

Agenda – Local Government and Housing Committee

Meeting Venue:

For further information contact:

Video Conference via Zoom

Naomi Stocks

Meeting date: 15 July 2021

Committee Clerk

Meeting time: 13.00

0300 200 6565

SeneddHousing@senedd.wales

Pre-meeting (13.00 – 13.30)

- 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**
- 2 Committee remit**
(13.30 – 13.35) (Pages 1 – 4)
- 3 Papers to note** (Page 5)
 - 3.1 Fifth Senedd Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee legacy report**
(Pages 6 – 26)
 - 3.2 Fifth Senedd Chairs' Forum legacy report**
(Pages 27 – 46)
 - 3.3 Letter from Llamau in relation to homelessness**
(Page 47)
 - 3.4 Letter from the Auditor General for Wales in relation to the work of Audit Wales**
(Pages 48 – 49)
 - 3.5 Letter from the Llywydd in relation to Committee timetables**
(Pages 50 – 52)



- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**

- 5 Consideration of the Committee's procedures and ways of working**
(13.35 – 14.00) (Pages 53 – 62)

- 6 Consideration of the strategic approach to the Committee's remit**
(14.00 – 14.15) (Pages 63 – 75)

- 7 Consideration of early Committee activity**
(14.15 – 15.00) (Pages 76 – 78)

Local Government and Housing Committee remit

15 July 2021

Purpose

1. The paper sets out the remit and responsibilities of the Local Government and Housing Committee.

Recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to note its remit.

Background

3. The rules and procedures of the Senedd are laid out in Standing Orders. Standing Order 16.1 requires the Senedd to establish committees with power within their remit to:

"(i) examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the government and associated public bodies;

(ii) examine legislation;

(iii) undertake other functions specified in Standing Orders; and

(iv) consider any matter affecting Wales."

4. In doing this, the Business Committee has to ensure that every area of responsibility of the Welsh Government and associated public bodies, and all matters relating to the legislative competence of the Senedd and functions of the Welsh Ministers and of the Counsel General, are subject to committee scrutiny.

Committee remit

5. The remit of this Committee, as agreed by the Senedd on 23 June 2021, is:



"to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy matters, encompassing (but not restricted to): local government, communities, and housing."

In their report on title and remits of committees, the Business Committee stated that they have decided to make remits "broad" and that they have decided "not to provide a list of subjects attached to each committee."¹ However, to help the Committee understand the remit, an indicative list of Ministerial responsibilities which sit within the remit is included in Annex 1.

¹ Business Committee, Sixth Senedd Committees Titles and Remits, June 2021, paragraph 11

Annex 1 – Ministerial responsibilities covered by the Committee

Minister for Climate Change

- The housing and housing-related activities of Local Authorities and housing associations, including housing management and the allocation of social and affordable housing
- Supply and quality of market, social and affordable housing
- Second Homes
- Homelessness and housing advice
- Matters relating to housing provided by the private rented sector, including regulation of registered social landlords
- Aids and adaptations, including Disabled Facilities Grants and Physical Adaptation Grants
- The provision of housing-related support (but not the payment of Housing Benefit)
- The regulation of commercial tenancies let by Local Authorities

Minister for Finance and Local Government

- Structural, democratic, financial and constitutional reform of Local Authorities including co-ordination of regional collaboration models
- The Local Government Partnership Council
- Local Government performance, governance and constitutional matters, scrutiny arrangements, cabinets, elected mayors, the role of councillors, their diversity, conduct and remuneration.
- Local Government electoral arrangements, sponsorship of the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales and the timing of Local Authority elections
- Local Government finance policy including financial reform
- The un-hypothecated funding of Local Authorities and Policy and Crime Commissioners through the Local Government revenue and capital settlements

- Financial governance, financing and accounting relating to Local Government
- Public Service Boards
- Public libraries
- Local archive services
- Local Government workforce matters
- Academi Wales
- Oversight of audit, inspection and regulation as they relate to public services, including the organisation arrangements for Health Inspectorate Wales and the Care Inspectorate Wales.

Agenda Item 3

Local Government and Housing Committee

15 July 2021 – papers to note cover sheet

Paper no.	Issue	From	Action point
Paper 2	Legacy Report	Fifth Senedd Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee legacy report	To note
Paper 3	Legacy report	Chair's Forum of the Fifth Senedd	To note
Paper 4	Forward work programme	Letter from Llamau in	To note
Paper 8	Forward work programme	Letter from the Auditor General	To note
Paper 9	Establishment and remits of committees	Letter from the Llywydd	To note

Fifth Senedd Legacy Report

March 2021



The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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**Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN**

Tel: **0300 200 6565**

Email: **SeneddCommunities@senedd.wales**

Twitter: **[@SeneddELGC](https://twitter.com/SeneddELGC)**

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Fifth Senedd Legacy Report

March 2021



About the Committee

The Committee was established on 28 June 2016. Its remit can be found at:
www.senedd.wales/SeneddCommunities

Committee Chair:



John Griffiths MS
Welsh Labour

Current Committee membership:



Dawn Bowden MS
Welsh Labour



Huw Irranca-Davies MS
Welsh Labour



Delyth Jewell MS
Plaid Cymru



Laura Anne Jones MS
Welsh Conservatives



Mandy Jones MS
Independent Alliance for Reform
Group

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Chair's foreword

I am proud of the Committee's work over the past five years. We have covered a broad range of issues, both policy and legislation. We have helped push issues up the political agenda, such as our early work looking at the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers, which helped inform the Welsh Government's Nation of Sanctuary – Refugee and Asylum Seeker Plan. We have consistently highlighted the inequality and unfairness still blighting our communities. The lack of equality of opportunity and outcome. The need for a more focused and comprehensive strategy to tackle poverty in Wales. These concerns ran through our work throughout this Senedd term and remain. We have also led the political debate with work looking at devolution of welfare benefits, and prisoner voting. We have shown adaptability to respond to national events, such as our work looking at fire safety in high rise buildings immediately following the horrific events at Grenfell; and over the last year on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our systematic approach to follow up work has meant that throughout the term, we have continued to seek real and meaningful progress to tackle the scourge of rough sleeping; and speed up pace with the implementation of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015. I would encourage all Senedd committees in the next term to prioritise follow-up work as this can be the most effective tool in driving through change.

I would like to thank all the stakeholders and citizens who have helped inform our work. In particular, those citizens who have shared their own lived experience, which has often been challenging, of a range of issues from seeking asylum; rough sleeping; juggling parenting with employment; and most recently the safety of living in high rise buildings. This lived experience really adds an extra layer to our scrutiny, and the recommendations we make for change. And to give my grateful thanks to members of the committee, present and past, together with our dedicated and professional team of committee clerks and researchers for their invaluable service and support.

John Griffiths MS

Committee Chair

1. Committee remit and workload

Our remit is very broad and means we have been responsible for a significant proportion of all legislation considered by the Senedd. We think this should be taken into account when drawing up committee structures and remits in the Sixth Senedd.

- 1.** All Senedd committees in the current term have had very broad remits. However, the breadth of our remit combined with our heavy legislative workload throughout this Senedd, has made it particularly challenging to manage our capacity at particular points during this Senedd term.
- 2.** This was also a challenge for our predecessor Committee in the Fourth Assembly; the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee (“CELG”), whose remit had also included culture, media, sport and the Welsh language. It recommended in its legacy report that a dedicated Communications Committee should be established in the Fifth Assembly.¹ This recommendation was implemented, with the establishment of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee at the outset of the Fifth Assembly. The sport element of the CELG Committee’s remit became part of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.
- 3.** This narrowing of the remit is to be welcomed, but the remit has remained incredibly broad, making it challenging to do full justice to all the areas we cover. This is before we take into account the impact on our work programme of a heavy legislative workload, and Covid-19.

Committee remit:

The Committee was established on 28 June 2016 to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): local government; housing, community regeneration, cohesion and safety; tackling poverty; equality of opportunity and human rights. On 13 November 2019, the Committee’s remit was amended to include the ability to: exercise the non-

¹ [Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, Fourth Assembly Legacy Report, March 2016](#)

budgetary functions set out in Standing Order 18A.2 in relation to accountability and governance of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

- 4.** We highlighted this issue in our response to the Committee on Assembly Electoral Reform who sought our views on the impact of any change of size of the then Assembly on committees.² Much of what we set out in this letter, we still believe is relevant, and should be considered when developing committee structures and remits in the Sixth Senedd. We set out the key points below.
- 5.** When looking at other legislatures across the UK, the Senedd is the only one which combines the equality portfolio with the housing and local government portfolio within the remit of a single committee. The Scottish Parliament is the closest comparator because, as in the current Senedd, its committees undertake both policy and legislative scrutiny. It split these two elements of our portfolio between two committees during the 2016 - 2021 session, the Equalities and Human Rights Committee and the Local Government and Communities Committee. Additionally, other aspects of our work sat with other committees at the Scottish Parliament, for example, during our work on the devolution of benefits, we met with the Social Security Committee.
- 6.** The Northern Ireland Assembly has a similar model, with committees undertaking both policy and legislative scrutiny. Again, our portfolio is split between two committees; Executive (which covers equality and human rights as part of its remit); and Communities (covering housing and local government.)
- 7.** The comparison with Westminster is less direct, as select committees are not responsible for legislative scrutiny for introduced Bills. However, it is worth noting that they also split their policy scrutiny for matters within our remit across two main committees: Housing, Communities and Local Government; and Women and Equalities. There is also an additional committee; the Joint Committee on Human Rights, with membership drawn from across both the Houses of Commons and the Lords.
- 8.** We are aware that at Westminster, there is a Select Committee for each government department, and we note the merits of that approach. However, there are factors which make this more challenging in the Welsh context - primarily because there are no separate Government departments in Wales with separate Permanent Secretaries. The Welsh Government has a single Permanent

² Letter from Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee Chair to Committee on Assembly Electoral Reform Chair, 27 January 2020.

Secretary, whereas in Whitehall, each ministerial department has a Permanent Secretary responsible for the day to day running of the department. The Permanent Secretary is accountable to Parliament for the stewardship of the department's budget and ensuring Value for Money. As ministerial reshuffles can often involve significant changes of responsibility, such a structure means it is more likely that committee structures could end up looking out of date or not reflecting Government structures. However, setting this aside, as a point of principle, we believe it makes more sense to have committee portfolios that more closely reflect ministerial portfolios.

Legislative workload

9. Despite the change in the portfolio of this Committee compared with our predecessor in the Fourth Assembly, the proportion of legislation we have considered is similar; we have scrutinised 27% of all legislation introduced in this Senedd. In total, we have considered 6 out of the 22 Bills introduced. This figure would have been higher if the Regulation of Registered Social Landlords (Wales) Act 2018 had not been referred to the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, because we were already considering two other Bills concurrently when it was introduced. We were also expecting to consider the Social Partnerships Bill, but its introduction was postponed due to the pandemic. A high proportion of the legislation introduced in recent years relates to housing. It seems likely that any committee which has housing within its remit will continue to be responsible for undertaking a significant amount of legislative scrutiny in the next Senedd. We would like this to be considered when committee remits are agreed in the Sixth Senedd.

10. Legislative scrutiny is core business, but as we do not have any control over when Bills are introduced, and our views on timetabling are not always implemented, it can be more difficult for us to manage our wider workloads, and ensure we can undertake the policy scrutiny we may wish to do.

11. Neither the issue of our broad remit, nor the heavy legislative workload is particularly problematic on its own, but the combination of the two has made it more difficult for us to manage such a broad portfolio.

12. We would reiterate our calls in our letter to the Committee on Assembly Electoral Reform, that legislative workloads should be taken into account when developing committee structures in the Sixth Senedd.

2. Working practices

We have developed a number of ways of working which we believe are effective, and could be useful for future committees to consider.

13. During this Senedd term, we have utilised both formal and informal means to gather evidence and engage with the people of Wales to inform our work. For each of the policy and legislative issues we have considered, we formed terms of reference and sought views from interested organisations or individuals. Every inquiry or area of Bill scrutiny has been published on our website, usually accompanied by a formal request for written evidence and publicised through ours and the Senedd's social media channels.

14. The majority of our evidence gathering has been through formal committee meetings, where witnesses have been invited to present evidence to inform our considerations of a range of policy and legislation areas. Prior to entering lockdown in March 2020, we were allocated a weekly meeting slot to undertake our business. The allocated slots were on alternate Wednesdays and Thursdays, enabling us to meet on a Wednesday morning and all day on a Thursday, fortnightly. These slots were primarily used to hold formal meetings on the Senedd estate, which Members and invited witnesses mostly attended in person; video conference facilities were occasionally used to facilitate the attendance of witnesses who were unable to attend in person.

15. Engaging with the citizens of Wales has been a crucial element of our work throughout this Senedd term. In addition to the formal evidence sessions, we also used informal means of gathering views from people who would be less likely or unable to attend a formal meeting. We specifically allocated some of our meeting slots to undertake informal visits and hold focus groups to meet with individuals directly affected by policy areas. These informal approaches were particularly useful to hear from people with lived experience as part of our work on prisoner voting, rough sleeping and refugee and asylum seekers. We also used online surveys to gather views from a wider audience, who may not have responded to the formal calls for written evidence.

16. The input of citizens into this work has directly shaped our choice of work, recommendations and outputs. For example, during our work on rough sleeping, after extensive engagement with people with lived experience, we undertook further specific investigation into the problems of rough sleepers with both

mental health and substance misuse issues. We would not have focused on these particular issues without hearing directly from those with the lived experience. Our citizen engagement work has been a particularly valuable aspect of our work throughout this term. We hope that this is built upon in the next Senedd term.

17. In response to the national lockdown which began in March 2020, we adapted our ways of working so that meetings could be held virtually. All of our meetings since then have been fully virtual, with Members, staff and witnesses attending from different locations.

18. This enabled us to continue with our work and we began by undertaking an inquiry into the impact of Covid-19 on matters related to our portfolio. We used Zoom to hold formal committee meetings with Welsh Government Ministers and external organisations. During this period we also undertook Stage 2 scrutiny of two Bills. Stage two proceedings were also conducted remotely, however the Chair and Clerk attended from the same location within Tŷ Hywel so that procedural advice could be provided.

19. Our use of these facilities has demonstrated that formal Senedd business can continue even when Members are unable to physically be in the same location and emphasises the wider benefits of remote attendance on increasing participation in business.

20. Our pre-pandemic work on increasing diversity in local government recognised the valuable contribution that remote attendance at formal meetings could make to enabling a wider range of people to get involved in local government.³ Since March 2020, the virtual nature of all Senedd business has proven that remote attendance is as effective as physically attending a meeting. It has also brought the additional benefits of not needing to travel, such as better work/life balance, enabling more time for caring responsibilities and participating in a wider range of meetings. We have embraced this new way of working and believe there should be a wider role for remote attendance at Senedd committee meetings when restrictions are lifted.

21. We have also been able to use Zoom and Teams facilities to continue our citizen engagement work during the pandemic. The nature of our work in understanding the implications of Covid-19, in particular when we considered the impact on the voluntary sector, meant it was crucial for us to be able to hear from people with direct experience. We have always found focus groups to be a useful

³ [ELGC Committee. Diversity in local government. April 2019](#)

forum to gather these views, so instead of travelling to meet with people from across Wales, we held these through Teams.

22. The wider benefits of holding these meetings virtually were clear both for Members and participants; instead of travelling to a specified location to meet in person, participants were able to contribute from their own homes or offices, which offered more convenience to all involved. Face to face engagement usually provides wider benefits than only meeting with citizens, such as witnessing projects first hand, therefore it will be important that committees continue to facilitate such meetings when restrictions allow. However, given their benefits in enabling wider participation, greater use of virtual meetings should also be part of a mixed approach to citizen engagement in future.

Following up on earlier work

23. We decided early on in the Senedd term that scrutinising the progress made in implementing our recommendations would be one of the most effective ways of ensuring change happens as a result of our work. Such follow up work has been an integral part of our activities throughout this Senedd.

24. Our first area of work in 2016 was post-legislative scrutiny of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, which focussed on whether that Act was working.⁴ Since then, we continued to review the legislation periodically by holding further evidence sessions in 2018 and 2020 to assess the progress made. This was also an important consideration of our work on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the various aspects within our remit.

25. We published our first report on rough sleeping in April 2018⁵, and since then we have undertaken extensive follow up work to assess progress and ensure changes are implemented. As part of this, we have continued to push for the step change we believed was needed in meeting our ambition to end rough sleeping. We published a follow up report which focused on mental health and substance misuse amongst people sleeping rough in December 2019.⁶ This was a priority area for us throughout this Senedd and we continued to scrutinise the Welsh Government on the matter, including through our work on the impact of Covid-19.

⁴ [ELGC Committee. Is the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence \(Wales\) Act 2015 working? December 2016](#)

⁵ [ELGC Committee. Life on the streets: preventing and tackling rough sleeping in Wales. April 2018](#)

⁶ [ELGC Committee. Rough sleeping follow up: Mental health and substance misuse services, December 2019](#)

26. Since the Grenfell tragedy, fire safety in high-rise buildings has been a priority area of work for us. We began our work by looking into the safety of high rise residential buildings in the social sector. We followed this by looking at private sector buildings⁷ and our final substantive piece of work at the end of this Senedd was to respond to the consultation on the Welsh Government's White Paper - Safer Buildings in Wales.

27. We believe that our commitment to following up previous work has been very effective in ensuring that those matters continue to receive the focus needed to result in change. By continuing to pursue these issues we demonstrated to the Welsh Government that our work doesn't finish when a report is published and that we expect to see changes as a result of our recommendations. Following up in this way is one of the most effective ways of scrutinising Welsh Government policies and actions, and we believe this approach should be embedded in future committees' work practices.

Joint committee working

28. Given the crossover between the remits of various committees, we have undertaken work jointly with others where appropriate. We held a concurrent meeting with the Finance Committee and Children, Young People and Education Committee, which was particularly valuable in bringing different perspectives together to scrutinise how the impact of budget decisions are assessed. The recommendations we made in our report were followed up by the three committees during our scrutiny of the draft budgets for subsequent years.

29. We found this joint approach to be effective and believe there could be a greater role for committees to work together on issues of interest, particularly should remits remain broad in the Sixth Senedd. Joint working has not always been easy to facilitate when committees are allocated specific meeting slots, which are difficult to deviate away from. However a more flexible approach to scheduling meetings such as increased opportunities to use virtual or hybrid formats could enable greater use of joint meetings in the future.

⁷ ELGC Committee. Fire safety in high-rise residential buildings (private sector). November 2018

3. Priorities for the Sixth Senedd

The impact of the pandemic has meant that we have not been able to undertake all the work that we would have liked. There are also some issues we believe would benefit from scrutiny in the next Senedd.

30. The combined impact of the pandemic and the legislative workload has meant that we have not been able to do all the work we have decided upon, some of this is follow up work and some are new pieces. We believe there would be merit in a future successor committee[s] to consider looking at these issues in more detail.

COVID-19 follow-up

Homelessness and rough sleeping

31. Homelessness, and particularly rough sleeping, has been a priority for us throughout this Senedd term, however the importance of tackling this issue became even more paramount during the Covid-19 pandemic. We scrutinised the Welsh Government on its actions at our first scrutiny session with the Minister for Housing and Local Government in May 2020 and followed up on this until our final meeting in March 2021. We welcome the focus given to this issue by the Welsh Government to ensure that accommodation was provided for those in need. We praise the excellent work done in the sector to house over 7000 people since the start of the pandemic, however we strongly believe that this work needs to continue in order to prevent all forms of homelessness. We are aware that some of those given temporary accommodation are now back on the street. Although the number is lower than before the pandemic, we remain concerned that the number could continue to increase without a continued focus on the services that are needed.

32. We are particularly concerned that the number of homeless presentations could increase substantially should the current protections restricting evictions and extending notice periods be brought to an end. We raised this with the Minister for Housing and Local Government on 11 March 2021, and a subsequent Cabinet Statement on 17 March confirmed that the protections would remain in place until the end of June 2021. We welcome this extension, but believe the situation should be monitored to assess whether further extension is required. We

recommend that continuing to scrutinise the impact of Covid-19 on homelessness is an area of urgent priority for our successor committee in the Sixth Senedd.

The Voluntary Sector

33. We conducted a short inquiry into the impact of the pandemic on the voluntary sector. Our report published in January 2021⁸, highlighted the essential role the voluntary sector had played in responding to the pandemic. We made a number of recommendations, including on the voluntary sector infrastructure in Wales; resources and finances; the BAME voluntary sector and the role the sector can play in Covid-19 recovery. We received the Welsh Government response to our recommendations in the final week of committee business. The Welsh Government accepted or accepted in principle all our recommendations.⁹ We believe that a future committee should consider and review the implementation of these recommendations.

Socio-economic duty

34. Following a delay due to the impact of the pandemic, the socio-economic duty was commenced at the end of March. It requires listed public authorities to consider how their strategic decisions can improve inequality of outcomes for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage. Through various aspects of our work during this Senedd, we have repeatedly called for its commencement. In our report on the impact of Covid-19 on inequalities, we recommended that the Welsh Government should adhere to the spirit and intent of the duty in all of its decision-making until it is commenced, and develop interim arrangements to monitor how it is meeting the spirit of the duty ahead of full commencement.

35. We believe that the socio-economic duty should be one of the key tools in the Welsh Government's plans to re-build following Covid-19. We therefore recommend to our successor committee that this may be an area of early priority, in particular whether or how the duty has influenced decisions taken by the Welsh Government and listed authorities.

Poverty

36. The prevalence and impact of poverty in Wales has been an area of significant concern both for us, and our predecessor committee. We have repeatedly made the case for the need for a cross cutting, comprehensive tackling

⁸ [ELGC Committee. Impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary sector. February 2021](#)

⁹ [Welsh Government response to Impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary sector. March 2021](#)

poverty strategy with clear targets, deliverables and milestones which progress can be assessed against. It has been a matter of disappointment that this has never been accepted or implemented by the Welsh Government. The impact of Covid-19 on people on low incomes was explored in our report on the pandemic, *Into Sharp Relief*.¹⁰ We highlighted that poverty has been a key determinant in the pandemic, from mortality rates to the risk of losing work or income, and educational attainment to overcrowded housing. The impact on low income households must be a key consideration for the Welsh Government in its recovery plans, and we recommend to our successor committee that it continues to prioritise the Welsh Government's approach to tackling poverty.

Race Equality Action Plan

37. The impact of Covid-19 on people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities has been significant over the past year, and has been an area of focus in our Covid-19 work. Professor Ogbonna's report recommended that the Welsh Government's should immediately recommence work on developing a Race Equality Action Plan. This will be published for consultation by the end of March 2021, and we recommend that our successor committee prioritises scrutinising progress in developing the plan and implementing its actions.

Other follow up work

Pregnancy, Maternity and Work

38. As we have outlined above, a key feature of our approach has been regular follow up on progress in implementing our recommendations. As part of our work in the final term of this Senedd, we agreed to follow up our inquiry into Pregnancy, Maternity and Work. We published our report in September 2018.¹¹ However at the time of publication there were a number of different pieces of work being undertaken by the Welsh Government, such as the Gender Equality Review; the Fair Work Commission; and a review of public procurement, which could have an impact on the implementation of some of the recommendations. The pandemic has also clearly had an impact on those juggling work and childcare. We had intended to revisit the recommendations through both oral evidence sessions and citizen engagement. However, the lockdown restrictions

¹⁰ [ELGC Committee, *Into sharp relief: inequality and the pandemic*, August 2020](#)

¹¹ [ELGC Committee, *Work it out: parenting and employment in Wales*, July 2018](#)

which began at the end of December led to us having to reconsider our work programme, and pausing this work.

39. We therefore believe there is real merit in this issue being looked at in more detail at the outset of the next Senedd.

Public Services Boards

40. We took a range of evidence looking at the structure, governance and resourcing, and best practice of Public Services Boards (PSBs) in 2018. We did not publish a report, as it became clear that it was difficult to come to conclusions about their effectiveness at that stage. We made a commitment to revisit this towards the end of the Senedd term, once more assessment could be made about the effectiveness of the Well-Being plans, and how they were working.

41. Unfortunately, due to the impact of the pandemic, we were unable to undertake this work as planned. However, we have touched upon the work of PSBs in a range of other policy work, including the impact of COVID-19 on the voluntary sector, and general COVID-19 scrutiny. We also note the work of the Public Accounts Committee at the end of this Senedd looking at the barriers to successful implementation of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.¹² One of the issues highlighted during our evidence sessions was the complex landscape within which PSBs are operating. They sit alongside a plethora of statutory and multi-agency partnerships, formed on a local, sub-regional and regional basis. We think this is an issue that would merit further consideration in the next Senedd.

Poverty in Wales: Making the economy work for people on low incomes

42. This was a wide ranging piece of work which we published in May 2018, that covered areas such as the Welsh Government's strategic approach to economic development; employability; procurement; pay; quality of work and benefits.¹³ As a result of this report, we undertook further detailed work looking at the desirability of devolving welfare benefits.¹⁴ However, we were not able to revisit the rest of the work due to the pandemic. As with the pregnancy, maternity and work inquiry, there were a number of on-going work streams within the Welsh Government at the time of responding. These included the Procurement Review, development of the approach to a Foundational Economy; and the Fair Work Commission; all of

¹² [Public Accounts Committee, Delivering for Future Generations: The Story So Far, March 2021](#)

¹³ [ELGC Committee, Making the economy work for people on low incomes, May 2018](#)

¹⁴ [ELGC Committee, Benefits in Wales: options for better delivery, October 2019](#)

which will have had an impact on addressing the issues we highlighted in the report. We believe this is an important area of work for a future committee.

Building Safety in high rise residential buildings

43. We have been considering this important issue since the tragic events at Grenfell in 2017. We have looked at the issue in relation to social and private sector housing, and culminating in our recent consultation response to the Welsh Government's White Paper on building safety. The Welsh Government has made a number of commitments outside of the White Paper, including the establishment of a building remediation fund which will go "further than that proposed in England."¹⁵

44. It is expected that there will be legislation introduced in the next Senedd to address some of these issues. We believe it is essential though that the relevant committee continues to monitor these issues closely, in particular the challenges faced by those who own and live in flats within the existing stock of high rise residential buildings around Wales.

Other work

45. There are two inquiries which we had identified that we would like to undertake in this Senedd, but we have been unable to do. We believe that both of these are very important, and that a successor committee should consider these in more detail.

Community Cohesion / Integration

46. During the Senedd term and particularly before the global pandemic hit, we were concerned at some of the reports suggesting that community cohesion had been affected by the wider political events, such as the referendum on EU membership. It was an issue we touched upon as part of our work looking at refugees and asylum seekers in Wales, and felt merited further investigation. Throughout this Senedd we have called for the Welsh Government to update its community cohesion delivery plan, which it had committed to doing twice before, in both 2017 and 2018. While we welcome on-going work to update the Race Equality Action Plan, we still believe the broader area of community cohesion and integration should be a matter of high priority for the next Senedd.

¹⁵ [Letter from the Minister for Housing and Local Government in relation to the inquiry into fire safety in high rise blocks in Wales. 16 March 2021](#)

47. Unfortunately as the pandemic hit, we had to reshape our work programme, and were unable to undertake this work.

Second Homes

48. In 2018, we identified two housing related inquiries to undertake; empty properties, and second homes. We completed the empty properties work, but our legislative commitments meant we were unable to look at the issue of second homes.

49. While there are particular “hotspots” that this issue affects more acutely, we are aware that this has an impact on the available housing stock in many areas, and has wider consequences on communities and individuals. We therefore believe there is merit in further work on this in the next Senedd.

Other areas of interest

Post legislative scrutiny

50. There are also a range of other areas which we feel are important, and future committees may wish to consider. In particular, we feel that there is real benefit for committees in the Sixth Senedd to undertake more post-legislative scrutiny. This was our approach in our first substantive inquiry – on the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015¹⁶, work we continued to follow up throughout the Senedd term.

51. Post legislative scrutiny is an important, if sometimes, overlooked area of scrutiny. There are a number of areas of work which we feel would benefit it. In particular, there have been a number of significant pieces of housing legislation:

- Housing (Wales) Act 2014 – in particular landlord and agent registration and licensing scheme;
- Impact of the Abolition of Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Act 2018.
- Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 – in particular looking at Parts 2 (Public Participation in local democracy); 4 (Local Authority

¹⁶ ELGC Committee, *Is the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 working? December 2016*

Executives, members and officers); 5 (Corporate Joint Committees) and Part 6 (Performance and Governance).

52. A future Committee may also wish to review the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016. This legislation has not yet been commenced, despite being passed five years ago. During the course of this Senedd, we have considered two further Acts which amended the 2016 Act. Consideration of implementation of the 2016 legislation, should also consider the changes introduced by these two Acts, in relation to the ban of letting agent fees; and the introduction of longer no-fault notice periods.

Policy scrutiny

53. There are also a range of other issues which we feel could benefit from further scrutiny in the Sixth Senedd:

- Alternative models of service delivery in local government;
- Transformation agenda in local government – digital;
- Post-pandemic recovery - local government services;
- Progress in implementing the recommendations of the Gender Equality Review;
- Regional economic inequalities and ‘left-behind’ communities. This should encompass the industrial communities and the particular challenges faced in terms of social mobility in communities which have experienced a long-term reduction in education and employment opportunities;
- Poverty – Local delivery of anti-poverty programmes in a post Communities First Wales;
- Reducing sexual harassment/increasing safety of women; and
- Availability of all-weather play areas for children and young people.

Fifth Senedd Legacy Report

March 2021



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Cardiff Bay
CF99 1SN

Tel: **0300 200 6565**

Email: **CoordinationUnit@senedd.wales**

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Fifth Senedd Legacy Report

March 2021



About the Chairs' Forum

The Chairs' Forum brings together the Chairs of Senedd committees to coordinate work, address practical matters affecting the operation of committees, and consider cross-cutting strategic issues. The Forum is chaired by the Llywydd and meets approximately six times a year.

Chair:



Elin Jones MS (Llywydd)
Plaid Cymru

Current membership:



Mick Antoniw MS
Welsh Labour



Jayne Bryant MS
Welsh Labour



Janet Finch-Saunders MS
Welsh Conservatives



Russell George MS
Welsh Conservatives



John Griffiths MS
Welsh Labour



Llyr Gruffydd MS
Plaid Cymru



Mike Hedges MS
Welsh Labour



Ann Jones MS
Welsh Labour



Dai Lloyd MS
Plaid Cymru



Lynne Neagle MS
Welsh Labour



David Rees MS
Welsh Labour



Bethan Sayed MS
Plaid Cymru



Helen Mary Jones MS
Plaid Cymru

The Chairs' Forum

Introduction

- 1.** As we approach the end of the Fifth Senedd, we have reflected on our time as Chairs of Senedd committees and have, in this report, identified certain aspects of our experience that we believe will be useful to the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee when it comes to considering its role in the process of establishing committees.
- 2.** This is not an account of our committees' work or an analysis of their effectiveness. Rather we offer our collective view based on our experience of chairing Senedd committees over the past five years.
- 3.** We begin the report with our view on the role of Chairs before moving to consider some of the more practical aspects of committee operation.
- 4.** The table at Annex A provides a summary of our conclusions and recommendations.

1. The role of Chairs

1.1. Election of Chairs

5. We are the first cohort of Senedd committee Chairs to have been elected by the Senedd. We unanimously endorse this approach.
6. Being elected by the Senedd has enabled us to operate with greater independence and authority.
7. In a Senedd that has seen significant changes to political groups and committee memberships, and faced great uncertainty as a consequence of EU exit and the COVID-19 pandemic, Chairs of committees have provided an important consistency to Senedd Business.

1.2. Commitment to the role

8. Chairing a committee is a significant commitment. A Chair must invest considerable time outside committee meetings to perform effectively. The role is one of providing strategic leadership and direction, and of building relationships with committee members that in turn facilitates trust and consensus. The role also requires engagement with stakeholders, representing the committee at external events, media work, developing policy expertise and undertaking professional development.
9. Ideally, Chairs of committees would be freed of other parliamentary duties to enable them to focus full-time on being a committee Chair e.g. not sitting on another committee and/or not being a party spokesperson.

Recommendation 1. Whilst recognising that this might be difficult to achieve, we recommend that the leaders of political party groups in the Sixth Senedd consider minimising the parliamentary duties placed on members of their group who are committee Chairs and to avoid potential conflicts of interest when allocating spokesperson responsibilities.

1.3. Setting the right direction

10. It is important that committee Chairs do all they can to ensure that the right culture is embedded within their committees at the start of a Senedd, so that committee members, particularly new Members of the Senedd, understand the value of committee work and are committed to it.

11. Our experience of the Fifth Senedd has shown that taking time at the start of a committee's life to develop a strategy that engages committee members, sets objectives, and maps out how a committee wishes to operate is essential to achieving this.

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd committees spend time establishing long-term objectives for their work, a strategy for the delivery of their objectives, and establishing a vision of how they wish to operate, before determining the details of their work programmes.

12. It follows that Chairs, through their Clerks, should ensure that any Member joining a committee during the course of a Senedd receives an appropriate induction to ensure that they are aware of how the committee they are joining operates. Additionally, a new committee member should be afforded the opportunity to contribute to the future development of a committee's strategic approach.

13. Effective scrutiny requires prioritisation. Our experience has shown the importance of prioritising a limited number of issues and maintaining a focus on them over time. This often has a greater impact on Government policy and delivery.

Engagement

14. Committees in the Fifth Senedd have engaged with citizens, stakeholders and expertise in a range of ways.

15. Considering who a committee needs to engage with, and how best to engage with them, to achieve a committee's objectives is a routine part of work planning.

16. There is a broader opportunity for committees, when establishing themselves at the start of the next Senedd, to set a more general approach to engagement as part of their individual strategy to achieve the objectives they set.

17. For example, a committee might decide to:

- prioritise having a regular in-person presence across different locations in Wales;
- operate in a predominantly virtual mode;
- spend less time in formal meetings and more time working in other ways;

- prioritise citizen engagement (perhaps through the use of citizens assemblies); and/or
- prioritise expert engagement.

18. Of course, many more approaches are possible, the examples above are provided as an illustration only.

Recommendation 3. We recommend that committees consider their broader approach to engagement when establishing their objectives and strategy at the start of the Sixth Senedd.

19. There is more that can be done to understand the people committees engage with. Consideration should be given to how data can be collected so that committees can better understand who they are engaging with through their work and, perhaps crucially, who they are not yet reaching.

Recommendation 4. We recommend that information about the people committees engage with is collected and reported throughout the Sixth Senedd to enable committees and the Chairs' Forum to monitor who committees are engaging with and whether that engagement is achieving committee objectives.

Committee support

20. The support we, and our committees, receive from Senedd Commission staff is highly valued and appreciated.

21. Whilst a high level of support might be needed for a committee on its establishment and in its early years of operation, the approach to supporting committees should mature with their development and be proportionate to the needs of each committee at a given time.

Recommendation 5. We recommend that Chairs, with the support of their Clerks, periodically consider the support committee members require. There may be a case for adjusting that support as committee members develop in their roles through the course of a Senedd, and as a committee faces different tasks.

1.4. Understanding the impact of committee work

22. We believe that there is more that needs to be done to understand the impact of committee work.

23. Professor Diana Stirbu has been commissioned to develop a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of Senedd committees in the Sixth Senedd.

24. This will include a proposal for how committees can better monitor the diversity of their engagement and how the Chairs' Forum can play a role in considering the overall picture in terms of the diversity of committee engagement.

25. At our meeting on 22 October 2020, we endorsed the approach to be taken by Professor Stirbu to this work and a number of Chairs contributed to her work.

26. A final report of Professor Stirbu's work is expected in April 2021.

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Chairs' Forum considers Professor Stirbu's report at as early an opportunity as possible in the Sixth Senedd.

2. Committee structures

2.1. Size of committees

27. The size of committees varies according to function and political balance requirements.

Policy and Legislation Committees

28. The Policy and Legislation Committees started the Fifth Senedd with eight members. This was a reduction in size compared to the Policy and Legislation Committees that operated in the Fourth Assembly [Senedd], which operated with a membership of 10.

29. On 18 June 2019, the membership of Policy and Legislation Committees was reduced to six members.

30. Whilst some Chairs had misgivings at first about a reduction in the size of committees from eight to six members, due to the heightened risk of inquorate meetings, most believe that attendance and member engagement has improved since the reduction in size.

31. To verify our view on attendance, Senedd Commission officials have provided us with aggregated attendance data for those committees affected by the change in membership numbers.

32. This data provides an indication that attendance improved with the reduction in committee size.¹

33. For ease of illustration, this can be presented as the average number of seats left empty across the affected committees. An empty seat means that a member has not attended a meeting and no substitute has attended in their place i.e. a seat has been left empty for the duration of a meeting.

34. Because of the significant change to how committees have operated since public health restrictions were introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have restricted the period for comparison up until the point when committees moved to operating virtually.

¹ A committee member is recorded as having attended a committee meeting if they attend any part of a committee meeting.

Number of members	Mean number of seats left empty per week across affected committees (to the nearest whole seat)
Eight members (before 18 June 2019)	7
Six members (19 June 2019 to 26 April 2020)	4

35. Whilst an observation that is more pertinent for another section of this report, the data we received has also shown a further improvement in attendance for this cohort of committees since they moved to virtual meetings.²

Number of members	Mean number of seats left empty per week across affected committees (to the nearest whole seat)
Six members (when working with virtual meetings i.e. after 27 April 2020)	2

36. We believe that the smaller policy and legislation committees seen in the Fifth Senedd have operated well. An increase in the size of committees, without a reduction in the overall number of committees, would dilute the focus individual Members can bring to committee work (as more Members would be required to sit on multiple committees).

37. The decision on the size of committees is interdependent with considering the number of committees, their functions, and the political make-up of a Senedd.

Recommendation 7. Whilst acknowledging that the factors in paragraph 37 must also be considered, we recommend that a membership of six (and certainly no more than eight), would be a good place for the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee to start when considering the establishment of Policy and Legislation Committees.

38. In making this recommendation, we also note that frequent changes of committee membership are problematic and continuity of committee

² Other factors, beyond the move to meeting virtually, may have contributed to the improvement in attendance. For example, a reduction in competing commitments as a consequence of the public health restrictions.

membership is key to the development of subject expertise and committee cohesion.

Specialist Committees

39. The Legislation, Justice, and Constitution Committee, has operated well with a membership of four, in light of its specific function.

40. Conversely, the Petitions Committee experienced problems with quoracy when it had a membership of four. These have largely abated since it was expanded to five members. The Petitions quoracy problems were also affected by the fact that it had independent members, who are unable to send a substitute in circumstances where they are unable to attend a meeting.

41. The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister has noted that its membership, consisting of all Chairs of other committees, has been too large and considers that a membership of eight would be more appropriate for a committee with its functions.

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the size of the Committee for Scrutiny of the First Minister in the Sixth Senedd be reviewed, in light of experience in the Fifth Senedd.

42. The reduction in the size of the Public Accounts Committee during this Senedd put the political balance on the committee in favour of the opposition. This had a significant impact on PAC's dynamics.

43. The Finance Committee's size did not have a particular bearing on its operation. The Finance Committee also had a political balance in favour of the opposition.

44. The Standards of Conduct Committee has had an increased workload in the Fifth Senedd, necessitating additional meetings and time commitment from its members, as well as additional support.

2. 2. Dual function policy and legislation committees

45. We believe that combined Policy and Legislation Committees i.e. committees that combine both policy and legislative scrutiny roles work well.

46. Non-legislative and legislative actions are interdependent within an area of policy. An understanding of these actions in the round is essential to the effective scrutiny of government.

47. Whilst specific procedures apply to the scrutiny of Bills, there is a wider policy context within which each piece of legislation sits. Subject knowledge is at least as important to the scrutiny of a Bill as procedural familiarity.

48. Members, and Chairs in particular, develop policy knowledge and stakeholder relationships that are invaluable when applied to both functions.

49. The pressure of Bill scrutiny can affect the ability of a committee to pursue other aspects of its remit, particularly when the spread of government Bills is unevenly distributed across policy areas. This can reduce the ability of a committee to scrutinise the Welsh Government in other areas of a committee's remit.

50. There is more that can be done to address some of this pressure without moving away from an operating model for committees that is centred on the dual function approach. We address this

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the dual function policy and legislation committees should continue in the Sixth Senedd.

2.3. Remits

51. In most cases committee remits have been unproblematic. The Policy and Legislation Committees were established without strict boundaries to their remits to allow the pursuit of issues beyond policy silos. This has proved an advantage at times when managing scrutiny workloads and pursuing issues that cut across different Ministerial responsibilities.

52. The External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee was established with a specific remit related to the UK's departure from the EU. Whilst it appears unlikely that a committee with the same remit will be established in the Sixth Senedd, it performed a range of scrutiny functions that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee will need to consider when proposing a committee structure.³

53. Some committees have faced near to unsustainable workloads at times during the course of the Fifth Senedd. In particular, we note the breadth of the Equality, Local Government, and Communities Committee's remit and its Bill

³. Aspects of the EAAL Committee's remit no-longer function due to how the process of EU Exit has progressed since the EAAL Committee's establishment. It is for this reason it appears unlikely that a committee with the same remit will be established in the Sixth Senedd.

scrutiny workload, and the volume of legislation that the Legislation, Justice, and Constitution Committee has had to consider at times alongside its other scrutiny remit.

Number of Bills considered by responsible committee

Responsible committee	Bills
Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee	1
Committee of the Whole Senedd	3
Children, Young People and Education Committee	4
External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee	1
Economy Infrastructure and Skills Committee	1 ⁴
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee	6
Finance Committee ⁵	1
Health, Social Care and Sport Committee	5
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee	2

54. The Petitions Committee has experienced a significant increase in the number of petitions it is required to consider. Consideration will need to be given to how this increased workload is managed, should the receipt of petitions continue to grow in the Sixth Senedd.

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Welsh Government shares as much information as possible in relation to its legislative programme for the Sixth Senedd at as early a point in the Six Senedd as possible, so that the Business Committee can consider the implications for committees and their workload.

Recommendation 11. The Bill scrutiny process itself can create pinch points for a committee and its staff. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee (or another committee with responsibility for Senedd procedures)

⁴ The Bill remitted to the EIS Committee was withdrawn shortly after introduction (the Bus Services (Wales) Bill).

⁵The Finance Committee also introduced its own Bill, now the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2019.

undertakes a review of the Bill scrutiny process to assess whether it is as efficient and effective as it might be.

55. We believe that a degree of additional capacity should be built into the committee system.

56. We acknowledge that the Fifth Senedd's Business Committee originally established a reserve policy and legislation committee that was to be used as a means of alleviating pressures in the committee system and that there was sufficient capacity to create a time-limited committee to consider Senedd Electoral Reform during the course of the Fifth Senedd.

57. Understandably, the reserve committee was swiftly re-tasked to consider the implications for Wales arising from the Brexit process (as the EAAL Committee) leaving that committee with little capacity to consider Bills unrelated to its core remit.⁶

Recommendation 12. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee, when considering the establishment of committees, should consider how best to build-in additional capacity and flexibility to handle peaks in committee workload.

58. We have seen a number of instances where Senedd committees have worked together during the course of the Fifth Senedd.

59. We have also seen an increase in interparliamentary working, for example through the Interparliamentary Forum on Brexit and in relation to the UK-wide Common Policy Frameworks.

60. We endorse Senedd committees working together.

61. We recognise the value that interparliamentary working can bring to our work.

Recommendation 13. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee considers whether there are any steps it can take to help enable

⁶ The EAAL Committee considered one Senedd Bill, the Regulation of Registered Social Landlords (Wales) Bill. It managed this by creating a sub-committee. It consider a wide range of other legislative matters, including UK Bills, the process of retaining EU Law, and legislation associated with the common frameworks programme.

joint working between Senedd committees and interparliamentary working, for example when timetabling committee business.

2. 4. Virtual meetings

62. In our view, virtual and hybrid means of conducting committee business are here to stay in one form or another, alongside the holding of in-person meetings at the Senedd and elsewhere.

63. Our experience of operating remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that committees can operate effectively through the use of virtual meeting technology.

64. Moreover, this use of technology has the potential to make committee business more accessible and flexible in a number of ways. This is of benefit to both committee members and those invited to contribute to committee work.

65. Without the restrictions of physical space and the need to account for travel time, virtual meetings can be convened more quickly and at times during the week that might not have been suitable for Senedd business previously.

66. This flexibility also has the potential to enable committee business to take better account of the family responsibilities of committee members, staff, and those invited to contribute to committee business.

Recommendation 14. We recommend that, within the parameters set for committee business by the Senedd Commission and the Business Committee in the Sixth Senedd, it should be a matter for individual committees to decide their mode of operation on a meeting by meeting basis i.e. whether in person, hybrid, and/or remote meetings will best enable them to achieve their objectives.

2. 5. Chairs' Forum

67. The Chairs' Forum has added value to our work by providing a space within which we can address cross-cutting scrutiny issues, share good practice, and look more strategically at the work of committees.

68. Additionally, as a consultative forum, it has helped inform Senedd Commission and Business Committee decisions affecting the operation of committees. For example, in relation to timetabling and changes to business necessitated by the Coronavirus pandemic.

69. We believe the Chairs' Forum works well as an informal group and welcome the Business Committee's decision to provide the Forum with a timetabled meeting slot at the end of each half term.

Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Llywydd establishes a Chairs' Forum in the Sixth Senedd and that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee timetables a regular slot for it to meet.

Annex A – Summary of our view

Election of Chairs

We are the first cohort of Senedd committee Chairs to have been elected by the Senedd. We unanimously endorse this approach.

Commitment to the role

Recommendation 1. Whilst recognising that this might be difficult to achieve, we recommend that the leaders of political party groups in the Sixth Senedd consider minimising the parliamentary duties placed on members of their group who are committee Chairs and to avoid potential conflicts of interest when allocating spokesperson responsibilities.

Setting the right direction

Recommendation 2. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd committees spend time establishing long-term objectives for their work, a strategy for the delivery of their objectives, and establishing a vision of how they wish to operate, before determining the details of their work programmes.

Recommendation 3. We recommend that committees consider their broader approach to engagement when establishing their objectives and strategy at the start of the Sixth Senedd.

Recommendation 4. We recommend that information about the people committees engage with is collected and reported throughout the Sixth Senedd to enable committees, and the Chairs' Forum, to monitor who committees are engaging with and whether that engagement is achieving committee objectives.

Recommendation 5. We recommend that Chairs, with the support of their Clerks, periodically consider the support committee members require. There may be a case for adjusting that support as committee members develop in their roles through the course of a Senedd, and as a committee faces different tasks.

Understanding the impact of committee work

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Chairs' Forum considers Professor Stirbu's report at as early an opportunity as possible in the Sixth Senedd.

Size of committees

Recommendation 7. Whilst acknowledging that the factors in paragraph 36 must also be considered, we recommend that a membership of six (and certainly no more than eight), would be a good place for the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee to start when considering the establishment of policy and legislation committees.

Recommendation 8. We recommend that the size of the Committee for Scrutiny of the First Minister in the Sixth Senedd be reviewed, in light of experience in the Fifth Senedd.

Dual function policy and legislation committees

Recommendation 9. We recommend that the dual function policy and legislation committees should continue in the Sixth Senedd.

Remits

Recommendation 10. We recommend that the Welsh Government shares as much information as possible in relation to its legislative programme for the Sixth Senedd at as early a point in the Six Senedd as possible, so that the Business Committee can consider the implications for committees and their workload.

Recommendation 11. The Bill scrutiny process itself can create pinch points for a committee and its staff. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee (or another committee with responsibility for Senedd procedures) undertakes a review of the Bill scrutiny process to assess whether it is as efficient and effective as it might be.

Recommendation 12. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee, when considering the establishment of committees, should consider how best to build-in additional capacity and flexibility to handle peaks in committee workload.

Recommendation 13. We recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee considers whether there are any steps it can take to help enable joint working between Senedd committees and interparliamentary working, for example when timetabling committee business.

Virtual meetings

Recommendation 14. We recommend that, within the parameters set for committee business by the Senedd Commission and the Business Committee in the Sixth Senedd, it should be a matter for individual committees to decide their mode of operation on a meeting by meeting basis i.e. whether in person, hybrid, and/or remote meetings will best enable them to achieve their objectives.

Chairs' Forum

Recommendation 15. We recommend that the Llywydd establishes a Chairs' Forum in the Sixth Senedd and that the Sixth Senedd's Business Committee timetables a regular slot for it to meet.

Dear John

I want to offer my warm congratulations on your election as Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee. The experience that you bring to the role will be invaluable and we look forward to working with you and your team in the months ahead.

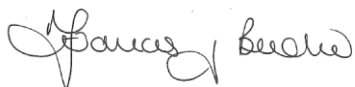
As you know, Llamau is the leading homelessness charity in Wales, supporting the most vulnerable young people and women. Over the last 30 years, we have supported over 67,000 young people, women and their children who are either homeless or facing homelessness. Many people think our job is simply to provide suitable accommodation - a safe place to stay - but it is very clear to us that for most people who are facing homelessness, their problems are far more complex than just a lack of permanent shelter.

In 2017, with the support of you and many other Senedd members, we launched the End Youth Homelessness Cymru campaign and at the heart of that work we are looking at preventative measures and specialised housing options which ensure that people are supported as needed and that episodes of homelessness are rare, brief and non-recurrent. There is much work being undertaken by both the Welsh Government and Local Government in Wales and the extra resources provided to tackle homelessness during the pandemic is to be welcomed. There is still much more to do though.

I would very much welcome an early opportunity to discuss this agenda with you and your committee clerks and hope that it might provide useful context for the committee's deliberations at the beginning of this Senedd term. If an informal session as a scene setter for all committee members would be helpful during the early stages of the committee's work, we would also be very happy to work with you to arrange that.

I know that there will be considerable demands on your diary but very much hope that a meeting in the next few weeks will be possible and look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,



Frances

John Griffiths MS
Chair
Local Government and Housing
Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

24 Cathedral Road / 24 Heol y Gadeirlan
Cardiff / Caerdydd
CF11 9LJ
Tel / Ffôn: 029 2032 0500
Fax / Ffacs: 029 2032 0600
Textphone / Ffôn testun: 029 2032 0660
info@audit.wales / post@archwilio.cymru
www.audit.wales / www.archwilio.cymru

Reference: AC/275/caf

Date issued: 9 July 2021

Dear John

The Work of Audit Wales

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee. I wish you every success in your new role and at the start of a challenging five-year period for public services in Wales.

My remit as Auditor General for Wales means that I am the statutory external auditor of most of the Welsh public sector and responsible for the audit of most of the public money spent in Wales. In September, I am planning to publish a series of 'Picture of Public Services' outputs. These will provide our take on the key financial and wider challenges facing public services over the coming years and will set out some of the key areas of public service delivery where I will be expecting public services to demonstrate progress. I hope that the outputs from this work will be of interest to all Members of the Senedd and that they will provide a useful point of reference for their future work.

I am expecting that the work of Audit Wales will continue to play a key role supporting the work of the new Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee (PAPAC), with PAPAC remaining our primary audience. However, I am also keen that Audit Wales uses its unique perspective and expertise to support the work of other Senedd committees where we have relevant audit intelligence to bring to bear. We would therefore welcome the opportunity to be included on any wider consultations that

your Committee runs. I am also anticipating that there will continue to be occasions where committees other than PAPAC might take the lead in scrutinising issues raised by my reports, where these are relevant and timely in the context of their own scrutiny work.

We have just recently published our latest [Annual Report and Accounts](#), which tells the story of our work during 2020-21 and links to some of our major outputs. Our Annual Report also summarises work in progress or planned to start later this year and we will be sharing further details with committee clerking teams over the summer. Our audit coverage across local government is quite extensive. It includes our audit of accounts work, local performance audit work across the sector and national studies. Examples of national reports that we will be publishing over the next couple of months include local authority financial resilience and town centre regeneration.

If you or your Committee members would like to find out more about the work of Audit Wales, then please do not hesitate to get in touch. If Members have specific concerns about the use of public money, then we are always open to receiving correspondence. Members can either contact me directly or they can do so via our Audit Wales address info@audit.wales. Further details about how we handle such correspondence are available on our website: [Raising a concern | Audit Wales](#).

I very much look forward to working with you over the next five years.

Best wishes,



ADRIAN CROMPTON
Auditor General for Wales

Agenda Item 3.5

Senedd Cymru
Welsh Parliament

Welsh Parliament
Business Committee

John Griffiths MS

Chair

Local Government and Housing Committee

14 July 2021

Dear Chair

Committee Timetable

I am writing to inform you of the Committee Timetable agreed by Business Committee at its meeting of 13 July.

The Business Committee has agreed a timetable that provides committees with fortnightly meetings, with the exception of the Legislation Justice and Constitution Committee which meets weekly due to the need to consider Statutory Instruments to strict deadlines.

A key message from the Chair's Forum of the Fifth Senedd was to ensure that there is flexibility within the arrangements for committees so that peaks in workload, or new tasks, can be managed. The Business Committee has sought to introduce this flexibility by varying the meeting time allocated to different committees. This reflects the type of work that different committees might need to undertake and reflects how working practices have evolved in recent years.

To this end, the timetable is fortnightly and has a number of additional meeting slots available within it, to accommodate peaks in the work of particular committees e.g. the Finance Committee when considering a draft budget, or a committee with Stage 1 legislative scrutiny responsibilities. By under-committing the timetabling capacity, there are greater opportunities for committees to work together as the possibility of membership clashes in each meeting slot is reduced.



Senedd Cymru
Bae Caerdydd, Caerdydd, CF99 1SN

✉ SeneddPwyllgorBusnes@Senedd.cymru

☎ 0300 200 6565

Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN

✉ SeneddBusiness@senedd.wales

☎ 0300 200 6565

In recognition of the known and expected legislative scrutiny responsibilities of some committees, the following committees are provided with a double meeting slot i.e. a morning and afternoon slot on a Thursday:

- Children, Young People, and Education;
- Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure;
- Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs; and
- Health and Social Care.

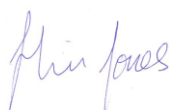
The remaining committees are provided with a single meeting slot i.e. one morning or afternoon meeting slot per fortnight. These committees are:

- Culture, Welsh Language, Communications, Sport, and International Relations;
- Equality and Social Justice;
- Finance;
- Local Government and Housing;
- Petitions;
- Public Accounts and Public Administration; and
- Standards of Conduct.

In order to provide some additional capacity for Bill scrutiny work, Fridays are also made available for committee Stage 2 scrutiny of Bills i.e. to provide an additional (and potentially longer) meeting for committees at this stage of the legislative process. The Business Committee will determine the allocation of any additional slots following a request from a committee.

The Business Committee has already indicated its intention to keep timetabling under review, so that it can respond to the needs of committees as the tasks they face change. Flexibility and responsiveness is at the heart of its decisions around timetabling for committees, and the Business Committee intends to review the committee structure and timetable around Easter 2022.

Yours sincerely



Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee



Agenda Item 5

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Agenda Item 7

By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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