

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Meeting: 14 July 2016

Committee role and responsibilities

Purpose

1. This paper sets out the main responsibilities of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee ('the Committee') for the Fifth Assembly.

Establishment and remit of committees

2. Standing Order 16.1 requires the Assembly 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.

3. In doing this, the Business Committee has to ensure that every area of responsibility of the government and associated public bodies, and all matters relating to the legislative competence of the Assembly and functions of the Welsh Ministers and of the Counsel General, are subject to the scrutiny of a committee or committees.

4. On 28 June 2016, the Assembly established six subject-specific committees¹ to carry out the functions described above, as well as a reserve policy and legislation committee. A further six committees² have also been established to undertake functions specified in

¹ Children, Young People and Education Committee; Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee; Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee; Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee; Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee; Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

² Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee; Finance Committee; Petitions Committee; Public Accounts Committee; Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee; Standards of Conduct Committee

Standing Orders, including the Finance and Public Accounts Committees.

The Committee's role and responsibilities

5. The Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee was established with a remit "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".

6. A more detailed list of the committee's remit is attached at Annexe 1. More detail on the wider roles and responsibilities of Assembly Committees is set out in the Business Committee's report '[Committees in the Fifth Assembly](#)' laid before the Assembly on 23 June 2016.

Role and responsibilities of the Chair

7. The Presiding Officer has written to all Chairs following their election, outlining the Assembly's expectations of Chairs and Committees, as well as the support available to them. A copy of the letter is attached at Annexe 2.

Operation of the Committee

8. The operation of Committees is governed by the rules set out in Standing Order 17. Advice on any aspect of SO17 is available from the clerks. Some of the key elements of SO17 are set out below:

- Declaration of Interests (SO17.24A) – Before taking part in Committee proceedings, a Member must declare any interest, financial or otherwise, that they, or to their knowledge, a family member, has or is expecting to have which is relevant to those

proceedings, and might reasonably be thought by others to influence their contribution.

- Quorum (SO17.31) - A committee meeting must be declared inquorate if there are fewer than three Members, or less than one-third of the committee's members, whichever is the greater, present. A committee meeting must be declared inquorate if, at the beginning of the meeting, the Members present represent only one political group.
- Openness (SO17.40) - Committees must meet in public and broadcasting access for public meetings must be permitted in accordance with such arrangements as the Commission agrees. Committee meetings are broadcast on Senedd TV and transcripts of committee meetings are made available in draft form within three to five working days, with a final version published within 10 working days.
- Meeting in Private (SO17.42) - A committee may resolve to exclude the public from a formal meeting or any part of a formal meeting for a specified purpose. These Standing Orders do not apply to informal meetings.
- Substitution (SO17.48) - A committee member who has given advance notice to the chair may be represented at a meeting, or a part of a meeting, by another Member from the same political group who has been identified in advance.

Support for the Committee

9. The Committee will be supported in all aspects of its work by a dedicated integrated team. The integrated team is made up of Commission staff from the following areas:

- Committee Clerking Team
- Research Service
- Legal Services
- Communications (Outreach and Youth Engagement)
- Translation and Reporting Service.

Issues to be considered as part of the Forward Work Programme

10. Alongside the policy inquiries agreed by the Committee, there are also specific matters that will need to be incorporated within the Forward Work Programme, including:

Legislation

11. The First Minister made a statement in plenary on Tuesday 28 June outlining the Welsh Government's Legislative Programme for the first year of the Fifth Assembly. The programme includes a Bill to abolish the Right to Buy and the Right to Acquire, and a Bill relating to the Trade Union Act.

12. The First Minister's statement does not include a specific timetable for introduction of the individual Bills. Subject to the Business Committee agreeing to refer specific Bills to the Committee, it may need to be flexible when planning its forward work programme in order to be able to respond to the demands of legislative scrutiny.

Scrutiny of Cabinet Secretaries

13. As an early priority, Members may wish to invite the relevant Cabinet Secretaries to attend scrutiny sessions to outline their vision and priorities for the next 18 months or so, and to follow up any legacy issues.

Budget Scrutiny

14. Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget will remain a routine part of the Committee's work programme. The Business Committee is currently considering the proposed timetable for the Welsh Government's forthcoming budget. Scrutiny sessions with relevant Cabinet Secretaries will be arranged to meet the agreed timetable.

Consideration of the Annual Report of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

15. Consideration of the PSOW's annual report will also remain a routine part of the Committee's work programme. The clerking team will make time for this in the Forward Work Programme.