

Memorandum to the Annual Report of the Assembly's House Committee by its Chair for the period October 1999 to September 2000

The attached report of the House Committee summarises its activities over the last 12 Months. The Committee has undoubtedly played an important role in influencing and shaping the services provided to Assembly Members, largely via the Office of the Presiding Officer; the direction of projects such as Pierhead; the framework of guidance within which we operate and many other domestic and housekeeping matters. Nonetheless it is fair to say that it is difficult to attribute specific achievements to the House Committee alone.

As part of the proposal to create a more independent OPO, it was agreed that the House Committee would become a formal statutory committee within Standing Orders. It is still advisory but has an expanded remit encompassing all of the items in the existing terms of reference plus Members fees and allowances and OPO's budget. On all of these matters the House Committee will be encouraged to offer its views to the Clerk, Presiding Officer or others. It will also be responsible for scrutinising proposals by the Clerk on behalf of Members for new or changed services, financial allocations, etc and for monitoring OPO's performance.

In order to make the Office of the Presiding Officer more accountable and open to Members it has also been agreed that one member of the House Committee will answer questions for oral answer in regular (probably 4-weekly) sessions. The House Committee will nominate that member, not necessarily the Chair or the same member on each occasion.

I hope that Assembly Members will support the continuation and enhancement of this important Committee and should like to take this opportunity to thank those who have participated over the last 12 months. It has been an interesting year and I am grateful to colleagues on the Committee for their support.

JANE DAVIDSON

Note: Assembly Members endorsed the changes outlined above in early October as part of a package of measures flowing from the project to create a more independent OPO.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE

ASSEMBLY'S

HOUSE COMMITTEE

October 1999 - September 2000

HOUSE COMMITTEE

REPORT TO THE ASSEMBLY

1. Introduction

1.1 The House Committee was established by resolution of the Assembly on 13 July 1999, under Standing Order 8.1, which allows for the Assembly to establish a committee, additional to those provided for by the Act or in standing orders. It was established for one year, to continue in existence until the date of the first anniversary of its initial meeting. The Committee is required to report to the Assembly at least once a year.

1.2 The main purpose of the Committee is to provide a forum for Members to provide advice to the Presiding Officer on the broad sweep of housekeeping matters and services, which are provided to Assembly Members and the public, mainly via the Office of the Presiding Officer. The Committee is advisory and has no executive powers.

1.3 Jane Davidson Deputy Presiding Officer, chairs the Committee. The other members are Janice Gregory, Peter Black, Brian Hancock and Glyn Davies.

1.4 During its first year, the Committee met on 5 occasions, approximately every 8 to 10 weeks.

2. The Committee's Remit

2.1 The Resolution passed in July set out the remit of the House Committee, and the requirements as to its membership, terms and reference, its meetings and its duration. A copy is annexed to this report.

3. The Committee's Priorities

3.1 The Committee worked to a standard agenda. Its priorities were agreed early on as:

- Minutes
- Matters Arising
- Report on Performance
- Accommodation Matters
- Presiding Officer Services
 - o Library
 - o Translation
 - o Broadcasting
 - o The Record
 - o Secretariats
 - o Public Information
- IT and technical equipment matters
- Catering Facilities
- Stationery

- Service for pay and expenses

- Any other business

4. Main Issues

4.1 During the year, the Committee considered issues as diverse as guidance on the use of stationery and resources and provision of a cash machine within the Assembly building in the Bay. Some of the key items discussed were:

Performance Standards

4.2 An important function of the House Committee is to advise on the views of Members in respect of the efficiency and quality of services provided by the office of the Presiding Officer and generally for Assembly Members and the public.

4.3 The Committee has monitored the performance of each area of OPO, through scrutiny of the Corporate Plan performance indicators. It also provided advice on how the Indicators could be improved to provide the best source of statistical information on performance.

Survey of Members and Support Staff

4.4 To further ensure that the services provided by the Office of the Presiding Officer were meeting the needs of Members and their staff, a survey was conducted. Members of the House Committee were invited to comment on the proposed survey, and provide advice on its content and structure. They noted feedback and endorsed an action plan, which it is proposed will continue to be monitored by the House Committee.

Smoking Policy

4.5 The Committee was actively involved in bringing forward a revision to the smoking policy for the Assembly Building in the Bay, and the creation of a smoking facility. Following a survey of staff and Members in Cardiff Bay, arrangements were made for a room to be provided in February. This has recently been refurbished and re-opened.

IT Support

4.6 The Committee has considered the arrangements for the support of the IS/IT systems for Members and their staff and proposed a number of improvements in consultation with Business and Information Systems division.

Pierhead

4.7 Members of the Committee have played a role in the consideration of proposals for the development of the Pierhead Building as the new Education and Visitor Centre.

4.8 The Committee was consulted on the proposals at an early stage, and was invited to bring forward the views of colleagues and in its June meeting the Committee was given a presentation on the internal design of the development, which provided useful discussion.

Guidance

4.9 The Committee has been consulted by the Presiding Officer on a wide range of draft Assembly Guidance, including IT Housekeeping, use of Conference/Meeting rooms and Video conferencing facilities. The Committee was particularly involved in reviewing the Guidance on the use of stationery and resources, including the appropriate use of facilities.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Under its Terms of Reference, the Committee shall cease to exist on 5 October 2000, which is the first anniversary of its initial meeting, unless a case is made for its continuation. The Committee has been informed that proposals are being prepared for establishing the House Committee within Standing Orders.

5.2 The Chair and members of the committee have reviewed the way in which the Committee has worked. They concluded that in its first year the Committee has achieved a fruitful dialogue and addressed and influenced a number of important issues but that it is appropriate for a revised committee with a stronger role to be established.

HOUSE COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 2000

ANNEX

Terms of Reference

The House Committee shall:

- advise the Presiding Officer on the views of Members in respect of the efficiency and

quality of services provided through the Office of the Presiding Officer and generally for Assembly Members and the public;

- consider monitoring reports submitted to it in respect of such services;
- make such advice to the Assembly as it sees fit on the standards of accommodation, services and equipment provided to Members and on the services to the public;
- report to the Assembly at least once a year.

Membership

The Assembly shall elect to the Committee one Member from each political group in the Assembly, together with another Member to chair it. If a Member other than the Deputy Presiding Officer is elected to chair the Committee, the Deputy Presiding Officer shall be entitled to attend meetings of the Committee.

A member of the Committee may, having given advance notice to the Chair, be represented at the meeting of the committee by another member from the same political group who has been identified in advance. The nominated representative may participate in the meeting of the Committee in all respects as if he or she was a member of it.

If the Deputy Presiding Officer has been elected to chair the Committee, but his or her absence from a particular meeting is unavoidable, he or she will nominate the Assembly Business Secretary, or a member of the Panel of Chairs of the Subject Committees, to chair the meeting, failing which the Presiding Officer shall nominate an individual from the panel. Where any member not being a member of the Committee chairs a meeting following such a nomination, he or she shall be treated for all purposes at the meeting as a member of the Committee.

Meetings

The Committee shall meet at least 3 times in each year. It shall meet in private. Provisions in Standing Order 8 relating to quorums for committees or voting in committees shall not apply to the Committee.

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Duration

The Committee shall continue in existence until the date of the first anniversary of its initial meeting.

