

Elin Jones MS  
Y Llywydd  
Chair, Chairs' Forum

10 October 2025

## **Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd**

Annwyl Lywydd,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2025 seeking our views on how committees have operated during the Sixth Senedd. We considered the questions in the consultation document at our meeting on 1 October. The following is a summary of main points discussed:

### **Committee Culture**

During the Sixth Senedd we have examined primary legislation and Legislative Consent Memoranda, annually scrutinised the Welsh Government's draft budget and undertaken a number of policy inquiries.

At the start of this Senedd, we held a strategic planning session with an external facilitator and set our overarching priorities for the upcoming term, specifically the delivery and availability of appropriate housing and the sustainability of local government in Wales. We subsequently held two further strategic planning sessions to review the Committee's objectives and ways of working and to agree future work priorities which aligned with our strategy.

We found these sessions effective to provide a clear focus and consensus in relation to the Committee's forward work programme. Follow-up sessions have been valuable, particularly following Membership changes, to ensure that policy inquiries remain aligned with agreed priorities and to support committee cohesion and a shared understanding of preferred ways of working. However, we noted that frequent changes in membership does disrupt continuity of work and the development of

policy expertise. Members joining mid-way through term would benefit from an induction to the policy areas within the Committee's remit. Having a background in the Committee's policy areas or relevant subject knowledge is helpful and enhances scrutiny.

In the Seventh Senedd, we would recommend that Members, as part of their formal induction, receive training to help them understand the roles and expectations of the Chair and other committee members, particularly as it is likely that there will be a high number of new Members elected in May 2026. We also noted that the tone and dynamics of meetings could be different in the next Senedd which may require different chairing skills and the need for further training for Chairs.

## **Organisation of Committee Business**

The remit of our Committee mirrors the Ministerial portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government. We have undertaken a number of inquiries and legislative scrutiny across both policy areas. However, we have undertaken more policy inquiry work relating to housing, compared to local government. This was not helped by the original committee timetable which allocated us a fortnightly meeting slot on a Wednesday, which did not enable us to allocate sufficient time for both workstreams. During the autumn term 2021, we were only able to undertake one housing inquiry alongside the scrutiny of LCMS and the draft budget.

As a joint policy and legislation committee, we have scrutinised four Bills during this Senedd. Our inquiry work has enabled us develop knowledge and understanding of policy areas within our remit, which we have subsequently applied to legislative scrutiny.

Our committee was appointed with six Members. To date, we have not had to suspend or adjourn due to quorum issues but have once had to delay the start of a meeting. We have come close to having quorum issues on a number of occasions, and we discussed that this would be more problematic if we were a smaller committee. The current committee has worked well. We have maintained a collegiate approach to our work and new Members have benefited from learning from more experienced Members.

## **Interactions with Committees**

We appreciate the flexibility offered by being able to join committee meetings remotely, particularly for North Wales Members on Thursdays. However, we acknowledge that in person attendance is preferable for Ministerial scrutiny and for Stage 2 of legislative scrutiny. We also noted that hybrid meetings promote accessibility by removing geographical barriers, meaning that we can engage with a wider audience. However we acknowledged that there is still room for improvement, especially in hearing from the "unheard voices";

In terms of accessibility and engagement, we have sought to make adjustments to enable people with lived experience to share their personal insights. For example, when undertaking work on building safety, a disabled high-rise resident with no voluntary speech and involuntary vocal and motor tics

provided evidence to the Committee by preparing a short video clip to be played at the start of session and making further contributions in response to questions from Members via the Zoom chat so that they could be read by the clerking team.

We also supported Gypsies and Travellers, one of the most vulnerable and prejudiced against communities, to share their views on the provision of sites, which we would probably view as one of our most important policy inquiries. We gathered the lived experiences of Gypsies and Travellers by undertaking site visits and focus groups and being flexible in how evidence could be submitted as levels of illiteracy are high among this marginalised community. We undertook a follow-up inquiry to look at Welsh Government's progress in implementing our initial recommendations after receiving correspondence highlighting that there had been no progress and that there was underspend in this portfolio. This was in line with our Sixth Senedd objectives to "listen, learn and persist to make a difference to the delivery of local government and housing in Wales" and to "view inquiries as live issues, not one-off events". We were deeply disappointed to find that there had been very little to no progress made in terms of implementing our recommendations. The Welsh Government has a responsibility to deliver for the people of Wales and committees play a vital role in holding them to account. We are encouraged that the responsible Welsh Minister has responded to our concern and progress has followed.

We also discussed Members' and witnesses' ability to contribute in their preferred language of either English or Welsh as the official languages of the Senedd. While Members praised the professionalism and high quality of the interpretation service, it was noted that the experience of contributing in Welsh is not on par with participation through the medium of English. In particular, it was felt that the use of headsets for receiving the translated feed can be a barrier. Given advances in technology, there should be a better way of providing simultaneous translation and we hope to see the experienced improved by the Seventh Senedd.

I hope that you find our response helpful.

Kind regards,



John Griffiths MS

Chair, Local Government and Housing Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.