

Equality of Opportunity Committee

Legacy Report 2003 to 2007

Introduction

The Equality of Opportunity Committee is provided for by the Assembly's Standing Orders to audit the Assembly's arrangements for promoting in the exercise of its functions and the conduct of its business the principle that there should be equality for all people.

This report is made under Standing Order 14.7, which requires the Committee to report to the Assembly from time to time in addition to submitting its annual report¹. It includes key issues that its successor may wish to consider during the Third Assembly.

Copies of all the Committee's reports, agendas, papers, minutes and transcripts of meetings can be found on the National Assembly website.

Remit and Responsibilities

The statutory basis for the Equality of Opportunity Committee is set out in the Government of Wales Act 1998 and the Assembly's Standing Order 14, relevant extracts of which can be found at Annex 1.

Standing Order 14.6 provides for the Committee to appoint expert advisers to enable the views of minority or disadvantaged groups to be put before it. During the First Assembly the Committee appointed standing invitees from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and Stonewall Cymru. In the Second Assembly the Committee extended a standing invitation for a representative of the Welsh Language Board to attend its meeting and provide advice on equality issues relating to the Welsh language.

In February 2005 the Assembly agreed to a change in Standing Order 6.6(iv) to enable Plenary to formally remit primary legislation to Committees other than subject committees for consideration. The change to Standing Orders reflects the importance of scrutinising equality legislation affecting Wales.

Work and Achievements

The work of the Committee during the Second Assembly can be found in the Committee's Annual Reports to plenary.

LEGACY TO SUCCESSOR COMMITTEE(S)

¹ The Committee's Legacy Report 2003-07 is made separately from its Annual Report 2006-07

Strategic Issues

2.1 It is recommended that successor Committee(s) should concentrate on the following high level strategic issues.

Mainstreaming Equality

The Committee has regularly monitored progress in mainstreaming equality by the Welsh Assembly Government during the Second Assembly. We believe that the progress made during the Second Assembly should continue to should be monitored by the Committee through scrutiny of the implementation of the Committee's recommendations contained in its report *Mainstreaming Equality in the work of the Assembly*.

We also believe that the Committee could play a key role in ensuring that equality issues are mainstreamed in the work of other Scrutiny and Legislation Committees and the Assembly Commission in the Third Assembly.

The role of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) in Wales

The CEHR will come into being in October 2007, replacing the Commission for Racial Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission as well as taking on responsibility for other equality strands and human rights.

We recommend that the Equality of Opportunity Committee in the Third Assembly monitors the work of the CEHR in Wales. It should encourage the Commission to ensure that a Welsh dimension is acknowledged and integrated into its work and that appropriate emphasis is given to all equality strands.

We also recommend that the Committee, at an early meeting in the Third Assembly, establishes, with the CEHR and other bodies, the role and function of any Standing Invitees it wishes to invite to the Committee.

Implementation of the Race, Disability and Gender Equality Duties in Wales.

Public Bodies in Wales currently have a duty to develop race and disability equality schemes and will in the future have a duty to develop gender equality schemes.

We recommend that the Committee in the Third Assembly should continue to monitor the effectiveness of these (and any other statutory equalities duties which are imposed on public bodies in Wales) in conjunction with the CEHR.

Other Items for Consideration

Policy review recommendations

The Committee produced 3 policy review reports during the First and Second Assemblies:

Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers
Mainstreaming Equality in the work of the Assembly
Service Provision for Disabled Young People: "Why is it that disabled young people are always left until last?"

We recommend that the Equality of Opportunity Committee continues to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in each of the reports. We also recommend that a working group be set up by the Committee to monitor the implementation of the recommendations in the Review of Service Provision for Gypsies and Travellers

Equal Pay Campaign

The Committee has been monitoring and supporting the Equal Pay Campaign during the Second Assembly. A sub group of the Committee has been reviewing progress in detail.

We recommend that the Committee in the Third Assembly continues to monitor the implementation and the effects of the equal pay campaign.

Links with the Scottish Parliament

In November 2006, the Committee visited the Equality of Opportunity Committee in the Scottish Parliament to discuss issues of mutual interest.

The visit was very useful in forging links between the Committees and sharing information and ideas. We recommend that the two Committees meet regularly (at least every 12 months) either face to face or by video conference to discuss equalities issues in the two countries.

Equalities Review

The Equalities Review was published in 28 February 2007. As this was too late for the Committee to discuss the Review during the Second Assembly, we recommend that the successor Committee consider it as early as practicable in the Third Assembly.

Other issues

The following areas are ones which the Committee has not been able to address in any great detail at recent meetings. We consider that they should be included in the Committee's forward work programme for the Third Assembly:

Religion/faith/belief issues;
Age discrimination;
Hate crime against the LGB community;

Procurement – promoting equality in the Assembly’s procurement policies;
Commissioner for Public appointments.