

Sixth Senedd Committees

Titles and remits

June 2021

Introduction

1. We propose a committee system that will provide robust scrutiny of the Welsh Government, effective legislating, and an efficient use of Members' time. It is a proposal built on the learning gathered from past Seneddau.
2. The committees we propose cover all areas of policy and legislative competence for which the Welsh Ministers, and the Senedd, are responsible. The challenge we face, as a small legislature, is ensuring this coverage, whilst not overburdening Members of the Senedd with committee work to the point where it affects their ability to perform the full range of functions needed to effectively represent the people of Wales.
3. Central to our deliberations has been the goal of ensuring that no Member of the Senedd has to sit on more than two committees.
4. This has informed our decisions on both the number of committees and their size.
5. We remain mindful of the need to maintain sufficient agility and flexibility to respond to unforeseen challenges that might emerge during the course of this Senedd. We will seek to address this through our approach to timetabling and by committing to keeping the committee structure under review.
6. To deliver a committee system within these parameters, we propose continuing with seven dual function policy and legislation committees alongside a number of specialist committees.
7. In broad terms, this is the model that has operated in the Senedd for a decade and a model that has been iteratively refined during that period.
8. We see the structure that we are proposing for the Sixth Senedd as a progression of this model.

9. In summary, we propose the following committees:

- Children, Young People, and Education Committee
- Health and Social Care Committee
- Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee
- Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee
- Equality and Social Justice Committee
- Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee
- Local Government and Housing Committee
- Finance Committee
- Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee
- Legislation, Justice, and Constitutional Affairs Committee
- Standards of Conduct Committee
- Petitions Committee

10. The committees and their remits are provided in full at Annex A.

Breadth of remits

11. As was the case in the Fifth Senedd, it is important to understand that, in the case of the policy and legislation committees, their remits are not prescriptive or restrictive. We have deliberately allowed them to remain broad and we decided not to provide a list of subjects attached to each committee. As in the previous two Seneddau, we believe that providing committees with the ability to pursue issues across portfolios and subject areas makes for better scrutiny and avoids the risk of too narrow an approach.

12. We expect Chairs and their clerks to communicate with one another to ensure that work programmes are aligned and, in the unlikely event of a dispute, this can be resolved by the Business Committee through exercise of Standing Order 17.2 or, if necessary, Standing Order 16.3.

New or changed functions

Public Administration

13. Within the overall committee structure, there is a need to ensure administrative scrutiny takes place alongside financial and legislative scrutiny.
14. To help ensure this, we have added the responsibility for scrutinising public administration – the “machinery of government” – to the remit of the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee.
15. This should ensure that sufficient attention is brought to how the Welsh Government organises itself to govern and deliver services to the people of Wales.

External affairs

16. In the Fifth Senedd, an External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee (“the EAAL Committee”) was established to respond to the multiple issues arising from the process of exiting the European Union.
17. By the end of the Fifth Senedd, it performed a number of significant functions including centrally overseeing the scrutiny of the UK-wide Common Frameworks Programme, the UK internal market, and international agreements (including the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement).
18. The EAAL Committee also played an important role in developing interparliamentary relationships across the UK, in Europe, and beyond, to ensure that the views of the Senedd were being projected to the places outside Wales where they needed to be heard.
19. We have not proposed the establishment of an equivalent committee. Instead, we have proposed that the functions performed by this committee be included in the remits of several different committees.
20. We intend to issue a separate report that responds to the legacy recommendations made by Fifth Senedd Committees that relate to the establishment of committees, including those made by the EAAL Committee.

Annex A: Committee remits

Policy and Legislation Committees

Children, Young People, and Education Committee

Remit: To examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy, encompassing (but not restricted to): the education, health and well-being of the children and young people of Wales, including their social care.

Health and Social Care Committee

Remit: To examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): the physical, mental and public health and well-being of the people of Wales, including the social care system.

Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs Committee

Remit: To examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): economic development, regeneration, skills, trade, research and development (including technology and science), and rural affairs.

Local Government and Housing Committee

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, communities, and housing.

Equality and Social Justice Committee

Remit:

- To examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): equality and human rights, fair work, community cohesion and safety; tackling poverty, and implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.
- Additionally, the committee may investigate any area of policy from the perspective of the cross-cutting issues within its remit, including (but not restricted to): equality and human rights, and the implementation of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee

Remit: To examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): climate change policy, the environment, energy; planning; transport, and connectivity.

Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations Committee

Remit:

- To examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing (but not restricted to): the Welsh Language, culture; the arts; historic environment; communications, broadcasting; the media, sport, and international relations.
- The Committee may investigate any area of policy from the perspective of the Welsh Language.

Specialist Committees

Finance Committee

Remit:

- to carry out the functions of the responsible committee set out in Standing Orders 18.10, 18.11, 18A, and 19 of the Senedd;
- under Standing Order 19, the committee's responsibilities include considering any report or document laid before the Senedd concerning the use of resources, or expenditure from the Welsh Consolidated Fund, including undertaking budget scrutiny of the bodies directly funded from the Welsh Consolidated Fund;
- under Standing Orders 18.10 and 18.11, the committee's responsibilities include oversight of the governance of the Wales Audit Office, as set out in the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2013;
- under Standing Order 18A, the committee's responsibilities include oversight of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales;
- the committee may also consider any proposals for, and the progress of, the devolution of fiscal powers to Wales as part of its responsibilities; and
- the committee may scrutinise legislation introduced to the Senedd.

Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

Remit:

- To carry out the functions set out in Standing Orders 18.2 and 18.3 and consider any other matter that relates to the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are employed in the discharge of public functions in Wales.
- The committee may scrutinise any other matter relating to the machinery of government, including the quality and standards of administration provided by the Welsh Government's Civil Service and Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies.

Legislation, Justice, and Constitution Committee

Remit:

- To carry out the functions of the responsible committee set out in Standing Order 21 and Standing Order 26C.
- The Committee may consider any other matter relating to legislation within or relating to the competence of the Senedd or the Welsh Ministers, including the quality of legislation.
- The Committee may consider any matter relating to devolution, the constitution (including Wales' constitutional future), justice, and external affairs.
- This includes (but is not restricted to): changes to the devolution settlement, intergovernmental relations, the UK-wide common frameworks programme, the UK internal market, international agreements, and interparliamentary relations.

Standards of Conduct Committee

Remit: To carry out the functions of the responsible committee set out in Standing Order 22.

Petitions Committee

Remit: To carry out the functions of the responsible committee set out in Standing Order 23.