

Eluned Morgan, First Minister

Via e-mail

29 July 2025

Dear Eluned,

Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister 11 July: Follow-up questions

Thank you for attending the Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee on 11 July 2025. It was a useful and informative session and the Committee appreciated the opportunity to explore the progress made against your four main priorities since your appointment to office 12 months ago.

There were some areas the Committee would welcome further information on following the session:

Your four priorities

- You referred during the meeting to revising the wording of your four priorities and the motion tabled for the Plenary debate on 15 July appears to reinforce that. In light of this, could you please clarify what your four priorities actually are now and whether changes in wording reflect simply a desire to make them "as easy as possible for people to understand", as you suggested, or if they represent a more substantial change in focus, for example a lessening of priority placed on educational standards?

Boosting educational standards

- To what extent, does evidence suggest that educational standards have improved in schools and colleges over the past year, or in this Senedd term to date?
- The Committee is interested to understand whether the return of operational school improvement functions to local authorities, and away from the regional education consortia, through the School Partnership Programme, indicates that regional working over the past decade or so has not had the desired effect.
- To what extent are challenges around pupil attendance and behaviour hindering efforts to improve standards and educational outcomes, and what is the Welsh Government doing to address these issues?
- While the Committee understands that differences in the way qualifications were awarded during the pandemic means it is difficult to compare outcomes between years, it is possible to look at the relative position of different groups of pupils and how these have changed over time. Gaps in GCSE attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and other pupils have widened at several grades both during the period before the pandemic and since. In light of this, to what extent is the Welsh Government delivering on its Programme for Government objective of ensuring educational inequalities narrow - and the First Minister's own priority of ensuring every family (and presumably child) has the chance to succeed?

- To what extent do you consider that the new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system has been delivered successfully to date, given the apparent inconsistencies in how schools and local authorities are interpreting the 2018 Act and Code, and the 44% reduction in the number of pupils identified with ALN since the new system was introduced?

Providing more homes for social rent

- What is the likelihood of reaching the 20,000 target for new low carbon social homes for rent during this Senedd term.

Iechyd Da: A Healthier Wales

- Following concerns raised by Committees during scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2025–26 about long-term funding of preventative and palliative care services, the Committee would welcome further information on the assessments made by the Welsh Government to measure the impact this has had on both these services and other NHS services. What is being done to mitigate any negative impacts?
- The Committee would welcome an update on the number of hospices and hospice beds in Wales and whether this has changed in recent months and years.
- What measures have been taken by the Welsh Government to improve the handover of ambulance patients within its 15 minute target? How effective have those measures been and is there data available to illustrate the current situation?
- The Committee would welcome a summary of the latest figures relating to breastfeeding rates, in particular within Flying Start areas, and whether any data is collected once people have left hospital.

Green Jobs

- The Committee would welcome further clarification on the broadening of language around the Welsh Government's priority for creating 'green jobs' to focussing on creating 'more jobs', and whether this suggests a change of emphasis.
- In light of the announcement by Trydan Gwyrdd Cymru to use wooden poles rather than pylons for grid connectivity, the Committee would welcome further information on whether it believes alternative solutions to pylons should be considered by other developers bringing forward investments.

Connecting Communities

- The Committee would welcome further information on how the UK investment of rail infrastructure in Wales over recent years has impacted the long-term vision of the Welsh Government for 'transforming our railways'.
- What consideration has the Welsh Government given to encourage active travel to railway stations?

Delivery

- The Committee would welcome information on the progress being made by the Cabinet Office Delivery Unit, including the number of people working in the Unit.
- Does the Welsh Government intend to publish 'public dashboards' of performance data that is being used by Ministers to make their decisions?

The Autumn term scrutiny session is scheduled to take place on Friday, 12 December 2025 and the theme is likely to focus on 'education, young people and future generations'.

Yours sincerely

David F. Rees.

David Rees MS

Chair, Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

