

Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd Consultation

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

The work of the Committees with regard to legislation tends to be dependent on the Programme for Government and the focus of the Welsh Government at the time. Therefore, one Committee may have more legislation on its forward work programme than others, while a different Committee may have more freedom to evaluate Welsh Government policy in depth. Furthermore, where the Committee focuses its time can sometimes be dependent on the Chair.

I do believe that Committees have an essential purpose in evaluating all of the above, and it can be quite difficult to assess where to focus their time and workload. Therefore, the analysis and critique of Committees can sometimes be at a surface level, rather than full inquiries.

- 2. 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.**

N/A

- 3. 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.**

Both types of Committee have their benefits and their weaknesses. While ad hoc Public Bill Committees may enable Members of policy Committees to scrutinise Welsh Government policy in more depth, the question of selection for those ad hoc Committees would be key. For example, Members who have little to no experience of the policy areas discussed within a proposed piece of legislation may not deliver the level of scrutiny it may need before passing to the Committee of the Whole Senedd. Although it is up to parties to put forward their candidates, this would need to be considered, as dual-function policy and legislation often means more agility in legislative scrutiny.

However, the time constraints for dual-function policy and legislation Committees have been outlined in the response to question 1, above.

Individual committees which reflect Ministerial responsibilities is an attractive prospect, however, thought should be given to administration when the First Minister has changed on multiple occasions in one term, as has happened in the Sixth Senedd.

- 4. 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.**

I am very concerned that, during the Sixth Senedd, it has become the norm for larger parties to have absent Members and not find substitutions. This means that Members such as myself have had to leave Committees in session to cover Members of other parties, and go between Committees already in session to ensure they are quorate.

With regard to specific Committees, those with higher workloads, such as the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee, should have a higher quota of Members. Furthermore, those Committees with a large breadth of issues scrutinised should also have higher membership, and this should be fairly distributed amongst Members.

- 5. 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.**

As in my response to Question 4, above, the lack of substitutions from some parties when Committees need to be quorate is cause for concern. This does need to be focused on, whether guidance for Chairs and Members needs to be clearer or other avenues are pursued.