

Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd Consultation

June 2025

The Chairs' Forum is seeking views on committee effectiveness in the sixth Senedd to help inform the seventh Senedd committee structure.

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Background

1. The Chairs' Forum ("the Forum") is made up of all the Chairs of the Senedd Committees and is responsible for maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of Committees, through coordination, collective leadership, and information exchange. It provides a space to address cross-cutting scrutiny issues, share good practice, and look more strategically at the work of committees.
2. The Forum is considering how Committees have operated during the Sixth Senedd and any changes that could be made to Committee procedures and practices for the Seventh Senedd to ensure the scrutiny function is as effective as possible. The Forum is keen to consider wider cultural issues around the operation of Senedd Committees, as well as practical matters such as size and function.
3. The Future Senedd Committee made a number of recommendations to the Forum about considerations for Committees in the Seventh Senedd, and these have been factored into the questions in this consultation.
4. Further information about the work of Committees in the Sixth Senedd and considerations for future Committee structures is set out on the following pages but the Forum is keen to hear views on the following areas in particular:

- Committee culture
- Organisation of Committee Business

- Interactions with Senedd Committees

5. This consultation seeks to gather a range of views, and you are welcome to answer some or all the questions.

Committees in the Sixth Senedd

Committee structure

6. There are currently 17 Committees in operation. A further two Committees are currently inactive, as well as one Committee which was dissolved in 2022. The Chairs' Forum is considered an informal Committee.

7. The size of each Committee varies, ranging from 4 – 7 Members, as noted in Table 1 below.

8. Standing Orders dictate that the membership of each Committee, including the allocation of Chairs, should reflect the balance of the political groups to which Members belong (so far as is reasonably practicable).

Table 1

Active Committees	Membership
Business Committee	4
Children, Young People and Education	6
Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure,	6
Committee of the Scrutiny of the First Minister	7
Committee of the Whole Senedd	60
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport, and International Relations	6
Economy, Trade, and Rural Affairs	6
Equality and Social Justice	6
Finance	4
Health and Social Care	6
Legislation, Justice and Constitution	4
Llywydd's Committee	5
Local Government and Housing	6
Petitions	5

Active Committees	Membership
Public Accounts and Public Administration	5
Standards of Conduct	4
Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee	4 (+2 vacancies)

Inactive Committees	Membership
Reform Bill Committee	4
Future Senedd Committee	5 (including the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery)

Dissolved Committees	Membership
Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform (2021 - 2022)	5

Remits

9. When establishing and proposing the remits of committees, the Business Committee must ensure that every area of responsibility of the Government and associated public bodies is subject to the scrutiny of a committee or committees. That includes the examination of any expenditure, financing, administration and policy of the Government and associated bodies, as well as any associated legislation.

10. The remits of most cross-cutting policy and legislation committees are proposed by the Business Committee and are subject to a vote of the Senedd. Such remits need not be coterminous with ministerial portfolios, and in practice most committees have operated with broad policy responsibilities which sometimes cut across more than one ministerial portfolio. However, Standing Orders state that certain committees are established with the responsibility to perform particular functions. For example, these include establishing:

- a “Public Accounts Committee”, to consider matters that relate to the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are employed in the discharge of public functions in Wales;
- Committee(s) which have oversight of Directly Funded Bodies (such as the Senedd Commission, Wales Audit Office, Public Service Ombudsman and Electoral Commission), including their annual budget cycles;

- Committee(s) that consider and report on the proposals for financing, or use of resources laid by Welsh Ministers or the Commission, and any other matter relating to or affecting expenditure out of the Welsh Consolidated Fund (including scrutiny of the Welsh Government's annual draft budget and associated administrative arrangements);
- Committee(s) that consider constitutional and legislative affairs under Standing Order 21;
- Committee(s) that consider complaints made to it by the Commissioner for Standards and any matters of principle relating to Members' conduct; as well as supervising the arrangements for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of information registered and recorded under Standing Orders 2 – 5; and
- Committee(s) that consider public petitions.

11. During the Sixth Senedd, the Senedd has operated a committee system that includes dual function policy and legislation scrutiny committees.

12. Committees are responsible for setting their own work programmes and how they work. There are a number of different approaches to how Committees can work, such as inquiries, visits, and stakeholder events.

Considerations for Future Committees

13. The Forum is considering how the Committee system has functioned over the course of the Sixth Senedd and is keen to identify what has worked well, and what can be improved, with the aim of informing decisions about the establishment and operation of committees in the Seventh Senedd. It has agreed to look at:

1. Committee Culture:

Considering practices which have worked well and where improvements can be made in relation to Senedd Committees including the tone and dynamics of Committees, effectiveness of recommendations and relations with Government,

Experiences of interacting with Committees including engagement with stakeholders, matters like diversity monitoring and interactions in language of choice

2. Organisation of Committee Business:

(i) Explore the benefits of the Senedd's current system (using dual-function policy and legislation committees) compared to a system that utilises separate policy scrutiny committees and public Bill committees; and the benefits of a system linked to the Government's organization of Ministerial responsibilities;

(ii) Timetabling of Committees in relation to other Senedd business.

(iii) Size and composition of Committees.

3. Interactions with Senedd Committees, including:

(i) Hybrid working;

(ii) Research briefing and

(iii) Welsh Language support.

14. These link in with the Future Senedd Committee's recommendations in its report 'Parliamentary business in the Seventh Senedd'¹, for the Chairs' Forum to consider as part of its work in this area. These include considering commissioning work to capture and communicate the culture of Senedd committees in the Sixth Senedd, considering the utility of committee portfolios being linked to Ministerial responsibilities, and capturing information on the effect of the increased size of the Senedd on scrutiny outcomes. **The key recommendations are:**

Recommendation 5. We recommend that the Chairs' Forum, in consultation with the Business Committee and the Senedd Commission, considers how best to establish arrangements to understand the effect the increase in the size of the Senedd has on the time Members spend preparing for committee work, and whether this leads to better scrutiny outcomes.

Recommendation 6. We recommend that the Chairs' Forum, in consultation with the Business Committee, revisits recommendation 1.1 of Professor Stirbu's report to determine whether the Seventh Senedd's Business Committee would benefit from work to:

- explore whether there is evidence to demonstrate a difference in outcomes delivered by a committee system that predominantly utilises dual-function policy and legislation committees (e.g. Scottish Parliament, the Senedd, and some European legislatures) compared to a system that utilises separate policy scrutiny committees and ad hoc public Bill committees (e.g. House of Commons, Commonwealth legislatures); and/or Parliamentary business in the Seventh Senedd
- explore whether there is evidence to demonstrate a difference in outcomes from a committee system linked to the Government's

¹ [Future Senedd Committee report: Parliamentary business in the Seventh Senedd](#)

organisation of Ministerial responsibilities (e.g. Scottish Parliament, House of Commons), compared to a committee system that is not (e.g. the Senedd).

Recommendation 7. We recommend that the Chairs' Forum, in consultation with the Business Committee and the Senedd Commission, considers commissioning work to capture and communicate the culture of Senedd committees in the Sixth Senedd, with a view to identifying the informal norms and practices that are valued by Members, and those that are not, to assist in the preservation of positive norms and practices between Seneddau, and inform induction processes.

Consultation Questions

15. The Forum would welcome responses to the questions in the following areas.

Committee Culture

16. As set out in paragraph 9 and 10, committees currently have a broad range of responsibilities including consideration of Welsh Government policy, legislation, and petitions submitted by the public. It is for committees to decide their own work programmes, with the exception of legislation which is allocated by Business Committee to committees with a specified timetable for each stage of the legislative process. Committees typically make recommendations to the Welsh Government based on its examination of policy areas.

The Forum would like to know your view on how committees focus their time e.g. legislation, policy inquires, stakeholder engagement, consideration of petitions ,and the level of strategic focus and evaluation in Committees.

17. Each committee decides its own approach to its work, with direction from the Chair.

The Forum would like to know whether you have a view on the tone and dynamics of committee meetings and on the role played by the Chair.

Organisation of Committee Business

18. The Senedd has operated joint policy and legislation Committees since the Fourth Assembly. This allows Members to develop policy expertise relevant to legislation, however it can have an impact on the levels of work a committee can undertake other than legislative scrutiny – depending on what legislation falls within the portfolio in each parliamentary term.

19. The portfolios in the Senedd committees are cross-cutting, meaning that they do not mirror Ministerial portfolios but instead cover a range of topics. This allows for connections between policy areas and scrutiny of Ministers on specific areas rather than portfolios. It also means that the Committee structure remains consistent if there are Ministerial reshuffles. However, this approach does mean that some committees scrutinise the work of multiple Ministers and can potentially see matters fall between committee remits. There have also been some concerns raised in this Senedd about scrutiny of the portfolio areas which are the direct responsibility of the First Minister.

The Forum would welcome views on the effectiveness of policy and legislation scrutiny being led by single committees, and whether committee remits should be cross-cutting or mirror Ministerial portfolios.

20. The Sixth Senedd saw some committees being established with smaller memberships than in previous Seneddau, with more four and five Member committees being established at the beginning of the Senedd, although most Committees were appointed with six Members. Quorum for committees remained at three Members, a policy which the Forum has recently reviewed and supports continuing into the next Senedd.

21. The Senedd Commission has agreed to undertake a gender-sensitive parliament audit before the end of the Sixth Senedd. It will focus in particular on the influence of gender on the Senedd's parliamentary decision making.

The Forum would welcome views on how committees are constituted such as the size of committees, the membership, and the way in which Committee Chairs and membership is allocated.

Interactions with Committees

22. Committees work with a broad range of stakeholders and adopt a number of different approaches to Committee work including evidence sessions, stakeholder event and consultations.

23. The Senedd seeks to be an open and welcoming organisation which enables a wide range of people to interact with it. During the course of the Sixth Senedd, committees have monitored the diversity of witnesses and considered ways in which people can interact freely in the language of choice.

The Forum would like to hear views on your experiences of attending and interacting with committees, including matters such as working in a hybrid way and the ability to engage with the work of the Senedd in your language of choice.

The Forum would also welcome examples of committee scrutiny or work which you consider has been effective or was not as effective and any suggestions for how effectiveness could be improved.