

SOUTH WEST WALES REGIONAL COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES, 2003 - 2004

Introduction

1. The South West Wales Regional Committee is one of the Assembly's four regional committees constituted under s61 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 and Standing Order 10.

2. Standing Order 10.2 provides that

“Regional committees shall advise the Assembly on matters affecting their regions, the affect of Assembly policies in those regions and the work of public bodies there.” The Committee is required to meet at least twice a year in the region.

3. There are 17 members:

Peter Black	South Wales West	Liberal Democrats
Nicholas Bourne	Mid and West Wales	Conservative
Alun Cairns	South Wales West	Conservative
Andrew Davies	Swansea West	Labour
Glyn Davies	Mid and West Wales	Conservative
Janet Davies	South Wales West	Plaid Cymru
Tamsin Dunwoody Kneafsey	Preseli Pembrokeshire	Labour
Lisa Francis	Mid and West Wales	Conservative
Brian Gibbons	Aberavon	Labour
Christine Gwyther	Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire	Labour
Edwina Hart	Gower	Labour
Helen Mary Jones	Mid and West Wales	Plaid Cymru
Dai Lloyd	South Wales West	Plaid Cymru
Val Lloyd	Swansea East	Labour
Catherine Thomas	Llanelli	Labour
Gwenda Thomas	Neath	Labour
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	Carmarthen East and Dinefwr	Plaid Cymru

4. Peter Black was elected to chair the Committee from July 2003.

Meetings

5. The Committee met five times between July 2003 and March 2004.

Method of working

6. Generally, the Committee has focused on public discussion of policies being developed by the Welsh Assembly Government or reviews being carried out by subject committees. Members of the public have been able to raise questions and express their views on the topics discussed. The minutes and papers of the meetings have been forwarded to the appropriate Assembly Minister or Committee Chair. When requested the Chair has forwarded questions to Assembly Ministers for a written response.

7. The Committee has also been keen to involve young people in its discussions. In November pupils from Dwr y Felin Lower Comprehensive School in Neath made a valuable contribution to the meeting on sustainable development.

Meeting Venues

8. The Committee has continued to meet in community centres and venues that are accessible to the public. The Clerk consults constituency Assembly Members and local disability access groups in selecting venues. The Committee has met in Kidwelly (July), St David's (October), Port Talbot (November), Carmarthen (January) and Pontardawe (March).

The Issues

9. The Committee has dealt with a range of issues across the spectrum of the Assembly's responsibilities.

Funding of Schools

10. The Committee discussed the funding of schools at its meetings on 4 July. The discussion focused on the Welsh Assembly Government's consultation paper on Schools Forums in Wales and on other aspects of the funding of schools. The meeting gave local organisations, including local schools, the opportunity to put their views to the Committee. The discussion has been reported to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

The planning aspects associated with affordable housing and sustainable communities in the countryside

11. In October, the Committee looked at The Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's inquiry into the planning aspects associated with affordable housing and sustainable communities in the countryside. The Committee heard a wide range of views from local interest groups, individual members of the public and local authority representatives. The evidence presented to the Committee was passed to the Chair of the Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee. .

Sustainable Development

12. At its meeting in November, the Committee discussed the Welsh Assembly Government's Sustainable Development scheme as part of the consultation undertaken to assess its effectiveness. The Committee heard from local environmental, tourism and transport groups and local authority representatives. It was particularly pleased to hear from pupils at Dwr Y Felin Comprehensive school, who had set up an eco group to tackle environmental problems. The views of the organisations were discussed with those Members present and passed on to Carwyn Jones, Minister for the Environment, Planning and Countryside.

Housing for Older People, including implications for Health and Social Care

13. At its meeting in January, the Committee discussed the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee's policy review of housing for the elderly, and its implications for health and social care. The Committee heard the views of local interest groups, the fire service and local authority representatives. David Melding, Chair of the Health and Social Services Committee attended the meeting in view of the relevance to his Committee's review of the interface between health and social care. The findings were passed on to Janice Gregory, Chair of the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee and a paper was put to the Health and Social Services Committee.

Special Educational Needs

14. At its meeting in March, the Committee looked at the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee's review of Special Educational Needs. The Committee heard from local headteachers, a teacher training college, service providers and a local authority. The main issues raised were included in a paper to the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee as part of the consultation process.

Conclusion

15. The regional committees provide an opportunity for Assembly Members to engage formally in dialogue with the people of the region and to convey the public view back to the Assembly. During its first year the Committee has responded to the recommendations of the Assembly Review of Procedure in feeding into policy development or subject committee reviews and addressing high profile cross-cutting strategies. We have sought input from local

organisations and individuals and I should like to thank all those who have given their time to contribute to the Committee's work.

16. During the past year emphasis has been placed on engaging the public and making meetings more accessible. I hope that in the future links with local schools can be strengthened as students have a valuable contribution to make in helping to develop Assembly policy.

Peter Black
Chair

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SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS

July 2003 to March 2004

Date	Venue	Agenda
4 July 2003	Princess Gwenllian Centre, Kidwelly	Funding of Schools
3 Oct 2003	St David's Town Hall, St David's	Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee's Review of the planning aspects associated with affordable housing and sustainable communities in the countryside
28 Nov 2003	Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot	Sustainable Development
30 Jan 2004	Halliwell Centre, Trinity College, Carmarthen	Social Justice and Regeneration Committee's Review of Housing for the Elderly
12 Mar 2004	Pontardawe Arts Centre, Pontardawe	Education & Lifelong Learning Committee's Review of Special Educational Needs