



## **Comisiwn y Cynulliad Assembly Commission**

### **NAFWC 2008 (Paper 2 Part 1)**

**Date:** Thursday 4 December 2008

**Time:** 1.30pm

**Venue:** Conference Room 4B

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### **New AM Mentoring Scheme proposals**

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#### **Purpose and summary of issues**

Following the successes of the Operation Black Vote (OBV) Assembly Member Shadowing Scheme (2007-08), Assembly Commission staff have been working in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to develop a framework for an all-Wales Assembly Member/Councillor mentoring scheme based on the Operation Black Vote model but extended to other equality strands to engage others who are under-represented in democratic and civic participation. We have met with OBV and other representative bodies to gauge interest in an extended mentoring scheme, open to under-represented groups across the equality strands, namely Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual people; Disabled people; young people; Transgender people and women. We have had discussions with the Equality and Human Rights Commission about the development of the Scheme.

#### **Recommendations**

The Assembly Commission is invited to:

- agree the proposed approach for an Assembly Member and Local Government Mentoring Scheme and offer any comments.



## Discussion

The main changes from the previous OBV Scheme would be:

- The Welsh public sector working together with voluntary organisations to develop an all-Wales mentoring scheme across the equality groups
- An opportunity for local and National politicians to participate in a joint Scheme which encourages civic and political engagement and participation across the equality groups
- Further engagement across the equality groups
- A locally based co-ordinator to administer all aspects of the Scheme
- Potential efficiency and financial savings by working together to fund, administer, promote and support the Scheme.

A draft framework is outlined in **Annex A**. Each of the representative organisations would have involvement in the recruitment of candidates and would come together to form a steering group to provide continued support throughout the Scheme. The Scheme would benefit from OBV's experience and expertise. We would seek their involvement in the BME strand, the promotion and recruitment process and to provide ongoing support for BME participants. They may also be called upon to deliver training.

The aims, objectives and desired outcomes of the proposed Scheme would be:

- To advance the civic, community and political representation and diminish the deficit in democratic participation of under-represented groups; enhance the understanding of and instil greater confidence in the Assembly and Local Government amongst those groups and the public.
- To give individual politicians, political parties, the National Assembly for Wales and Local Government in Wales, the opportunity to work with and gain greater insight into the experiences of under-represented communities.
- To give a positive message that under-represented communities in Wales can bring about positive change by engaging with politicians and the democratic process.
- To increase the potential for mentees to consider becoming more active in the political and civic sphere.
- To improve the political knowledge of mentoring participants to enable them to obtain a variety of skills so that they can consider further involvement in the civic and political sphere.
- To provide mentoring participants the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge to act as community ambassadors, advising and empowering others to become more actively engaged in civic society

We propose the following format:



- The pilot schemes would run during the 2009-10 financial year, after which the Assembly Commission, WLGA and partners will evaluate the success of the scheme before proceeding with another intake of participants.
- The scheme would involve selected participants mentored by politicians for a minimum of ten days over the course of six to eight months, starting in September 2009. For participants involved in the AM mentoring part of the Scheme, this would involve time in both the National Assembly in Cardiff Bay and in constituency offices to enable participants to experience the full breadth of work undertaken by Mentors. Likewise, participants in the local government element of the Scheme should experience the whole range of a councillor's duties.
- The Assembly Commission, Welsh Assembly Government and WLGA would work closely with organisations across the identified equality strands to develop and advertise the Scheme and to choose appropriate candidates. Partners include OBV, Disability Wales, Stonewall Cymru, Funky Dragon and Wales Women's National Coalition.
- Assembly Commission staff would approach party groups within the National Assembly to generate interest in the Scheme. WLGA would organise local authority participation. Strengthened guidance would be issued to participating Assembly Members outlining the objectives, commitment and support available. It is likely that the WLGA would adopt and adapt that guidance.

### **Administrative and Budgetary Arrangements**

The Assembly Commission and the Welsh Assembly Government (via the WLGA) will joint fund a locally based co-ordinator, at HEO level, to administer both the National Assembly and local authority elements of the Scheme. The post-holder would act as a single point of contact and administer applications received, co-ordinate training, communications, events, funding and expenses. Efficiency savings could be made by shared training events, communications and venues etc.

The coordinator would be housed in the Assembly Commission, line managed by the Equality Manager in the Corporate Unit. The post would be filled through open recruitment for a fixed-term contract of 12 months to be commensurate with the length of the pilot scheme. Secondments will be considered.