



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee – 12 March 2024**

DATE **9 May 2024**

BY **Counsel General, Mick Antoniw MS**

I chaired the sixth meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee ('IMSC') on 12 March. The then Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, Jane Hutt MS, also attended for Welsh Government.

A joint [communique](#) was published following the meeting, which contains full details of other attendees. As this was the first IMSC meeting since the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Executive, I opened the meeting by welcoming Northern Ireland's First Minister and deputy First Minister. The agenda enabled discussion of a range of issues including: how to support multi-faith communities and foster community cohesion; the UK Legislative Programme (specifically, legislation relating to tobacco and vapes and the Post Office); and the final report of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales.

In relation to the discussion on community cohesion, the then Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip outlined common threats to community cohesion, noting the sometimes-divisive narratives in the media around immigration and highlighting Wales' aspiration to be nation of sanctuary. She requested further information from the UK Government on their approach to tackling online extremism and noted the need to look at prevention in a holistic way. I emphasised the need for consensus on these issues.

As part of the discussion relating to the Tobacco and Vapes Bill, I noted that, whilst we agreed to work together on a UK-wide basis at the October IMSC, the portfolio level Health Inter-Ministerial Group has yet to properly meet. That Group will be vital for discussion of the legislation as it develops and to ensure the smooth passage of the Senedd consent process. Alongside the health focus of this legislation, I also noted the concerns raised by vapes as single use plastic items.

I welcomed the Post Office legislation introduced and queried whether, if similar injustices relating to the earlier CAPTURE system were found, that would be taken into account.

I welcomed the improved engagement and co-operation seen recently relating to the UK legislative programme, something that is absolutely necessary if further breaches of the Sewel Convention are to be avoided. I requested further official level discussions to facilitate progress on the Data Protection and Digital Information Bill; the Victims and Prisoners Bill; the Trade (CPTPP) Bill and the Leasehold Reform Bill.

I took the opportunity to highlight the recently published final report of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales, given the shared relevance of some of the issues raised by it. Specifically, I drew attention to Commission recommendations 1 and 2, which relate to strengthening democracy and citizen engagement – areas which represent a challenge for us all; recommendations 4 and 5, which look at the strengthening intergovernmental relations mechanisms and the Sewel Convention – matters which are clearly of collective interest; and recommendation 6, which relates to financial management.

The next IMSC is currently scheduled to be held in June, with chairing arrangements to be determined.