

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL

Purpose

1. To update the Committee as to progress in respect of the draft Local Government Bill and on the Welsh Assembly Government's proposals for primary legislation for Wales to be included in the Bill.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee notes progress to date.

Summary

3. The Welsh Assembly Government is continuing to press the UK Government to ensure that maximum flexibility is included in the next Local Government Bill to enable the Assembly to develop solutions that are sensitive to the particular needs and circumstances of Wales.

Background

4. I have previously reported to Committee the details of the consultation exercise on the draft bill which took place on an England only basis over the summer. This report also included details of the requests made by the Welsh Assembly Government to the UK Government in respect of primary legislation for Wales to be included in the final bill. It also set out our request that for those items in the Bill that are common to England and Wales, where those powers are delegated to the Secretary of State in England they be delegated to the National Assembly for Wales in respect of Wales.

Consideration

5. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's consultation closed on 23 August and the UK Government is now considering whether any changes should be made to the draft Bill in light of the consultation responses.
6. In order to ensure that Welsh authorities are aware of the Bill and have an opportunity to comment on it from a Wales perspective I have written to all local authorities highlighting

its publication and sought the views of the Welsh Local Government Association on our proposals. Committee should be aware that this has resulted in a decision to not proceed with the planned merger of Revenue Support Grant and National Non-Domestic Rates into a single funding stream.

7. Negotiations with the UK Government are still ongoing as regards the Wales proposals and the final outcome will not be known until the end of October. This is also the likely timing for a final decision as to the final form of the Bill as a whole and whether the Bill will be introduced in the next session of Parliament.

Compliance

8. This paper has been produced in accordance with s40 of the Government of Wales Act, which enable the Assembly to do anything conducive or incidental to the exercise of its functions in relation to local government. This power has been delegated to the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities and officials. There are no issues of regularity or propriety.

Contact point: Richard Shearer

Local Government Modernisation Division