

## **Social Justice and Regeneration Committee**

### **Report to Assembly**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Standing Order 9.9 requires subject committees to report to the Assembly on their progress in fulfilling their forward work programme. This report covers the period 3 June 2003 to 31 March 2004.

#### **2. Membership**

2.1 During the year membership was:

Janice Gregory (Chair)	Sandy Mewies
Peter Black	Janet Ryder (to Nov 2003)
William Graham	Catherine Thomas
Edwina Hart (Minister)	Rhodri-Glyn Thomas(from Nov 2003)
Mark Isherwood	Leanne Wood
Huw Lewis	

#### **3. Meetings**

3.1 During the period the Committee met formally in public on 12 occasions and also held one informal meeting. Two of these meetings were held outside Cardiff, in Llanelli and Merthyr Tydfil.

#### **4. Visits**

4.1 The Committee paid a visit to North Wales where it met with a variety of organisations covering different aspects of its portfolio. Members of the Committee also conducted a number of visits in connection with its review of Housing for Older People. These included visits to reference sites in Derry, Swansea, Burryport, Caerphilly, Bournemouth, Wakefield and Cardiff.

#### **5. Remit and Responsibilities**

5.1 The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, which covers the governments programme for regenerating the communities in Wales, in particular those suffering the greatest disadvantages. It includes Community First, anti-poverty initiatives, the social economy, the voluntary sector, community safety and relations with the police, the fire service, drug and alcohol misuse, youth justice and housing. The Committee's portfolio is attached at Annex 1.

5.2 The responsibilities of subject committees, as set out in Standing Orders, are attached at Annex 2.

## **6. Aims and Objectives**

6.1 The Committee set out its aims in the Strategic Forward Work Programme for the period from June 2003 to December 2004, which was approved following the meeting on 2 July 2003. The aim has been to address the anti-poverty agenda and achieve better, simpler government.

6.2 The Committee agreed that in reviewing and developing policy it would focus on those areas where it may be seen to complement, rather than duplicate policies being developed by the Minister.

## **7. Progress**

7.1 The Committee has concentrated on its policy review and on regular presentations from interested organisations from the voluntary, public and community sectors to enhance its appreciation of all matters included in its remit. Because that remit is so broad, the Committee has developed a strategic approach to its work. It has done so by adopting a single theme to each meeting that supplements the regular Ministerial reports on priorities identified in the Strategic Forward Work Programme.

## **8. Policy Development and Review (Standing Order 9.7)**

### **Housing for Older People**

8.1 The Committee's decision on the subject for its policy review was influenced by the Assembly Government's intention to conduct a wide ranging debate about the options for meeting the future housing needs of older people. The Terms of Reference of the Review is at Annex 3

8.2 An extensive public consultation exercise began in July 2003. 38 responses were received. 9 individuals / organisations presented oral evidence to the Committee throughout the autumn and spring terms. Members undertook a number of visits to organisations to further inform the inquiry.

8.3 The Committee appointed Nigel Appleton of Contact Consulting as expert adviser to support its work.

8.4 The final report is due to be published in June 2004 and will include a number of recommendations for the Welsh Assembly Government to consider.

### **Substance Misuse**

8.5 In January 2004, the Committee began an inquiry into substance misuse. The Terms of Reference of this Review is at Annex 4. The Committee invited written submissions from a wide range of interested parties and is expected to

take oral evidence and undertake visits during the summer and autumn terms 2004. It is expected to report during the spring term 2005.

### **Other issues of policy development and review**

8.6 In addition to its own policy reviews, the Committee has contributed to the key policy developments being taken forward by the Minister for Social Justice and regeneration. From the outset the committee has identified "housing" as the key element in the whole Social Justice agenda. It has prioritised those housing issues that have been identified in the Welsh Assembly Government's Housing Strategy, including those surrounding Homelessness the Ageing Housing Stock and the special problems of rural areas.

8.7 The committee also recognises the part being played by the Community First initiative in redressing the balance by helping to regenerate the poorest communities in Wales. It receives regular reports on progress.

8.8. The Committee has contributed to Welsh Assembly Government developing policies on Domestic Violence, Drugs and Alcohol Misuse, Crime and Disorder issues and Credit Unions.

### **Minister's Report**

8.9 The Committee scrutinises the Minister at each meeting via her regular reports to Committee. In addition, the Committee also scrutinised the Post Office in it and its proposals for Royal Mail services in Wales.

### **9. Review of Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies (SO 9.7(iii))**

9.1 The Committee's remit only one ASPB - the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse. As the title suggests this is an advisory panel only with no financial responsibility and its operations have not been scrutinised by the Committee

### **10 Scrutiny of Legislation (SO 9.8(i)).**

#### **Secondary Legislation**

10.1 In June 2003 the Committee agreed a protocol for handling subordinate legislation. The Committee received a detailed timetable of forthcoming legislation within the Minister's portfolio at each meeting In accordance with the agreed procedure the following items were considered by the Committee

- Draft Annual Reports to Tenants Determination 2003
- The Leasehold Reform Act

## **European Legislation**

10.2 Following the Panel of Chairs endorsement of the European and External Affairs Committee proposals for a system of more proactive scrutiny of European legislation by subject committees, papers have been prepared detailing all relevant social justice and regeneration documents deposited in the EU Parliament. Members are given the opportunity to identify items for future scrutiny. To date, none have been identified.

## **Primary Legislation**

10.3 Following the Queens Speech, Plenary identified 3 items of Primary Legislation that should be referred to the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee. These were the Fire and Rescue Services Bill, the Housing Bill and the Domestic Violence Bill. The first two were considered in draft before and the Committee's comments fed to the originating department by the Minister. The Committee therefore had nothing to add in considering the published versions. The Domestic Violence Bill was considered by the Committee and a report of its considerations and recommendations was laid before plenary. The report and recommendations was also referred to the Secretary of State for Wales

## **11. Appointments (Standing Order 9.8)**

11.1 Janice Gregory and William Graham have been the Committee's nominees for public appointments. They were not called upon to act in this capacity during the period of this report

## **12. Budget (Standing Order 9.8)**

12.1 The Committee considered and commented on the Assembly Government proposed budget for 2004-2005. The Chair's letter conveying the Committee's recommendations is attached at Annex 5.

## **13 CROSS CUTTING ISSUES/JOINT WORKING**

13.1 The Civil Contingencies Bill was remitted to the Local Government and Public Services Committee following a Plenary resolution in December 2003. The purpose of the Bill is to create a statutory duty on local bodies to develop contingency plans to deal with a civil emergency and to provide powers for the Government to make regulations to deal with proclaimed emergencies. An invitation was received from the Chair of the Local Government and Public Services Committee for Members of the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee to attend the meeting when the bill was discussed in February as the Bill cuts across issues within the Committee's portfolio.

## **14. The Statutory Schemes**

14.1 the Committee has taken account of the national Assembly's statutory schemes for relations with the voluntary sector and the sustainable development scheme in the course of its work. Similarly it has had regard to the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act.

## **15 The Future Programme**

15.1 The committee's priorities for 2004-2005 will be set out in the Strategic Forward Work Programme. Key subjects include:

- Housing
- Substance and Alcohol Misuse
- Domestic Violence
- Crime and Disorder
- The Anti-Poverty agenda – including community regeneration
- Youth justice
- Police and Fire services
- Scrutiny of secondary legislation – including that relating to the Housing Bill when it becomes enacted.

**Janice Gregory**  
**Chair**

**SOCIAL JUSTICE AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE**

**Annex 1**

**Remit and Responsibilities**

1. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration which embraces The Government's programme for regenerating the communities of Wales in particular those suffering the greatest disadvantage: including Communities First, Anti-Poverty initiatives, the Social Economy, the Voluntary Sector, Community Safety and relations with the Police, the Fire Service, Drug and alcohol abuse, Youth Justice, Housing and equality.
2. The responsibilities of subject committees as set out in Standing Order 9 are principally: policy development; scrutiny of Ministers and relevant bodies; and scrutiny of legislation.

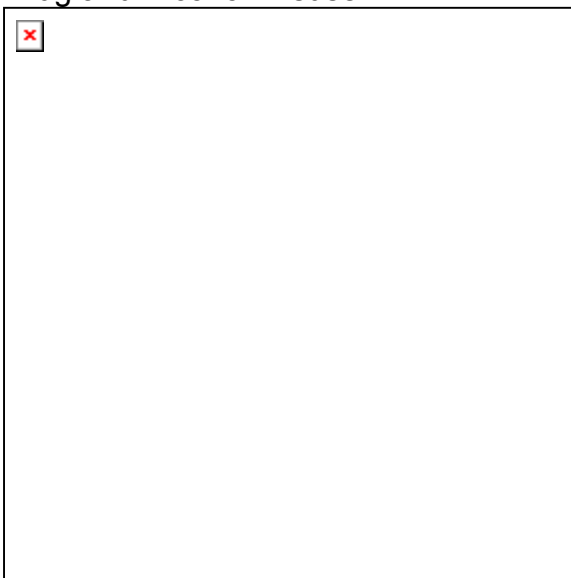
**Aims**

3. With such a broad remit, the Committee will develop a strategic approach to its work and aim to balance consideration of subjects across the portfolio and its range of responsibilities.

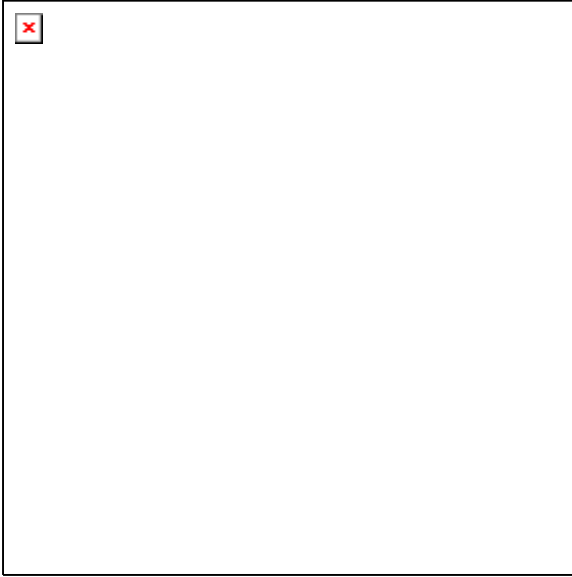
**Priorities**

4. Priorities for the coming periods will be:
  - *Policy development (SO 9.7(i))* - the Committee will focus on those areas of policy development where it can make the greatest impact. In the coming period the Committee proposes to review topics from the following policy areas:

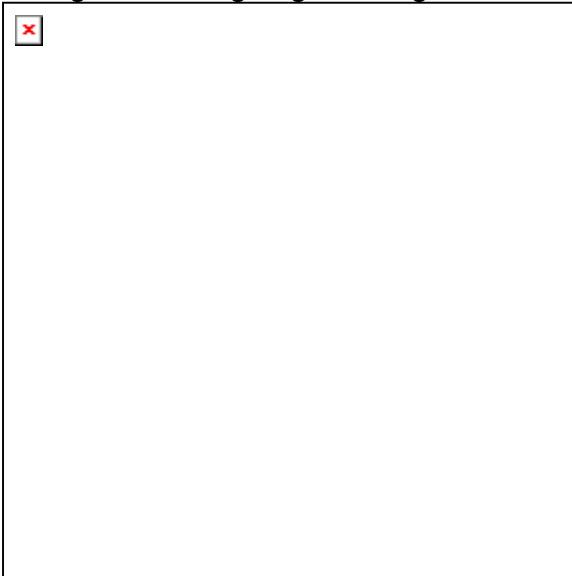
- Drug and Alcohol misuse



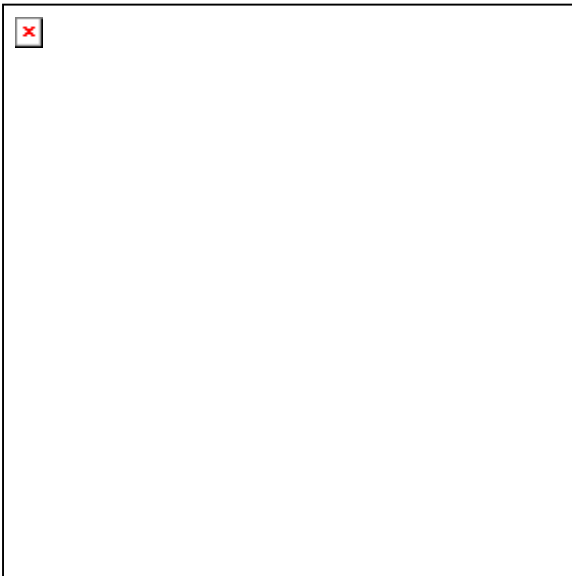
- Housing for older people



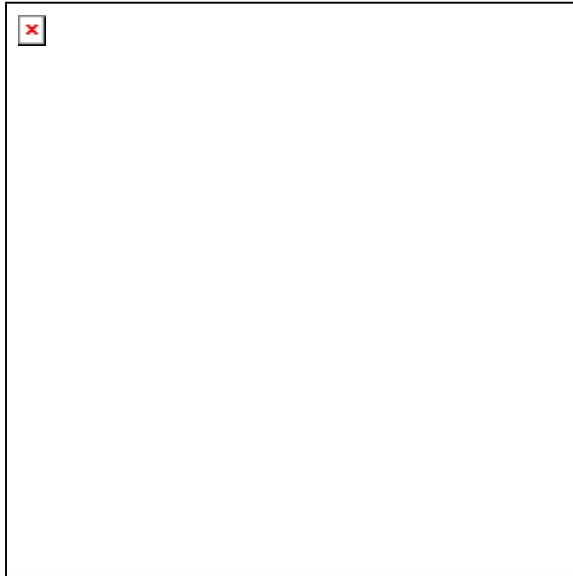
- Preparing for new housing in the light of the ageing housing stock



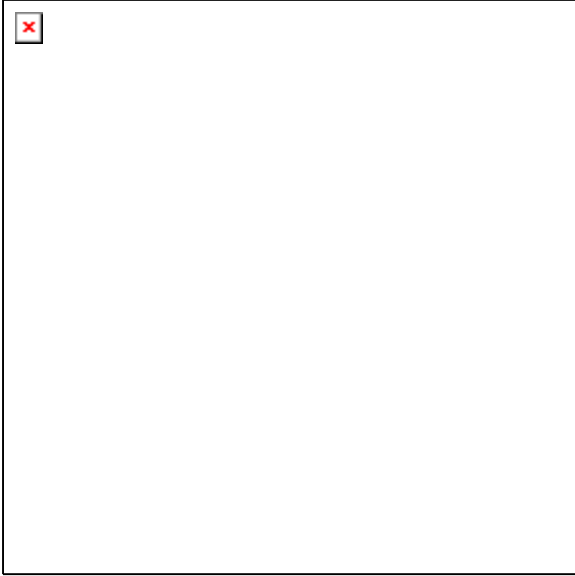
- Domestic Violence



- Funding of the Voluntary sector



Credit Unions

- 
- The part played by the Social Economy in Community Regeneration
- *Scrutiny of the Minister (SO 9.7(ii))* - the Minister will report at each Committee meeting on current developments within the portfolio. The Committee may wish to scrutinise the Minister in the new session regarding Community Regeneration. The former Local Government & Housing Committee policy reviews on Community Regeneration represented a detailed view of the contribution that Community Regeneration projects were achieving in Wales. The committee may wish to receive regular progress reports on the implementation of the review.
- *Scrutiny of sponsored bodies (SO 9.7 (iii))* - there is only one ASPB within the Committee's remit – the Advisory Panel on Substance Misuse. Involvement in their activities, although of interest, is likely to be small.
- *Other items (SO 9.8)* - the Committee will consider any relevant items as necessary.
- *Proposed legislation affecting Wales (SO 9.8(i) and 22)* the Minister will regularly outline forthcoming secondary legislation and the Committee will be informed of relevant proposed primary legislation. The Committee will



identify for scrutiny those items of legislation where there is scope to influence content, and will also consider draft secondary legislation referred by the Deputy Presiding Officer, as appropriate.

- *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.

### **The Assembly's Statutory Duties**

5. The Government of Wales Act 1998 places certain duties on the National Assembly; the Committee's work will be guided by the following:
  - *Equality of Opportunity (s.48 and s.120)* – Committee meetings will be held in public and on occasion away from the National Assembly building to increase the accessibility of its business to people across Wales. Over the range of issues within its portfolio, the Committee will have regard to equality of opportunity;
  - *Sustainable Development (s.121)*

## **Responsibilities of Subject Committees**

## **ANNEX 2**

Standing order 9.7 and 9.8 set out responsibilities of subject committees.

### **Responsibilities**

9.7 Each Subject Committee shall:

- (i) contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Minister 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 primary, secondary and European legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under Standing Order 24;
- (ii) provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to the allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 21;
- (iii) perform its functions under Standing Order 23 (complaints);
- (iv) perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 22; and
- (v) consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields.

**Annex 3**

### ***Policy Review – Housing for Older People***

#### **Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference for the review are:

- *The current provision of housing for older people in Wales;*
- *In the light of the ageing housing stock and other considerations, what is required to allow existing older residents to remain in their own home;*
- *What new provision is needed to cater for the needs of an ageing population.*

### **Issues to be addressed**

In taking forward the review, the Committee will be considering the following questions (this is not an exhaustive list but is intended to provide a flavour of the sorts of issues the Committee will wish to address):

1. Mechanisms to enable older people to remain in their own homes
  - ◆ Exploration of a workable model for an Equity Release Scheme appropriate to the needs of people in Wales
  - ◆ Improving the effectiveness of the adaptation service and reducing waiting times.
  - ◆ Investigating the opportunities for funding housing related projects with health money (e.g. from Local Health Boards) such as Care and Repair schemes and Adapted Housing Registers and the use of pooled budgets under Health Act 1999 Flexibilities
  - ◆ The role and funding of domiciliary care services
  - ◆ Consideration of reversion schemes
  - ◆ Consideration of the link with Communities First
  - ◆ Care homes and Homes for the Community
2. *New provision to cater for the needs of an ageing population*

The role and future of sheltered housing

- ◆ Co-ordinating sheltered housing with other care schemes
- ◆ The role of new technology
- ◆ Retirement villages
- ◆ Best practices elsewhere – the UK
- ◆ Best practices regarding the flexibility of design.

### **Terms of Reference**

### **Annex 4**

To consider the effectiveness of current policies and arrangements for the prevention and treatment of substance misuse giving particular regard to:

#### ***Prevention***

Identification of best practice in substance misuse education in Wales.

Assessment of guidance and support necessary to ensure the implementation of best practice in schools and other settings.

Assessment of action taking to reduce the risk of substance misuse in Wales by means other than education (e.g. within the areas of family support, housing, employment)

***Treatment***

Assessment of the availability of shared care and supervised consumption schemes across Wales and the barriers to recruitment of GPs and pharmacists to these schemes.

Identification of the key difficulties experienced by people trying to access treatment services, in particular, detoxification and rehabilitation.

Identification of best practice in reducing waiting times for treatment.

***Groups effected by substance misuse***

Availability of services necessary in order to protect and improve the well being of children who have substance misusing families

Identification of the needs of, and availability of services for, particular groups: children, released prisoners and people with mental health problems.

***Alcohol***

Identification of the needs of, and availability of services for, people with alcohol problems

Assessment of the impact of the focus on illegal drugs, for example from the Home Office, on the provision of services for alcohol misusers  
Assessment of the effectiveness of policy initiatives which address the issue of alcohol availability and 'binge' drinking.

Edwina Hart AM  
Minister for Social Justice  
and Regeneration  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff CF99 1NQ

Eich cyf . Your ref  
Ein cyf . Our ref SJR-08-04(p2)

14 May 2004

Dear Edwina

### **Budget Planning Round 2004**

I am writing to formally record the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee's views on your paper on the budget for 2005-06 that was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 12 May 2004.

May I first of all put on record the Committee's appreciation of the paper, which reflects the policies it has advocated over the last twelve months, and in particular prioritises Housing. The Committee is unanimous in its view that housing is central to the whole Social Justice agenda, and would clearly wish to see more resources being allocated if this was possible. There is a clear link between housing and health, and members would wish the Welsh Assembly Government to explore innovative projects that relate to both housing and health concerns.

Members of the Committee realise that Social Housing Grants continue to be a major influence in promoting the housing programme. However the lack of end-of-year flexibility means that unspent resources may be lost. Consideration should be given to allow unspent allocations to be carried over to the succeeding year. The Committee would wish to see an increase in the amount available for capital grants for public sector housing and the possibility for funding private projects in Community Housing Trusts, being considered.

The question of affordable housing, particularly for younger people is of special concern to Members. The whole culture of everyone needing to own their homes is questioned by some. All agree however that, as well as spending money on building new houses, much needs to be done in managing voids in the existing stock. Both Registered social Landlords and Local Authorities should be involved in identifying the options in this area.

The Committee welcomes the proposals for the £100million crime fund but would wish to see a breakdown of the figures amongst the various services. It notes that the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy is included in the

Domestic Violence budget heading. Members believe it should be separately identified.

The Committee would also wish to reiterate its previous concern to ensure that grants to the voluntary sector are notified well in advance to assist the continuity of provision.

Finally, the Committee would like to emphasise that most of the other mainstream budgets contribute to the SocialJustice agenda and urges the Welsh Assembly Government to take an holistic approach which recognisers this in determining its budget.

I hope you will find the views of the Committee helpful and supportive in your discussions with your Cabinet colleagues on the 2005-06 budget

Yours sincerely

Janice Gregory  
Chair  
Social Justice Committee