

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

POLICY REVIEW OF COMMUNITY REGENERATION

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Issue

1. To seek the Committee's views on an initial list of recommendations from the policy review of community regeneration

Recommendation

2. The committee is invited to consider the draft recommendations set out in the annex.

Timing

3. In the light of the Committee's views on the draft recommendations, work will be put in hand on preparing the Committee's report on the review.

Background

4. Following the Committee's discussions at the last meeting on 24th April of the issues that have emerged from the review as set out in paper LGH-08-02 (p.3), an initial set of recommendations has been prepared. It would be helpful to have the Committee's confirmation of these recommendations to facilitate the preparation of the draft report of the review.

POLICY REVIEW OF COMMUNITY REGENERATION

LIST OF DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General recommendation

***Draft recommendation 1:** That the Local Government and Housing Committee identifies and supports the consensus in Wales for the social inclusion objectives of Better Government and endorses the Community First scheme as a means of achieving them. It recognises the principles and values of partnership and community involvement and asks the Welsh Assembly Government to promote it in all policies that impact on community regeneration.*

This draft recommendation sets the scene for the review. It endorses the Assembly's commitments to social inclusion and partnership working. The report would make it clear that the Committee is firm in its belief that any progress in regenerating communities can only be made if the communities themselves are totally involved and committed. The best results will be attained where the people in the community are empowered to effect improvements themselves.

(2) Funding

Draft Recommendation 2.1: *That the Welsh Assembly Government publishes an annual digest and calendar of funding streams with associated dates and deadlines.*

All of the organisations reported the difficulties and manpower effort required in identifying the various funding streams. This recommendation attempts to address that issue.

Draft recommendation 2.2: *That the Welsh Assembly Government engages in a major exercise to consolidate and unify the funding streams it and Assembly Public Bodies (APBs) operate.*

This recommendation follows on from that above and reflects the support for a streamlining and consolidation of the various funding streams.

Draft recommendation 2.3: *That the Welsh Assembly Government accepts a permanent co-ordinating role to develop harmonisation and integration of community regeneration funding throughout Wales. It should create a forum in which it, its sponsored bodies and other funding agencies (e.g. National Lottery), develop a funding regime which is co-ordinated in its objectives, methodology and timescale.*

The final part of the recommendations associated with the complexity of the funding programmes. Recommendation 2.1 can be achieved quickly. 2.2 will take longer to achieve and 2.3 recognises that community regeneration is a long term programme and requires long term commitment from all the agencies involved.

Draft recommendation 2.4: *That the Welsh Assembly Government reviews and streamlines all its funding procedures to remove unnecessary bureaucracy and that it encourages similar exercises in other funding agencies in Wales.*

This draft recommendation is aimed at addressing the belief that current procedures are over bureaucratic and lack the necessary flexibility which sensible risk assessment would bring. This results in delays in paying grants and awards, detailed evidence being required for minor expenditure and excessive requirements for business plans and audited accounts for minor grant aid.

Draft recommendation 2.5: *That decision dates are determined early and published in programme documents and response times for bids are kept reasonable. And in most cases are within six weeks of submission deadlines.*

Theses are practical suggestions for addressing the delays associated with bureaucratic demands.

Draft recommendation 2.6: *That the Welsh Assembly Government urgently develops a funding stream which enables core funding of established community regeneration projects and organisations. The Welsh Assembly government should consult widely with those groups involved in community regeneration to determine allocation methods, qualifying criteria and administrative procedures.*

This draft recommendation recognises critical concern of core funding. It recognises the part played by community organisations in meeting needs that are not being met by main stream services. It acknowledges that regeneration groups themselves should be consulted on the provision is needed to develop a stable funding regime.

Draft recommendation 2.7: *That the Welsh Assembly Government reviews the community regeneration budget at an early opportunity to ensure that funding levels are sufficient to promote an active programme of community regeneration in Wales*

This recommendation is include to ensure that adequate funding is available in the light of the enormity of the regeneration task in Wales

(3) Capacity Development

Draft recommendation 3.1: *That the Welsh Assembly Government takes all opportunities in delivering Community Action Plans and Capacity Development Plans to ensure that community capacity is developed and enhanced*

Capacity development is fundamental to the regeneration of communities. Many organisations have expressed concern about the readiness of communities to take on a major role in regeneration. Similarly, concern has been expressed about the organisational capacity of key public agencies to work in community sensitive ways. This recommendation recognises the need for a national strategy to address the problem. This draft recommendation taken with those at 3.2 and 3.3 below could collectively build a capacity development strategy for Wales.

Draft recommendation 3.2: *That the Welsh Assembly Government works with all relevant agencies to promote high standards of community based practice in the delivery of public services in Wales*

See above

Draft recommendation 3.3: *That the Welsh Assembly Government hosts a forum in which all relevant partners and agencies develop a national plan for Community Regeneration Capacity. The forum would include WLGA, WCVA, Communities First Support Network, ELWa, WDA, FE Colleges, Universities and a range of community based organisations.*

Perhaps the starting point for developing a strategy for Capacity Development

(4) Shortage of Community Regeneration Staff

***Draft recommendation 4:** That the Welsh Assembly Government work with FE, HE, ELWa, the Consortium for Community Regeneration, and community organisations to map current provision, develop innovative short courses and work place learning to promote rapid skilling of new entrants to the community regeneration field. That the Welsh Assembly Government underpins the process with a bursary scheme to encourage new entrants to training programmes.*

There is a lack of qualified, skilled and experienced community regeneration workers. This draft recommendation recognises that shortage and suggests ways of addressing the problem.

(5) Relationships with Statutory Sector Partners

***Draft recommendation 5.1:** That the Local Authority takes the lead role in regeneration, determining in consultation with the community appropriate measures and actions. That it co-ordinates resources, act as banker and manages community regeneration within a partnership structure. Within that structure it is an equal partner. Funding is provided to the partnership and controlled by partnership decisions, which are binding on all partners.*

This draft recommendation is included to recognise that as service providers, statutory authorities have a critical role in community regeneration. It also recognises the situation that in order for regeneration to work, they must recognise the role and contribution of the voluntary and community sectors when working in partnership.

***Draft recommendation 5.2:** That the Welsh Assembly Government adopts a system of accreditation of community regeneration partnerships to ensure recognised best practice in community regeneration is uniformly experienced throughout Wales.*

This draft recommendation recognises that development work is required in some locations to promote the participation mode of working. Currently, there are no mechanics for monitoring the quality of working practices in regeneration partnerships in Wales.

(6) Resourcing Community Engagement in the Statutory Sector

***Draft recommendation 6:** That the Welsh Assembly Government introduces a grant component of funding for 'community provision' by the statutory sector which will be derived from an additional element of funding over and above past funding levels.*

Money spent on community approaches is inevitably syphoned from core sources. This draft recommendation recognises that, in the early days at least, funding should be provided to statutory bodies to develop community approaches.

(7) Advancing the Community First Approach

Draft recommendation 7: *That the Welsh Assembly Government considers ways to extend the principles of partnership and community participation (including the provision of seed-core funding), which underpin Communities First, to all communities in Wales.*

This recommendation recognises that community regeneration is appropriate to all communities, not just those with the greatest deprivation. It recognises that the partnership approach can be universally beneficial and that community groups inevitably require some 'start-up' resources.

(8) The role of the Welsh Assembly Government

Draft recommendation 8.1: *That the Welsh Assembly Government develops a body of community regeneration expertise 'in house' to establish effective working relationships with the community regeneration sector. This may be created by recruiting staff from the community regeneration sector, secondments, job shadowing and in house training of Assembly personnel.*

Community regeneration is still in its early stages and this draft recommendation suggests that in order to take the process forward it will be necessary within the Welsh Assembly Government to develop an expertise which will enable it to promote effective liaison and knowledgeable interaction with practitioners.

Draft recommendation 8.2: *That the Welsh Assembly Government develops appropriate monitoring techniques to promote minimum standards of all agencies engaged in community regeneration.*

This draft recommendation creates an 'inspectorate' role within the Welsh Assembly Government in recognition of the major public expenditure allocated to this policy field and few accreditation procedures or quality controls in place.

