

Rt Hon Elin Jones MS
Llywydd and Chair of Business Committee

Dear Llywydd,

24 June 2024

Re: Committee remits

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on the above issue, in light of recent changes in ministerial responsibilities. From our perspective our remit has served us well to date and we do not consider any changes to the equality and social justice remit to be necessary at this time.

From day one, we have sought to work together both formally and informally with other committees on cross-cutting issues including with the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee on well-being of future generations; the Children, Young People and Education Committee on child poverty, and childcare; and the Local Government and Housing Committee on Gypsy, Roma traveller sites, and support for refugees. We continue to champion equality and social justice considerations in our scrutiny and urge other Senedd Committees to ensure that these are mainstreamed in their work.

On the wider issue of committee remits, we do not disagree with the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure (CCEI) Committee's arguments and accept that scrutiny of five separate ministers is likely to be onerous and would pose significant challenges. In that regard we respect the Business Committee's decision to look at whether adjustments may be required. In reaching a decision, however, we urge you to prioritise changes that will strengthen the premise of collective responsibility and accountability. We have regularly been frustrated by the tendency of some ministers to avoid scrutiny or explain policy failures by arguing that responsibility for something is in another minister's portfolio. On certain issues we have gone as far as to recommend the creation of unified portfolios (for example a Minister for Babies, Children and Young People as part of work on child poverty) or formal mechanisms for coordinating cross-cutting policy areas (for example in our report on the Draft Budget 2024-25) to combat this.¹ The Welsh Government has told us that these steps are

¹ Equality and Social Justice Committee, [Calling time on child poverty: how Wales can do better](#), November 2023; [Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024-25](#), February 2024

unnecessary every time, and yet, we suspect that this mentality continues to be pervasive. Ultimately, it is Cabinet that is responsible for government decision-making in our system and it is vital that any decisions on remits strikes a balance between practical considerations and the need to enhance the capacity of Committees to scrutinise and hold ministers to account.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jenny Rathbone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenny Rathbone MS

Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.