

Statement from the Deputy Presiding Officer, on behalf of the House Committee, in response to recommendations in the Equality of Opportunity Committee's Report "Mainstreaming Equality in the work of the National Assembly".

1. The House Committee welcomes the Equality of Opportunity Committee's report and notes that its remit is to audit the equality arrangements of the Assembly as a whole.
2. A number of the recommendations are specific to the work of the Assembly Parliamentary Service. The House Committee responses to these are set out below:

Chapter 7: Making Progress – People

Recommendation 13 - The Committee recommends:

Further equality training for Assembly Members to enable them to carry out their specific roles be made available. It should be delivered in short bite-sized chunks to fit in with Members' schedules, and consideration should be given to offering short sessions on a Monday or Friday in Members' constituencies. Assembly Members should not be permitted to participate in a public appointments panel unless they have undertaken appropriate equality training.

3. Training for Assembly Members will always have to be voluntary, but the Assembly Parliamentary Service will ensure its availability in a way that is relevant as well as being convenient for Members to attend. Assembly Parliamentary Service's Human Resources team will develop a programme of training for consideration by House Committee in the New Year.
4. The House Committee will review the recommendation that Assembly Members should not participate in a public appointments panel unless they have undertaken appropriate equality training.
5. **Financial Implications:** These are difficult to quantify at this stage but will not be substantial.

Chapter 9: Making Progress – Monitoring and Evaluation

Recommendation 26 - The Committee recommends that:

Other Assembly committees should submit their strategic forward work programmes to the Equality of Opportunity Committee. The Equality of Opportunity Committee will consider whether the forward work programme pays due regard to equality and comment as appropriate. Further, that each subject committee annual report should contain a section setting out how their activity

over the previous year has complied with the equality duty in Section 120 of the Government of Wales Act.

6. Subject Committees' Forward Work Programmes have been submitted to the Equality of Opportunity Committee as set out in the response to Recommendation 27 below.
7. **Financial Implications:** None.

Recommendation 27 - The Committee recommends that:

A simple checklist of questions, based on the examples in the toolkit advocated in recommendation 23, should be prepared for committees to use. This checklist should be drawn up in consultation with the Equality of Opportunity Committee's Standing Invitees.

8. The Panel of Chairs has considered Mainstreaming Equality on two occasions and has requested further equality guidance to assist in the handling of equality within their Forward Work Programmes. The Assembly Parliamentary Service will be developing its own guidance specifically for use by Committees, and is taking forward this recommendation in consultation with the Equality of Opportunity Committee's Standing Invitees. The Standing Invitees have been invited to attend the Panel of Chairs meeting on 25 January 2005 to discuss with the Panel ways in which equality issues should be addressed in formulating Forward Work Programmes and Committees' Annual Reports.
9. The House Committee also has the following comments on recommendations for which the responsibility to respond rests with the Welsh Assembly Government but which have implications for the Assembly Parliamentary Service.

Chapter 2: Terms of Reference and Definitions

Recommendation 1 - The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly adopts the definition of mainstreaming set out below:

"Mainstreaming' equality is about the integration of respect for diversity and equality of opportunity principles, strategies and practices into the every day work of the Assembly and other public bodies. It means that equality issues should be included from the outset as an integral part of the policy-making and service delivery process and the achievement of equality should inform all aspects of the work of every individual within an organisation. The success of mainstreaming should be measured by evaluating whether inequalities have been reduced."

10. The House Committee accepts this recommendation.

11. **Financial Implications:** Not possible to quantify

Chapter 6: Making Progress – Strategy and Leadership

Recommendation 4 - The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly should continue to seek to set an example for the public sector in Wales on equality issues, but that where the Assembly is not leading the way, it should seek best practice from across the public sector and encourage other public bodies to match the standard of the best.

12. The Assembly Parliamentary Service will be represented on the Welsh Assembly Government's Task and Finish Group, which will consider this and other recommendations, for discussions on issues that affect the Assembly Parliamentary Service.

13. **Financial Implications:** There may be some costs associated with promotion activities but these are not likely to be significant.

Recommendation 5 - The Committee recommends that:

All Assembly Government Ministers should ensure that action is taken within their portfolios to ensure that equality is mainstreamed in all the policy areas they are responsible for.

14. The Equality of Opportunity Committee and Subject Committees will scrutinise Ministers on this aspect of their portfolios. The Assembly Parliamentary Service internal guidance to Clerks, Chairs and Members will be reviewed by officials to ensure that this duty is given due prominence.

15. **Financial Implications:** None.

Chapter 7: Making Progress – People

Recommendation 7 - The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly ensures that the new Human Resources IT system is able to produce authoritative data regarding the make up of Assembly staff.

16. The Assembly Parliamentary Service will promote use of the new Human Resources IT system to ensure the data held is comprehensive and can be used to monitor the effectiveness of relevant Human Resources policies.

17. **Financial Implications:** None.

Recommendation 8 - The Committee recommends that:

The Permanent Secretary ensures that the recruitment strategy is agreed and put in place as soon as possible. We further recommend that the Permanent Secretary and Bernard Galton, the recently appointed Assembly Human Resources Director, present the strategy to us for consideration and discuss their priorities for increasing diversity in the levels within the Assembly workforce and promoting equality of opportunity.

18. The Assembly Parliamentary Services' Human Resources team will monitor recruitment statistics and make them publicly available on an annual basis. At its February meeting House Committee will consider the Welsh Assembly Government's Attachment Protocol – a recruitment policy designed to bring about the merger of the ASPBs into the National Assembly for Wales – and whether to implement it for Assembly Parliamentary Service posts.

19. **Financial Implications:** None.

Recommendation 11 - The Committee recommends that:

Training regarding equality issues should continue to form a key part of the Assembly's induction programme for staff. An ongoing programme of specific equality training should be rolled out. The training should be subject to regular evaluation and review.

20. The Assembly Parliamentary Service's Human Resources team will monitor and review the new induction training programme for all new Assembly Parliamentary Service staff to ensure that it raises awareness of equality issues and enables staff to promote equality and meet statutory equality obligations.

21. Ongoing, specific equality training tailored to individual staff roles and responsibilities is identified and addressed through the performance management system in place in the Assembly Parliamentary Service.

22. **Financial Implications:** Already included in training budgets.

Chapter 8: Making Progress – Practical Action, Levers Guidance and Advice

Recommendation 14 - The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly Government clarifies the role of the Equality Policy Unit, in particular who it reports to and provides advice to. That clarification should ensure that all Ministers, as well as the corporate Assembly and Committees, have access to the highest quality equality advice. We also recommend that every effort be made to ensure that the Unit is fully staffed and that the staff have the appropriate expertise and training.

23. The Assembly Parliamentary Service will explore the option of identifying an Equality champion.

24. **Financial Implications:** Any expenditure will be contained in existing running costs.

Recommendation 15 - The Committee recommends that:

Each Assembly Division should give one person, at a sufficiently senior level, responsibility for dealing with equality issues across the Division's work. There should be Group level equality boards made up of the representatives from each Division.

25. Equality is considered as a standing item at Assembly Parliamentary Service's Senior Management meetings. This allows existing Assembly Parliamentary Service equality mechanisms to be reviewed.

26. **Financial Implications:** None.

Recommendation 16 - The Committee recommends that:

A thorough review of all existing Assembly guidance on equality issues, is conducted as part of the development of an overall strategy. In the light of the review the guidance should be revised, if appropriate, and then widely publicised to staff. The guidance on Committee papers and Ministerial submissions should also be revised to make consideration of the implications for equality of opportunity a requirement.

27. The Assembly Parliamentary Service will work with the Welsh Assembly Government officials on any review of guidance relating to committee papers produced by the Welsh Assembly Government.

28. **Financial Implications:** The work for Assembly Parliamentary Service will be contained within existing running costs.

Recommendation 17 - The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly's consultation guidance is reviewed to ensure that it is firmly based on equality of opportunity principles and addresses the need to engage the diversity of the public in Wales.

Recommendation 18 - The Committee recommends that:

In conducting consultation, the Assembly should seek to engage as wide a range of individuals and organisations as possible. Where an issue has particular relevance to a minority or disadvantaged group action must be taken to ensure that their views are solicited and acted on. In some cases capacity building in that community may be required to facilitate their engagement in the process.

29. Members' Research and Committee Service is already committed to reviewing its consultation process in respect of race relations. This will be extended to include other equality of opportunity strands. Results of this process will be made available to other Assembly Parliamentary Service Divisions and to committees. The advice of the Equality of Opportunity Committee's Standing Invitees will also be sought - see response to recommendation 27 in paragraph 8

30. **Financial Implications:** Not likely to be significant.

Chapter 9: Making Progress – Monitoring and Evaluation

Recommendation 24 - The Committee recommends that:

The Assembly's annual report on equality should focus on reporting on the objectives set in the equality strategy. It should include reports from individual Ministers on what has been achieved within their portfolio, a report from the House Committee on activity by the corporate Assembly and reports on corporate policies such as Human Resources.

31. House Committee will consider the advice of the Mainstreaming Task and Finish Group and will consider whether it wishes to adopt a common approach to reporting in the future.

32. **Financial Implications:** Not known, but unlikely to be such that they cannot be contained within existing Assembly Parliamentary Services' allocations.