

**Y Pwyllgor Craffu ar Waith y Prif Weinidog**  
**Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister**

Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales



Carwyn Jones AM  
First Minister  
Welsh Government

25 March 2013

Dear First Minister

**Committee Meeting on 27 February 2013**

The Committee is grateful to you and your officials for attending the scrutiny session on 27 February regarding the operations of the Delivery Unit and the Welsh Government's approach to reducing child poverty.

A number of issues arose from our discussions where we would welcome further information and clarification.

**The First Minister's Delivery Unit**

You stated that there have been a number of times when the Delivery Unit has drawn issues to your attention, but you were unable to give us further details as you did not want to "publicly discuss the business of Government". We note your concerns, but without any examples, we find it difficult to understand how the Delivery Unit operates let alone assess its effectiveness

Bae Caerdydd  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Clerc/Clerk: Dr Siân Phipps, Ffôn /Tel: 029 2089 8582  
E-bost /Email: FM.Scrutiny@wales.gov.uk

in those situations when Government Departments are not performing so well.

We also noted what you said about the Unit being judged when the Government delivers on its Programme for Government at the end of its term. We have reservations about leaving it to the end of this Assembly before the effectiveness of the Unit will be evaluated. We believe there should be more transparent, on-going monitoring of its performance.

**You appeared to accept the suggestion that a better measure of the success of the Delivery Unit might be when it identifies *non-delivery* and how it acts in those situations. We would like you to give some thought as to how you could report to us on this aspect of the Unit's operation so that we can fulfil our role in scrutinising your portfolio.**

We were interested to hear from the Permanent Secretary that he has established a group charged with improving the work of the Delivery Unit and the “heavy lifting on delivery” within the Welsh Government. **We would welcome more information on the constitution, remit and activities of that group.**

We went on to discuss the skills set of staff in the Delivery Unit, and we were told that those officials were “steeped in policy development”. While we appreciate the importance of staff having policy development skills, we believe they also need to demonstrate what the Permanent Secretary referred to as the “cycles of policy *and delivery*” (our emphasis). **We would welcome further information on the auditing and evaluation experience of the staff working in the Delivery Unit.**

Finally, we discussed at some length the size and complexity of the Programme for Government annual report, which is edited by the Delivery Unit. We agree with you that it is important for stakeholders, including

ourselves, to scrutinise in detail the work of Welsh Government departments. However, it is unclear to us how the report in its current form can be used, as quoted from your 2011 Cabinet Statement, “to be able at any time to evaluate the impact our policies are having.” We are also unclear as to the role that the Delivery Unit plays in deciding the indicators and measures that should be included in the annual report.

**Perhaps a measure of the effectiveness of the Delivery Unit would be its ability to analyse and summarise the annual report into more digestible formats. We would be grateful if you would consider this and the other points raised in the paragraph above and suggest how best to take them forward.**

## **Child Poverty**

Reducing child poverty is one of the most important challenges faced in Wales. Despite the discussion we had on the issue, we are still concerned about the current gap in the Welsh Government’s child poverty measurement and monitoring arrangements, which has been the case for the last three years.

You mentioned that you have no plans to change the Welsh Government’s measures of child poverty and outlined that previous indicators had “more or less” been drawn into the Programme for Government. You went on to say that you have asked the New Policy Institute to look at the child poverty strategy and that new data arising from its work will be available before the summer recess.

We believe that changes in the way progress with tackling child poverty is measured since the Welsh Government published the suite of 30 indicators in its 2006 document *Eradicating Child Poverty in Wales – Measuring Success*

is resulting in a lack of scrutiny on the Government's performance in this area. **We would welcome further information from you on a) the rationale for changing the Welsh Government's child poverty indicators since 2006, (b) the data from the New Policy Institute and (c) what you expect these data will add to current monitoring arrangements.**

We were also very concerned to hear you say that the Welsh Government "simply does not have the tools to ensure that we can achieve" child poverty targets. **While we appreciate that child poverty eradication is a joint responsibility between Wales and Westminster, it is not credible in our view for the Welsh Government to use this as an alibi for delivering on areas of its own responsibility.**

We talked about the good progress being made in Scotland and we were encouraged to hear that you will be looking at what has been achieved there and why the Scottish Government has been so effective. **You agreed to write to us giving your views on this issue, but we would like you to carry out a more rigorous review of the Scottish example and what Wales could learn from the approach it has followed. We would also like you to write to us with an update on the discussion at the recent Joint Ministerial Committee.**

More fundamentally, we discussed the fact that child poverty spans so many Government departments and areas of policy, and you told us that child poverty was being addressed as part of the Government's strategy towards poverty in general. **We note that the recent Cabinet reshuffle has resulted in one Minister having responsibility for many children's issues and also for tackling poverty, but we want to be assured that child poverty has a specific policy focus within the Minister's portfolio. We would like you to instigate a concerted refocus on *child* poverty, with added impetus.**

We look forward to receiving your response to the points we have raised.  
Both our letter and your reply will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Melding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

David Melding AM  
Chair, Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister