably of their - financial management system, staff structure, and member services. These reviews constitute substantial non routine expenditure, and, in its written response, TPAS requests additional funding to appoint consultants to undertake these important reviews.
- In conclusion, it was noted that TPAS Cymru requires continued core funding. The client group is largely tenants who do not have ready access to funding to buy in the services that they require.

1. The Chair asked members if they were content to discuss the presentation and the papers under Item 8 together. Members were in agreement and the following points were made:

- The Minister said that she was very pleased to have received the presentation from TPAS Cymru that reinforced the valuable role the Assembly Government has with them. She added that their funding was due to be reconsidered in March 2004.
- Members felt that, if the Community Mutual Model was the way forward with social housing, it was important to develop the capacity amongst tenants bodies to achieve this.
- It was acknowledged that TPAS's future work will be different to that undertaken in the past and that new demands will be made on both staff and financial resources. TPAS were asked to comment on the adequacy of the present funding.
- TPAS were also asked to expand on "mystery shopping" and how they see their future role with Local Authorities.

1. Carol Kay advised that:

- TPAS will be carefully considering the resource implications that it might

be faced with as a result of new developments such as the emergence of

'Community Mutual' housing organisations."

- The "mystery shopping" scheme, which has been funded by the National Assembly, allows tenants to undertake relevant training and then visit landlords offices to ascertain the level of service given. This scheme has proved to be a powerful tool in demonstrating what is happening on the ground.
- TPAS Cymru have very strong established links with local authorities in which a great deal of groundwork has been undertaken by TPAS. . Increasingly, TPAS has encouraged social landlords to appoint tenant participation officers. TPAS has also participated in the preparation of social landlords' Tenant Participation Strategies. It is also able to offer Welsh language services in North Wales.

7.5 The Chair thanked Carol Kay and Pam Every for their presentation and wished them well with their future work.

### **Item 8: Review of Tenants Participation Advisory Service - consideration of report LGH-10-02(p.4)**

8.1 This item was taken with item 7.

### **Item 9: Policy review of community regeneration - consideration of draft report LGH-10-02(p.5)**

1. The Chair invited comments on the draft report of the Committee's policy review of community regeneration.
2. Members were in agreement that the draft provided the basis for an excellent report.
3. The Chair thanked Members for their agreement and advised that the final report would be prepared for the next meeting on 26 June.

### **Item 10: Minutes of the 22 May meeting LGH-09-02 (min)**

10.1 The minutes were agreed.

## **Committee Secretariat June 2002**

### **Summary of action points:**

1. The Minister agreed to circulate a note to members on the funding for Wales under the Counter Terrorism project and to make enquiries about funding for the port at Holyhead.
2. The Minister to include reference to the Goods and Services Order on Local Authorities' trading with the Assembly in her next written report.
3. The Minister to press the Home Office on continued funding for the TASC project in 2002-03.
4. The Minister to liaise with other Ministers and consult with the WLGA and housing associations on evidence of refusal of planning permission for residential accommodation for vulnerable people.
5. The Minister to raise with Home Office the question of the Capital/Revenue split in administering the Community Against Drugs Fund
6. The Minister agreed to bring forward a paper in the autumn term on the Code of Conduct following consultation on the new ethical framework.
7. The Minister to update the committee before the summer recess on her discussions with audit bodies concerning audit arrangements.
8. The Minister to provide a paper on the Community Fire Safety Trust.
9. The Minister agreed to make representations to the UK Government for the inclusion of fire safety measures in Building Regulations.
10. Officials to provide an explanatory note on the technical issues relating to water supply for domestic sprinklers.
11. The Clerk to arrange for a presentation from Inspector Tony Rees on the targeted Alcohol and

Street Crime project and the evaluation being conducted by Prof. Mike McGuire.

12. The Minister to involve the Committee in the proposed review of Assembly Government tenant participation / empowerment policies, programmes and funding.

13. The performance review of TPAS-Cymru to be included on the agenda when complete (March 2003).