

Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee

Report To The 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 11 June 2003 to 31 March 2004.

2. Membership

2.1 During the year membership was:

Rosemary Butler (Labour, Newport West, Chair)
Alun Pugh (Labour, Clwyd West, Minister)
Leighton Andrews (Labour, Rhondda)
Lorraine Barrett (Labour (Cardiff South and Penarth))
Eleanor Burnham (Liberal Democrat, North Wales)
Lisa Francis (Conservative, Mid and West Wales)
Denise Idris-Jones (Labour, Conwy)
Elin Jones (Plaid Cymru, Ceredigion)
Laura Anne Jones (Conservative, South Wales East)
Owen John Thomas (Plaid Cymru, South Wales Central)

3. Meetings

3.1 During the period the Committee met formally, in public, 11 times. There were five meetings in private of rapporteurs who considered the corporate plans of five ASPBs and two other private meetings to consider drafts of the Committee's report "Welsh Writing in English".

4. Visits

4.1 The Committee undertook nine visits during the year. Two were related to the policy review on the contribution of the arts and sport to community regeneration: projects in Swansea and the City Songs rehearsal at the Welsh National Opera in Cardiff. The Swansea projects were the Phoenix Centre in Townhill, the first community economic development centre of its kind in Wales; the National Waterfront Museum which is due to open in 2005 and will tell the story of socio-economic change in Wales during, and since, the Industrial Revolution; and the Wales National pool which opened to the public in May 2003.

4.2 Three other visits were to see Diversions, progress on the Wales Millennium Centre, and the Artes Mundi exhibition in the National Museum where the Committee also held its meeting in February 2004.

4.3 The Committee also visited four ASPBs as part of its consideration of their Corporate plans. Visits to the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Language Board included a tour of the premises; the visit to the Sports Council took in a review of the facilities at Sophia Gardens; and that to the National Museum took place at St Fagans where Members had a chance to see some of the exhibitions.

5. Remit and Responsibilities

5.1 The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport, which covers arts, museums, ancient monuments, libraries, the languages of Wales, media and broadcasting, sport and recreation, and lottery issues. The portfolio also includes oversight of nine Assembly sponsored (ASPBs) or grant aided public bodies.

5.2 The responsibilities of subject committees as set out in Standing Orders are attached at Annex 1.

6. Aims and Objectives

6.1 The Committee set out its aim in the Strategic Forward Work Programme for the period from June 2003 to December 2004, which it approved on 2 July 2003. The aim has been to balance scrutiny of the Minister with contribution to policy development through committee policy reviews.

7. Progress

7.1 The Committee has concentrated on policy reviews, with two being undertaken during the year. It has also received reports from the Minister at each meeting.

8. Policy Development and Review (Standing Order 9.7)

Review of English Medium Writing in Wales

8.1 The Committee agreed to undertake this review at its first meeting on 11 June 2003. The terms of reference were:

To review

- the contribution of English-medium books and writing in Wales to Welsh culture
- the support mechanisms available to writers in Wales, including playwrights and screenplay writers
- the support mechanisms for the production and marketing of new writing, including private sector support
- the mechanisms for raising public awareness of English-medium Welsh literature and writers.

8.2 There were 35 responses from the written consultation, which took place during the July and August. Three oral evidence sessions were held during October – December when 18 organisations/individuals presented their views to the Committee.

8.3 The Committee made 19 recommendations in its report, 9 of which were ranked as priorities. These ranged across whole spectrum of the review: marketing; support for writers and publishers; education; classic works; libraries; booksellers and awards.

8.4 The report was launched on 31 March and debated the same day in Plenary.

Review of the Contribution of Arts and Sport to Community Regeneration

8.5 The Committee agreed the terms of reference for this review at its meeting on 2 July 2003. They are:

To review and consider:

- the links between arts policy, sports policy, and community regeneration policy
- how local arts and sports projects can contribute to community regeneration
- support mechanisms for community regeneration related arts and sports projects
- best practice in community regeneration related arts and sports projects.

8.6 A written consultation took place during September - December from which 53 responses were received. Oral evidence was taken during three meetings in February and March 2004; 14 individuals/organisations attended to give their views. It is expected that the first draft report will be produced before the summer recess.

Other Issues of Policy

8.7 The Committee contributed to the consultation on the Protection of Historical Assets in Wales, which it discussed, with the Chief Executive of CADW in November 2003. It also held a session on sources of European funding for culture with a presentation from a member of the Wales Office in Brussels.

9. Scrutiny of Legislation (Standing Order 9.8 (i))

9.1 The Committee considered progress on the Communications Bill including the proposed establishment of an OFCOM Wales office. The Committee also considered the draft Gambling Bill that was referred to it by the Joint Committee on the Draft Gambling Bill.

10. Monitoring and Scrutiny (Standing Order 9.7 (ii) and (iii))

10.1 The Committee has oversight of five ASPBs:

- Arts Council of Wales
- National Library of Wales
- National Museums and Galleries of Wales
- Sports Council of Wales
- Welsh Language Board.

10.2 The Committee agreed to adopt a new approach in scrutinising the ASPB corporate plans. Rather than including them in its formal agenda the rapporteurs from the Committee instead visited four to discuss their plans in private; the National Library made the visit to the Assembly office in Cardiff since time did not permit for travel to the Library's offices in Aberystwyth. These meetings were held in recess in early September 2003 and a report on the outcome and issues was put to the full Committee on 24 September. The ASPBs subsequently appeared before the full Committee in March to discuss progress. The experiment was deemed a success by the Committee and the ASPBs and at least two other Committees are to follow suit.

10.3 Scrutiny of the Minister took place at every formal, public meeting except one. Members had the opportunity to question the Minister on his report to Committee as well as on oral reports on topical issues such as the future of the National Botanic Garden on which there was much debate.

10.4 The written reports included regular updates on developments under the three policy documents on sport, the Welsh language and arts and culture. Other items included were the review of lottery funding, the historic environment and the future of Clwyd Theatr Cymru

11. Appointments (Standing Order 9.8)

11.1 The Chair, Rosemary Butler, and Owen John Thomas have been the Committee's nominees for public appointments. During the year they were consulted on the appointments of Chair for two organisations and on members for the same two organisations along with a further six.

12. Budget (Standing Order 9.8)

12.1 The Committee considered and commented on the Assembly Government's proposed budget for 2004-2005. The Chair's letter conveying the Committee's recommendations is attached at Annex 2.

13. Cross-cutting Issues

13.1 The Committee's policy review on the contribution of arts and sport to community regeneration was considered by the South East Wales Regional Committee. The Chair addressed its meeting. As part of the same review,

the Deputy Minister for Social Justice made a presentation to the Committee on his own review on Communities First.

14. The Statutory Schemes

14.1 The Committee has taken account of the National Assembly's statutory duties for relations with the local authorities and the voluntary sector, the sustainable development scheme, and equal opportunities in the course of its work. Similarly it has had regard to the requirements of the Race Relations Act

15. The Future Programme

15.1 Key issues for the Committee for 2004-2005 are:

- completion of the policy review on the Contribution of arts and Sport to Community Regeneration
- the Minister's response to the Committee's report "Welsh Writing in English"
- consider a future policy review on Creative Industries
- current issues in media and Broadcasting
- the outcome of Audit Committee's meeting with the National Museum following the National Audit Office report on Collections Management.

Rosemary Butler
Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee
May 2004

Duties of the Committee

The Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee is one of seven subject committees. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in the National Assembly's Standing Orders :

“9.7. Each subject committee shall

- i. contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly 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.

Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- i. advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under SO22;
- ii. provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19;
- iii. perform its functions under Standing Order 21(complaints);
- iv. perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and
- v. consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields.”

Standing Order 9.9 requires the subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months.

Annex 2

CULTURE, WELSH LANGUAGE AND SPORT COMMITTEE

PWYLLGOR DIWYLLIANT, Y GYMRAEG A CHWARAEON

Alun Pugh A.M
Minister for Culture, Welsh Language
and Sport

Bae Caerdydd / Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd / Cardiff
CF99 1NA

19 November 2003

DRAFT BUDGET 2004-05 TO 2006-07

Thank you for your presentation to Committee last week on the draft budget. The Committee was pleased to note that you had taken account of its key priorities, as set out in my letter of 15 July.

The Committee welcomes the Welsh Assembly Government's additional £150,000 funding of Middleton and also supports the continued funding of the development costs of the likes of the Wales Millennium Centre and National Waterfont Museum.

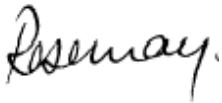
Concern was however raised that there was a planned reduction in the portfolio's budget from indicative figures provided for Committee on 24 September and those in Committee last week. Members were particularly concerned that the greatest loss would be carried by the Culture Fund. I understand that the Welsh Assembly Government will be undertaking a Spending Review to inform its forward budgets from 2004/5 as well as taking account of the UK Treasury spending review and the Committee looks forward to receiving details of these.

You will also be aware that some Members of the Committee expressed their disappointment that the Welsh Assembly Government would not be proceeding with the proposed Film Fund, in particular as European Objective One funding has been granted. I would therefore be grateful if you could update the Committee on the Welsh Assembly Government's film industry intentions following the Economic Development Minister and WDA's review of the support accorded to the creative industries. The Committee also indicated that they would be grateful to receive a note on the support the Government and Lottery has provided to the industry in the past.

The Committee is pleased that you reiterated your commitment to reviewing the timescale with which the Committee receives ASPB Corporate Plans to facilitate their budgetary consideration.

I am copying this letter to the Finance Minister.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosemary". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosemary Butler A.M

Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Sport Committee

cc Sue Essex, Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services