

Elin Jones AM
Llywydd

19 July 2017

Dear Elin

Programming forthcoming legislation

Thank you for your letter dated 11 July, seeking my views on:

- Whether I consider our Committee would have capacity to manage the volume of forthcoming legislation; and
- Whether the double incidence of a pair of Bills being referred at similar times is likely to pose particular challenges.

Capacity of Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

My view is that four Bills in such a short space of time, and coming so quickly after the Committee has already undertaken scrutiny on a pair of Bills, which also followed in quick succession, is not ideal and should be avoided.

This view is informed by a number of factors, including the impact it will have on our capacity for policy and budget scrutiny (not taking into account any impact arising from Brexit). We would be left with very limited time available to undertake any policy scrutiny, and we would only be able to undertake very short work, such as one-day inquiries on tightly focused areas. Given the broad and significant remit of our committee this is far from ideal.



We would also lose the opportunity to respond to events, for example the work we have done following the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower. It would also severely restrict, if not, prohibit opportunities to do community engagement and outreach, or to undertake visits. We have found visits have played a critical part in our policy scrutiny work including on refugees and asylum seekers; post-legislative scrutiny of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act and Communities First: Lessons Learnt.

While we acknowledge that an important part of our role is to undertake legislative scrutiny it is far from ideal for the bulk of legislative scrutiny to be in the hands of one committee. It also restricts the ability of individual Members to influence and shape the forward work programme, with our programme being ultimately shaped by external factors.

I'm aware that this challenge was faced by our predecessor Committee in the fourth Assembly, and that the establishment of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee was partly to help mitigate against these pressures. I acknowledge that the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee has a heavy and important workload looking at Brexit. However, if it is the case that this means they cannot undertake part of their remit because of their workload, it is clear that that Business Committee will need to look at EEAL's remit, as well as considering the remits of other committees, to ensure that this problem does not continue into the fifth Assembly.

Double incidence of Bills

I am particularly concerned about the impact of the scheduling of the Bills and the fact that we are likely to have a pair of Bills referred to us at two separate points in the year. Any steps that could be taken to mitigate the impact this will have on the Committee (including referring one of the Bills to another Committee) would be very welcomed.

This is of particular concern in relation to our workload in the autumn, because it is possible that by having two Bills introduced at a similar time (even taking into



account the longer time available for Stage 1 consideration of The Public Service Ombudsman for Wales (Committee Bill)) it will mean the Committee is unable to carry out its agreed inquiry into Public Service Boards. This is a piece of work that would link to the Committee's current work on poverty in Wales, our on-going scrutiny of the Future Generations Commissioner, while also looking forward to the Local Government Reform Bill, and is not a piece of work that would fall under any other Committee's remit.

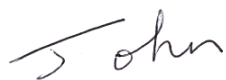
We have already seen the impact that a pair of Bills being referred at similar times can have on the Committee's work programme, following our consideration of the Trade Union (Wales) Bill which was introduced on 16 January, followed by the Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill introduced on 13 March. Even with almost two months separating the referral of these Bills, there has been an impact on the Committee's work programme. While we acknowledge that such close timetabling will happen, it is far from ideal for it to happen on three separate occasions within the first two years of an Assembly.

Further to the impact on the Committee and our work programme, these decisions cannot be taken without some consideration to the integrated team who support the Committee. Once Stage 2 is completed, and the Committee's legislative scrutiny has ended, Committee officials continue to support the legislative process through to Royal Assent. Having pairs of Bills introduced at a similar time will clearly have an impact on their other responsibilities and work they do for the Committee.

It is very welcome that the Business Committee is taking this approach to considering the impacts of legislative scrutiny on individual Committees and is looking at the legislative programme more broadly, instead of considering Bills in isolation. I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my views on the challenges facing the Committee over the coming months. In order to help us with our forward work programming, I would appreciate an in principle decision about referral being made as soon as is practical, to help aid us with our forward work programming.



Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John". The letters are cursive and connected.

John Griffiths

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

