

LEGAL SERVICES COMMITTEE FOR WALES

Internet briefing note of the meeting held on 7th October 2005.

Present: John Williams
Margaret Griffiths
Tom Jones (Chair)
Fran Targett
Bob Chapman

In Attendance: LSC - Lee Phillips; Simon Pickthall; Andrew Pearce

Apologies for Absence: Roy Morgan

Local Government Data Unit

It was agreed that a representative from the LGDU would be invited to give a presentation on the new Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation to the Committee's at the next meeting.

Welsh Language Scheme

Tom Jones reported that the draft Scheme had been launched for consultation at the National Eisteddfod. There had been a small number of responses to date, although the closing date was not until 1st November 2005. Tom encouraged Committee members to respond on an individual basis to the draft Scheme

Objective 1 Training and Development Project

Tom Jones suggested that there needed to be an official launch of this major project, and that the LSC ought to take the lead in organising this. Lee Phillips confirmed that a project team meeting was due to take place within the next four weeks and she undertook to include the launch event as an agenda item.

Powys Benefits Home Visiting Service

Tom Jones requested that an evaluation of the service being provided by Powys Benefits be undertaken alongside an assessment of similar schemes operating in Wales and England so that any relevant good practice and lessons learned could be identified and disseminated more widely. It was noted that Wrexham CAB was undertaking home visits as part of its 'Better Advice Better Health' project, and there were other schemes operating in Wales and England that included some elements of a home visiting service. Lee Phillips agreed to present a paper to the Committee meeting in December 2005

Legal Services Research Centre findings

It was agreed that Pascoe Pleasance would be invited to address a future National Forum meeting on the updated findings of the National Periodic survey (due later in the year) and some specific research on users' experiences of 'problem clusters' currently being undertaken by Richard Moorhead at Cardiff Law School.

CLS Wales Policy Paper

Simon Pickthall explained that the Wales section of the CLS Strategy Consultation Paper was to be drafted by colleagues in the Policy Team in London. This paper had been prepared as a briefing document for the Policy Team to help with their drafting.

Tom Jones endorsed the paper as an excellent summary of the work of the Wales office in establishing the CLS in Wales over the previous five years, and in terms of the future agenda.

Tom suggested that the 'Political' section of the paper needed to be made less 'party political' in its references to the main political parties; and that more explicit reference should be made to both the Welsh Office and the Government of Wales Bill due to go before Parliament later in the year.

John Williams suggested that the paper needed to more clearly distinguish the executive role of the Welsh Assembly Government from the legislative role of the Assembly as a whole.

The Committee instructed a copy of the paper to be sent to Anne Stephenson as part of the briefing papers for the November meeting with Edwina Hart.

The Legal Services Committee for Wales – future developments

Tom Jones explained that the Commission had made the 'in principle' decision to abolish Legal Services Committees in the English Regions. This decision needed to be ratified by the DCA before it could be implemented. The Commission had recognised that the position in Wales was different, however, and had invited the LSCfW to consider whether a Wales Committee needed to continue to exist; and if so, what it might do and how it should be organised. Andrew Pearce had prepared a draft options scoping paper to help the Committee in its initial discussions about the future of a Wales Committee. This was discussed and the following points were agreed :

- the paper should start with an explanation of the functions that any Wales Committee could perform – the key roles envisaged included
 - acting as a policy filter to advise on and monitor the potential and actual impacts of LSC policy in Wales as well as WAG policy on the activities of the LSC in Wales
 - the provision of strategic advice to the LSC on the allocation of expenditure in Wales
- the options identified would then need to be appraised against their ability to deliver the key functions
- the paper needed to recommend a preferred option and explain why other options had been rejected.

Andrew would re-draft the options paper in the light of the direction from the Committee and re-circulate it for comments as soon as possible.

PIB/CLSDF Update Report

Progress reports from the Welsh PIB and CLSDF projects were received and noted.

It was noted that presentations from a selection of North Wales PIB/CLSDF projects would be included as part of the agenda for the December meeting in Anglesey.

The next round of meetings to review A-D ratings in each CLSP area would be taking place in December/January for ratification at the February 2006 Committee meeting.