

WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

CABINET

WORK PROGRAMME OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY UNIT

Paper by the First Minister

Introduction

This note sets out the proposed initial work programme and working arrangements for the new Strategic Policy Unit and seeks views

Core Work Programme

Recently we discussed the role of the new Unit and its initial work programme. This focused on addressing some of the big cross-cutting issues and processes.

The new Unit has now worked up these initial ideas into projects that they will deliver over the next six to eight months, working closely with the Cabinet.

The papers below describe each of the proposed projects, the issues they aim to explore and the way in which they will work and report. The projects are:

- A. Strategic Priorities for the Spending Review
- B. Economic Inactivity (to follow)
- C. Delivery of Public Services
- D. Regeneration

A further note at E sets out how the Unit will be organised so that Special Advisors and officials maintain their different roles while gaining the benefits of working together in a single policy team.

Other Work

The Strategic Policy Unit is a limited resource available to the First Minister and other ministers to undertake ad-hoc tasks which cross over ministerial portfolios. It is currently leading a short-term task group to advise on the means of creating a Community Development Financial Institution to assist the social economy and gain access to community investment tax credits. The Unit is also working with education and finance officials to advise on the Government's intentions for implementing the Rees Report on student

hardship. In addition the Unit has the continuous task of preparing briefing for First Minister's questions

Secondees

The SPU consists of civil servants allocated to it and special advisers. In addition it has the ability to recruit secondees from within the civil service and from other organisations.

Cary Evans has been seconded to work on the project concerned with strategic priorities.

It is intended to recruit two further secondees: one for the delivery project and one for the regeneration project.

Relationship between SPU and Ministers

The work programme of SPU is commissioned by Ministers only. The output of the work undertaken belongs to Ministers only. It is important that the process of undertaking the programme involves Ministers; it would not be appropriate for Ministers to simply receive finished products. The first stage of ministerial involvement after agreeing the programme will be to receive initial reports. Thereafter minister may wish to consider establishing two working groups:

- One to consider progress on the inactivity and regeneration projects
- One to consider progress on the delivery and strategic priorities

Recommendation

Subject to any detailed comments expressed today on the programme of work, I recommend that we endorse the programme and ask the Unit to implement it as quickly as possible so that it can report back to us.

Financial Implications

To be accommodated within the Cabinet Executive running costs.

First Minister

SPU Project

Strategic Priorities for the Spending Review 2002

Aim

To identify a coherent set of policy priorities to inform resource allocation in Wales from 2003.

Questions to address

Is the current trend/process of resource allocation ie existing budgets and likely pressures likely to deliver on Plan for Wales targets?

What are the underlying causes or issues that link different interventions and programmes and should we increase the focus on these?

Is there an approach to universal services that would help to prevent problems in the first place and so reduce the growth in `fire-fighting` expenditure?

Should we focus more on building on Welsh strengths and future potential?

Are we making enough of our current major flagship projects and cross-cutting strategies to ensure they deliver?

Are there any new flagship projects that would have sufficient impact to justify giving them priority?

Organisation

The study will be operated jointly by SPU and Finance. It will be steered by a working group comprising SPU and FP staff.

The project leader will be Carys Evans.

The project will work closely with policy groups and Ministers to explore areas for development.

The project will be developed in house to the interim report stage in January. There will be a need to consider then whether to make a public statement ahead of the Spending Review announcement in July.

Programme

Phase one: brainstorm with Group Directors -report to Cabinet in January
Phase two: work up detailed proposals for Cabinet discussion in April/May.

Dependencies

Strong synergy with Delivery study
Whitehall Spending Review: need to evaluate the Whitehall approach and incorporate what may be relevant to the NAW.

SPU Project

DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Aim of the study

To identify the significant areas of risk in achieving the delivery of public services anticipated in Plan for Wales; and provide an analysis of the mechanisms that are available to the Assembly Government in assuring the required level of delivery.

Questions to address

1. Where are the main risks to the delivery of the overall programme set out in Plan for Wales 2001?
2. What evidence is there of the effectiveness of the range of mechanisms available to the National Assembly for Wales in assuring the required level of delivery by the range of delivery organisations:
 - Regulations and Guidance
 - Service Level Agreements
 - Performance Indicators and Targets
 - Inspections
 - Core funding
 - Activity funding
 - Required Plans
 - Required Partnerships
 - Transfer of success
 - Reward mechanisms
 - Advocacy
3. How may the effectiveness of the mechanisms vary in different situations and in relation to different organisations – local authorities, ASPB's the voluntary and private sectors?
4. Are there criteria for the use of PFI in service delivery which can be applied across the public sector?
5. How can we enhance the collaboration between providers within sectors, such as local authorities, and between sectors

Organisation

There will be a project group involving staff from economic development, health, social care and local government divisions

The project manager will be Paul Griffiths

The project will be developed in-house to the interim report stage in January when recommendations will be put to Cabinet on whether and how to engage external partners.

The question of collaboration between local authorities will be answered through a distinct line of enquiry within the overall project. Adam Peat will take responsibility for this in collaboration with other members of the project group.

Programme

Phase One:

- To identify potential risk areas in the delivery of Plan for Wales and other aims set by Cabinet
- To undertake an initial scoping exercise of the use of various mechanisms available to the Assembly
- To advise on the potential for enhancing collaboration between local authorities
- To advise on the criteria that may be used to consider the applicability of PFI funding

Phase Two:

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the range of mechanisms available, possibly use case studies in specific policy areas

Phase Three:

- To make recommendations on changes in the way in which the NAW seeks to assure service delivery through partner organisations, to include any recommendations for subordinate legislation.

Milestones

There will be reports to Cabinet on the completion of each Phase:

Phase One –	January 2002
Phase Two	Spring 2002
Phase Three	Summer 2002

Phase Four: To recommend specific areas for rationalisation or change to existing mechanisms, including recommendations for subordinate legislation.

Dependencies

The project will need to work within the timetable for a White Paper on Local Government, likely in January.

The project will need to work within the timetable for NHS reform.

The project will need to build upon the completed consultation on the role of PPP/PFI.

The project will need to make a contribution, if appropriate, to the Spending Review study and to the overall Budget round.

SPU

November 2001

SPU Project

REGENERATION

Aim

To evaluate the impact of Assembly strategic programmes on regeneration at regional levels, including work in south-east Wales following Corus closures; and to consider means of improving the co-ordination and effectiveness of such programmes and their relationship with programmes of community regeneration.

Questions to Address

What is the experience of developing policies for economic development, transportation and land use in order to assist the development of areas of Wales smaller than the whole country but larger than a unitary authority?

How can the Assembly best relate to local authorities, ASPB's and other partners in developing policy and its implementation at a regional level?

What are the policies and programmes aimed at community regeneration and how may they be improved and co-ordinated?

How can we better connect regeneration initiatives at a regional and community level?

Are there particular features of effective programmes for community and regional regeneration in rural areas?

Organisation

There will be a project group staff from economic development, transport, planning, community regeneration.

The project will seek to build on NEDS and contribute to the Wales Spatial Plan.

The project will run in parallel with the Assembly's Committee's review of Community Regeneration. This project has a wider scope but will be able to assist the Government in contributing and responding to the Committee's review.

The project would lend itself to the recruitment of a secondee to assist in Phases Two and Three.

Programme

Phase One

- To identify the issues that lend themselves to consideration at a regional level and to gather evidence of how such consideration has taken place.
- To monitor the development of the Committee Review on Community Regeneration

Phase Two

- To work with local authorities and ASPB's to develop proposals on how each can give consideration to issues which need to have a regional dimension.
- To evaluate experience of connecting initiatives at regional and community levels
- To assist in any Government input to the Committee review

Phase Three

To make recommendations

Milestones

Report on Phase One by January 2002

Report on Phases Two and by Summer 2002

Report in phase Three in Autumn 2002

Dependencies

The work will need to mesh into the Committee's Review of Community Regeneration

It will have an interest in the implementation of Winning Wales

It will contribute to the development of a Spatial Plan for Wales

THE STRATEGIC POLICY UNIT

Aim of the Unit

To support Cabinet in the development of policy ideas, with a particular focus on cross-cutting and long-term strategic issues.

Working arrangements

The Unit will comprise the special advisors, civil servants and secondees.

The Unit will work to a programme of projects agreed by Cabinet. These projects will have tailored management and reporting arrangements. The focus of projects will be to add value to existing work by identifying gaps, strengthening connections and addressing the big picture issues more directly than is possible within individual policy areas.

The programme will be steered by the Senior Special Advisor (Paul Griffiths). The delivery of the programme will be managed by the Head of Policy (Matthew Quinn), reporting to the Director of the Cabinet Executive. Civil servants and secondees will report to the Head of Policy.

The projects will be supported and informed by internal working groups, drawing on the relevant areas of expertise. The Unit will not have a delivery function. Its role will be to develop proposals for further development and implementation within Groups.

The civil servants within the Unit will continue to have a role in supporting policy development capacity and techniques for staff.

The Special Advisors within the Unit will continue in their role of supporting Cabinet and Ministers in the handling of their day to day responsibilities.

Reporting to Cabinet

The Unit is accountable to the First Minister and will work closely in support of the Ministers for Assembly Business and for Finance and Communities.

The work programme will include regular reporting to Cabinet and to the appropriate Cabinet sub-committees.