

REPORT TO THE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITYDATE: 8th February 2010

REFERENCE:

SUBJECT: Consultation on Scrutiny and Political Structures**SUMMARY:**

A consultation document has been received from the Welsh Assembly Government on proposals to further develop the scrutiny function as a vital part of accountability and good governance in local authorities and the wider public sector.

Whilst most of the proposals relate to local authorities, some of the proposals impact on Fire & Rescue Authorities and these are highlighted in the attached report.

OBJECTIVES		IMPLICATIONS	
Trusted & Respect	√	Operational Risk Management	√
More than Emergencies	√	Community Risk Reduction	√
Saving Lives, Protecting Communities	√	Training & Development	√
Managing within Budget	√	Civil Contingencies	√
Improving Efficiency	√	Finance & Procurement	√
Resources to Priorities	√	H.R.	√
Alternative Resources	√	ICT	√
Managing People	√	CCMS	√
Integrated Management Planning	√	Transport	√
Partnership Working	√	Health & Safety	√
Effective & Empowered People	√	Premises	√
		Sustainability & Environment	√
		Welsh Language	√
		Legal	√
		Governance	√
		Equality & Diversity	

COMMENTS/OBSERVATIONS ON THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES/IMPLICATIONS:**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Authority considers the Consultation document and makes representations as detailed in the attached report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT:

Consultation document on Scrutiny and Political Structures issued by Welsh Assembly Government

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REPORT TO FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY, 8TH FEBRUARY 2010

ON

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ISSUED BY WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT - SCRUTINY AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

1. Background

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 received Royal Assent in November 2009. It includes provisions which confer on the National Assembly legislative competence with respect to scrutiny and governance matters in local government. The policy proposals set out in this consultation document (appendix 1 to this report) flow from that competence and would be included in an Assembly Measure which the Assembly Government hopes to introduce to the Assembly in 2010.

The consultation document seeks comments upon three broad local government policy areas, namely the future development of scrutiny; a review of political structures and council organisation; and strengthening the links with the community. Each of these areas are considered in turn in the report and in particular their impact on the Fire & Rescue Service

2. Future Development of Scrutiny

2.1 Joint Scrutiny Committees

The proposals do not directly apply to Fire & Rescue Authorities.

2.2 Co-option of persons other than Councillors

The Authority recognises the benefits of the expertise and challenge that can be provided by co-opted members and it is interesting to note that Fire and Rescue Authorities' still do not have explicit ability to co-opt members.

The Authority notes that the consultation does not make any proposals about co-opted members to Fire and Rescue Authority scrutiny committees and therefore offers no comment in relation to co-opted members to local authority scrutiny committees.

2.3 Scrutiny beyond the functions of a local authority

Of particular concern to the Authority in this section is the absence of any details of the public services the local authorities would be able to scrutinise and "require" information and/or attendance from at a meeting. This has created some difficulty in making a concise response to this section as different scenarios have had to be considered.

The Fire Authority is particularly concerned that Fire and Rescue Authorities should NOT be included within the list of public services that local authorities can scrutinise under these proposals. It is asserted that this would be inappropriate for the following reasons:

- The Fire and Rescue Authority is comprised of Councillor representatives from the six constituent local authorities that make up the Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.

- Although not required to do so by statute, the Authority has set up a formal scrutiny structure as a matter of good practice.
- If the Fire & Rescue Service was to be included in the schedule of “devolved public services” for which local authorities would have responsibility for scrutiny then there is the potential for this Fire and Rescue Authority and Service being subject to 6 separate scrutiny committees. It is highly likely that each would have different terms of reference, reporting requirements etc. leading to unnecessary complexity and bureaucracy for those servicing the committees.
- The prospect of scrutiny being undertaken by members not familiar with the Fire and Rescue Service would result in an inefficient use of resources (both officer and member time)
- In a similar manner, servicing up to 6 scrutiny committees would result in an inefficient use of resources (officer and member time) with again the potential for the proposed scrutiny committees considering the same or similar issues at differing times throughout the year.
- Additionally, the servicing of such committees would provide an additional burden for Fire and Rescue Authorities.

2.4 Health Scrutiny

The proposals do not directly apply to Fire & Rescue Authorities

2.5 Imposition of group discipline in scrutiny committees

The proposals do not directly apply to Fire & Rescue Authorities

2.6 Allocation of Scrutiny Chairs

The proposals do not directly apply to Fire & Rescue Authorities

2.7 Forward Planning

As a matter of good practice, the Fire and Rescue Authority already utilises a forward work programme for its scrutiny committee and supports this proposal.

2.8 Officer Support for Scrutiny

The proposal to provide, adequate and independent officer support for scrutiny does not appear to apply directly to Fire & Rescue Authorities. In a single service authority the benefits of such a proposal would not seem to be cost effective.

2.9 Reference back of executive decisions

The proposals do not directly apply to Fire & Rescue Authorities as they do not operate under executive arrangements.

3. Review of Political Structures and Council Organisations

Options for Political Structures
 Functions & Responsibilities
 Delegation of Functions
 Forward Planning

None of the proposals relating to the above apply directly to Fire & Rescue Authorities

Audit Committees

Whilst the proposal does not apply directly to Fire & Rescue Authorities, the establishment of an Audit Committee as a statutory requirement is supported, the Authority already having established such a Committee. As noted in 2.2. the Authority recognises the benefits of the expertise and challenge that can be provided by co-opted members. The proposal to appoint an independent Chair and a maximum of one third of lay appointees would however not be supported in a Fire & Rescue Authority context given that membership of such an Authority's Audit Committee is made up of members representing its six constituent authorities.

4. Strengthening the links within the Community

Duty to consult

Councillor / community calls for action

Promotion of democracy and petitions

None of these apply directly to Fire & Rescue Authorities, it being noted that there will be further consultation on guidance to be issued on the promotion of democracy and petitions, whilst there will be separate consultations as to whether Fire & Rescue Authorities (along with Community Councils and National Park Authorities) should be subject to petition schemes. The Authority would reserve any comments on such issue until that consultation document is published.

5. Conclusion & Recommendations

Whilst the majority of the proposals contained within the consultation document relate to unitary authorities, there are issues which are relevant to Fire & Rescue Authorities as indicated in the body of the report and on which representations should be made.



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

CONSULTATION ON SCRUTINY AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

16/12/09 – 17/03/10

Background

The Local Government Act 2000 (“the 2000 Act”) introduced executive models, overview and scrutiny committees, provision for the discharge of functions and also enabled principal authorities to opt out of executive models if they wished and adopt alternative arrangements, known in Wales as the Fourth Option (after the two mayoral options and the leader/cabinet model).

Although the Assembly was given limited powers to make secondary legislation in relation to certain issues, in general there was little room to vary the basic structures introduced through the 2000 Act. The main areas in which secondary legislative powers (now vested in the Welsh Ministers) are already available, are:

- To create an additional executive model
- To enable executives to arrange for the discharge of their functions to area committees, joint committees or to another authority
- To enable authorities to change their political structures
- To allow local authorities to opt for “alternative” (non-executive) arrangements, and
- How to deal with petitions for an elected mayor.

We have now entered an era in Wales, however, where our path for the development of public service diverges somewhat from that operating in England; the introduction of the Making the Connections agenda, the Beecham review, Local Service Boards and regional cooperation amongst local authorities. On top of this, the Government of Wales Act 2006 gives the National Assembly for Wales (“the Assembly”) the power to pass legislation known as Assembly Measures in relation to those “matters” (listed in “fields” in Part 1 of Schedule 5) which are within the Assembly’s legislative competence.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (“the 2009 Act”) includes provisions which confer on the National Assembly legislative competence with respect to scrutiny and governance matters in local government.. The policy proposals set out in this consultation document flow from that competence

and would be included in an Assembly Measure which the Assembly Government intends to introduce to the Assembly in 2010.

Future development of scrutiny

1. Joint scrutiny committees

The creation of Local Service Boards and regional partnership boards of local authorities, as well as budget constraints and the need for efficiencies have changed the strategic situation facing local government. This period is likely to be characterized by an increase in services being delivered through partnerships of two or more local authorities or by local authorities collaborating with other organisations within the public sector.

Current legislation requires each principal council to operate overview and scrutiny committees, with powers to scrutinise and develop policies in relation to their own authority's functions, including those of the executive, as well as in relation to social, environmental and economic issues affecting their area. However, there are no legislative provisions which enable the creation of joint scrutiny committees with other local authorities, even though there have been occasional instances of these being established on a short-term, informal, basis. Such joint committees offer the advantage of reviewing services which span county boundaries but lack any teeth in relation to them.

The Assembly Government proposes that local authorities should be able to create joint scrutiny committees with one or more local authorities. Such joint committees would have similar powers to single-authority scrutiny committees in relation to each authority involved in its membership.

The nominations for membership of joint committees from each constituent authority should reflect political balance within that authority and the same number of members should be nominated by each authority. The process for deciding on the appointment of the chairs and vice-chair posts should be agreed between constituent authorities.

We propose that Welsh local authorities should be able to form joint scrutiny committees with neighbouring English authorities. However, the National Assembly cannot legislate for English local government, so their participation in such a body would be dependent on any legal constraints placed upon them.

2. Co-option of persons other than councillors

Scrutiny can be strengthened by co-opting expert advisers, citizens' representatives or people from other outside bodies such as other public service deliverers or third sector organisations. This could enhance the authority of local authority scrutiny in the eyes of other bodies, their users and citizens more generally. At present, other than in limited specific circumstances, no co-optee can vote. The exception is the position of parent governors and church representatives who sit as voting members of education scrutiny committees (see also paragraph below on crime and disorder scrutiny committees). The Assembly Government wishes to advance the position of co-optees

whilst still recognising the unique authority of the locally elected members to represent their constituents.

The Assembly Government proposes that local authorities be enabled to co-opt people to scrutiny committees other than elected councillors and allow them voting powers. Local authorities would be able to decide on the appropriateness of such a move but the Welsh Ministers should have a fallback power to direct authorities to co-opt if felt necessary to do so (for instance, if this seemed necessary to ensure the cooperation of outside public bodies).

The total number of co-optees on a scrutiny committee should not outnumber the elected members on that committee, although such a provision could be disapplied for scrutiny sub-committees, so that a number of co-options could be made without requiring a regard for balance in the elected members.

Any voting co-optees are to be treated as being members of the authority and subject to the members' code of conduct. They should have the same power as elected members to propose agenda items, including those which "call-in" executive decisions. Best practice in relation to co-option will be included in guidance.

3. Scrutiny beyond the functions of a local authority

Currently, scrutiny committees have power under Section 21 of the 2000 Act 'to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area'. They are not, therefore, confined to examining local authority functions but they have no statutory powers to require cooperation from bodies outside the authority.

If local authority scrutiny committees are to operate successfully in the era of local service boards, shared services etc, they will need to relate to organisations other than their own authority. At present, scrutiny committees can require executive members and officers of their own authority to attend their proceedings but only invite others from outside their authorities.

The Assembly Government intends to strengthen provisions so that there be a requirement on local authorities that they take responsibility for scrutinising the delivery of public services in their area (but see below with respect to Health). Scrutiny committees would be able to require representatives of deliverers of devolved public services to provide information and/or to attend when invited to do so. Any such organisations would have to provide an explanation to the scrutiny chair in the event of a refusal to attend. The bodies which would be subject to scrutiny would be listed in regulations to be made by Welsh Ministers prior to the measure coming into force.

It should be noted that from October 2009, local authorities need to establish crime and disorder scrutiny committees, under the provisions of sections 19 and 20 of the

Police and Justice Act 2006. These have the responsibility for scrutinising the work of the local community safety partnership (CSP) and its constituent bodies (with respect to their crime and disorder roles). Under Home Office regulations, these committees will be able to co-opt representatives from the CSP organisations and give them voting rights. The committees will also be able to require representatives of CSP organisations to attend and/or provide information.

4. Health scrutiny

The National Health Service in Wales has been subject to significant reform in the recent period, which is still underway. Consideration is being given to the future role of Community Health Councils (CHCs) and their relationship with the new Local Health Boards (LHBs). At the time of writing, their configuration is undecided. Whereas in England, local authorities have had a responsibility to scrutinise the NHS in their area since 2003, that has not been the case in Wales, partly because of the continued existence of CHCs (abolished in England). However, local authorities work closely with LHBs in the preparation of Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategies and Children and Young People's Plans and they have a close interest in the NHS and its inter-relationship with social services provision. They are also vital partners within Local Service Boards.

A number of initiatives have already been taken to improve scrutiny processes in this field. A pilot exercise, supported by the Assembly Government's Scrutiny Development Fund, is under way in Carmarthenshire whereby the county council and CHC are developing joint scrutiny of health and social services and Cardiff City Council have established a pilot scrutiny panel for their LSB which involves representatives from health and other bodies, in a voting capacity, to examine to work of the LSB.

The Assembly Government wishes to encourage local authorities, CHCs and LHBs to take account of these experiments and any others which may develop. Legislative steps in relation to scrutiny in this area will be revisited following a review of these projects, allowing time for the health restructuring to bed in and for relationship between CHCs and local authority scrutiny to be tested.

5. Imposition of group discipline in scrutiny committees

Turning to the rules under which scrutiny committees currently operate, it has been suggested that "whipping" can undermine effective scrutiny. Current guidance already emphasises that the party whip should not be used in the business of overview and scrutiny committees.

Scrutiny is viewed as an arena in which policy examination and review should be as independent as possible. Whipping does not sit easily with this. Scrutiny is not a decision-making process and whipping could stifle fully independent scrutiny. Abolishing whipping would still allow members of scrutiny committees to discuss their voting intentions and to decide, if they wished, to vote along party/group lines.

The Assembly Government proposes that political groups should be prevented from imposing voting instructions on members of a scrutiny committee and from imposing discipline on a member of a scrutiny committee as a result of their voting in a particular fashion.

6. Allocation of scrutiny chairs

A further issue in the operation of independent scrutiny is that some councils have appointed chairs of scrutiny committees who are all members of the same political group(s) as the members of the executive.

This practice can give an impression that scrutiny is not fully independent or that special responsibility allowances paid to chairs of scrutiny committees represented patronage by the ruling leadership.

Scrutiny works most effectively where chairs and members feel free from constraint and able to act effectively as a check and balance to the leadership. Constructive criticism should lead to better policy development.

The Assembly Government proposes that chairs of scrutiny committees should be allocated at least in proportion to the political balance of an authority. This will not prevent an authority from allocating a greater proportion of chairs to members of political groups outside the executive if they see fit. Nor would it prevent an authority from avoiding this requirement, provided there was unanimity in support of this. Committee vice-chairs should be decided upon by the membership of the committee.

In the event of a political group refusing to take up its allocation of chairs, the post should be offered to another political group not represented in the executive or, in the absence of such, be decided upon by the committee itself.

7. Forward planning

Many authorities already operate scrutiny in a way which is well planned and has a healthy balance between the scrutiny and policy development role. However, the 2007 research report by CRG Research on “The Role and Functions of Elected Members” found that examples also existed of scrutiny committees being “swamped” with paperwork and ploughing through reams of executive decisions. It is preferable if scrutiny committees organise their work in a planned way.

It is not a requirement that scrutiny committees consider every decision made by cabinet. It can be far more productive for them to take longer considering policy areas in greater detail. The public should also have the opportunity of knowing when particular policy areas are being reviewed and follow the deliberations of the scrutiny committee if they wish.

We propose that scrutiny committees should be required to produce forward work plans and publish them on their council web pages. In drawing up their forward plans, committees would be obliged to have regard to the cabinet

forward plan, their authority’s joint risk assessment, local delivery agreement and (when existent) outcome agreements.

8. Officer support for scrutiny

If scrutiny is to operate effectively, it must be provided with adequate officer support. This support should be discreet and should be overseen by an officer with sufficient seniority to ensure that scrutiny is able to punch its weight within the officer structure. Failure to provide reasonable levels of officer support leads to inadequate research and administration. It is noticeable that inadequate scrutiny is usually highlighted in reports by regulators/inspectors where service delivery failure threatens.

The Assembly Government proposes to place a requirement on local authorities to provide adequate, independent officer support for scrutiny and to have regard to any guidance produced by the Assembly Government in relation to this matter. Such support could be shared between different authorities. We do not propose to follow the route of the statutory scrutiny officer, as introduced for England, but would welcome views on this matter.

9. Reference back of executive decisions

The National Assembly’s Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee in its report “Inquiry into Local Government Scrutiny and Overview Arrangements” recommended that “the Assembly Government should strengthen and clarify the guidance on call-ins with a strong predisposition towards allowing call-ins in all circumstances except where there are clear exceptional reasons for doing otherwise”. The term “call-in” refers to the power of scrutiny committees to consider an executive decision which has been made but not implemented and to ask the executive to reconsider.

The Assembly Government supports the general point of the Health, Wellbeing and Local Government Committee and intends to address it within statutory guidance. This will include reference to safeguards to deal with vexatious or repetitive attempts at call-ins.

Review of political structures and council organisation

10. Options for political structures

We have now had more than 7 years of formal experience of the political structures introduced through the Local Government Act 2000. There has been little support for mayoral models in Wales and none expressed for the option of elected mayor plus council manager, recently removed as an option in England by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Fourth Option (“alternative arrangements”) has operated in three councils since the introduction of the option in 2002. Although, as yet, no formal approach has been made to the Assembly Government by any of the three councils to change, the structure has not always been comfortable. Difficulties have arisen at various times in

relation to the creation of coherent leaderships, the relationship between the board and full council and the relationship between boards and area committees. The Assembly Government is not convinced that the Fourth Option has clearly demonstrated an improvement in transparency and effectiveness and it seeks to provide for the possibility of executive models being made sufficiently flexible to suit all principal councils. For instance, the current restrictions on the maximum size of area committees under executive arrangements, (that they must not represent more than 40 percent of either the area or the populations of an area) could be revisited.

The Assembly Government proposes to remove the “mayor and council manager” option. We will make it easier for local authorities to change their political models (subject to this not happening more than once every four years. All political models will need to include a leader or elected mayor plus a cabinet/executive, though this may include the possibility of a politically balanced cabinet. (Note: In this case, the executive would reflect the balance immediately following the four-yearly full council elections and be in place for the full term of the council)

It is proposed to introduce greater flexibility in the rules governing the establishment of area committees compared to existing executive models.

11. Functions and responsibilities

At present, complex regulations¹ specify the statutory functions of local authorities which must not, or may not, be the responsibility of executives or boards. The general principle is that core council functions should be the responsibility of the executive or board and responsibility for functions should also be transparent.

The Assembly Government intends to simplify the current system, so that “fields” of activity would be stipulated which would not be appropriate for executive responsibility, allowing authorities themselves to decide on fine detail and allowing more functions to be subject to local choice. Welsh Ministers would have a fall-back power of direction in relation to this matter.

12. Delegation of functions

The introduction of Local Service Boards opens the way by which decisions might be reached by those boards. There are already arrangements available which allow local authorities to form joint committees with other local authorities and delegate decision-making functions to those committees. The same does not apply, however, to committees formed with other public bodies which are not county or county borough councils.

It is proposed that local authorities will be able to delegate decision-making powers to executive members representing them on Local Service Boards or other partnerships. Any such decisions will need to be recorded and published in the same way as other executive decisions.

¹ The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Functions and Responsibilities) (Wales) Regulations 2007
The Local Authorities (Alternative Arrangements) (Wales) Regulations 2007

13. Forward planning

The research report on the Role and Functions of Elected Members recommended that executives should be obliged to publish forward plans of their work programme for the period ahead. This would enable the more efficient organisation of scrutiny as well as enabling greater public transparency.

The Assembly Government proposes to make it a requirement that executives should publish forward plans on their websites. These should be rolling documents covering a period of six months ahead and subject to quarterly update. Guidance would make reference to the extent of detail required.

14. Audit committees

The Assembly Government has endorsed CIPFA's 2005 guidance to local authorities on the establishment of audit committees, as distinct bodies from the executive or scrutiny function. This recognises the complexity of local authorities as multi-million pound service delivery organisations. Audit committees are seen as an essential check on financial propriety and may also identify opportunities for efficiencies.

We propose to make the establishment of audit committees a requirement and that the arrangements for appointment of members should be a function of the full council. It is proposed that the Chair of the audit committee be a lay person, as in the case of standards committees, and that a maximum of one third of the membership also be lay appointees.

15. Welsh Ministers' powers

The Welsh Ministers' powers of intervention in the operation of a local authority are largely confined to instances where there is a threat to the delivery of essential public services. There are very limited powers in the event of political impasse or breakdown.

There may be circumstances in which political impasse prevents the authority from making decisions or otherwise making effective governance possible.

It is proposed that Welsh Ministers be empowered to intervene in the operation of a local authority when there is an actual or perceived threat to the effective discharge of functions, as identified within a report of an inspector/regulator.

Strengthening the links with the Community

16. Duty to consult

Following the recommendation of "Beyond Boundaries: Citizen-Centred Local Services for Wales" to develop citizen-centred scrutiny, a number of options for involving the citizen in the scrutiny process have been discussed and piloted in

various councils. Local authorities are already under obligations to consult as part of the development of their strategic plans.

It is proposed that scrutiny committees should be placed under an obligation to provide the public an opportunity to contribute to policy reviews by scrutiny committees.

17. Councillor/community calls for action

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced the provisions necessary for the operation of community, or councillor, calls for action (CCfAs) in England.

A further form of CCfA was introduced for the scrutiny of crime and disorder matters, under the provisions of sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 in April 2009 for England and in October 2009 for Wales. In essence, CCfAs under the Police and Justice Act 2006 empower local communities and local councillors. Should a local community feel they have a crime and disorder problem which falls within the responsibility of their local authority, they may raise it with their local member. The local member could be empowered, through a delegation of budgets and responsibility, to remedy the problem themselves if practical to do so. If that is not practical, he could ensure that the matter was discussed at the relevant scrutiny committee, who, in turn, could require the executive/board to investigate and produce a report on the matter. This would be fed back to the community through the local member.

The Assembly Government proposes to introduce the provisions enabling CCfAs in policy areas beyond that of crime and disorder. Such provisions would be supported by guidance as to how to deal with frivolous or repetitive bids. Local authorities would be empowered to provide for functions and budgets to be delegated to councillors for use within their local community area.

18. Promotion of democracy and petitions

The 2009 Act includes provisions in relation to Petitions and the Promotion of Democracy. It imposes duties on local authorities to promote understanding of the opportunities for members of the public to influence the work of local authorities and other local public bodies. The provisions apply to England and Wales but Welsh Ministers have discretion as to when they are commenced in Wales.

In brief, the provisions place a duty on local authorities to promote understanding of their functions, their democratic arrangements and how members of the public can take part and what taking part is likely to involve.

In addition, there is a duty on principal local authorities to promote understanding of public bodies (referred to as ‘connected authorities’) which cover the authority’s area, explaining what they do and their democratic arrangements, and how members of the public can take part and what this is likely to involve. Allied to this is a duty to promote understanding among local people of courts boards, independent monitoring boards for prisons and immigration removal centres, Youth Offending Teams and lay justices and how local people might play a role in these.

The 2009 Act places duties on councils in relation to electronic petitions signed by those who live, work or study in the local area. They must make, publicise and comply with a scheme for handling both paper and electronic petitions, so that local decision-making about petitions is more transparent, by requiring them to publicly respond to petitions which meet certain criteria.

The provisions give an automatic right for the matter raised in a petition to be debated by the full council if more than a specified number of people have signed it. Welsh Ministers have the power to issue guidance as to the threshold figure which is appropriate and to specify by order a threshold figure applicable to all principal authorities, or to direct a principal authority to amend its petitions scheme, including the threshold specified in it.

Under the 2009 Act, certain senior council officers could, as a result of a petition, be called to account at a scrutiny meeting, though councils could determine which of their officers are liable to be called to account.

The Welsh Ministers have power to issue guidance in relation to the petition function. This includes a power to create a model petitions scheme which authorities will be able to adopt and a power to direct an individual authority to amend its petition scheme.

The Assembly Government proposes to commence these provisions so as to come into force at the same time as provisions in the Assembly Measure. We will consult on guidance on the promotion of democracy and on petitions. We will also consult on whether other local authorities (community councils, national parks, fire and rescue authorities) should be subject to petition schemes.