

Dame Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer
National Assembly for Wales
Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay
Cardiff CF99 1NA

10 March 2016

Dear Presiding Officer

COMMITTEE FOR THE SCRUTINY OF THE FIRST MINISTER

The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister held its final meeting of this Assembly on 26 February when we had a productive session with the First Minister reviewing matters that we have covered over the course of the Assembly.

The issues we have covered with the First Minister have included;

- Legislative Programme
- First Minister's Delivery Unit
- Child poverty
- Major infrastructure projects in north Wales
- Relationship with the third and private sectors
- Climate Change
- The promotion and marketing of Wales
- Welsh Language
- Major public appointments

We have also looked in recent meetings at some of the constitutional developments that are under consideration in the Assembly and more widely. The Committee is grateful to the First Minister for his full responses to our questions and for his open approach over the course of the Assembly.

Following the session with the First Minister the Committee considered in private issues relating to the role and working methods of the Committee in the next Assembly.



Committee Members felt that the Committee fulfilled a very useful function and agreed that a similar Committee should be established in the next Assembly. Committee Members also agreed that I should convey the following practical points to you so that they can be noted by the current Business Committee and so that officials can take them into account in advising the incoming Business Committee.

Frequency of Meetings – The Committee currently meets once in each Assembly term and agreed that this was appropriate for the next Assembly as well.

Length of meetings – The Committee usually meets for around 2½ hours (2 hours with the FM and around 30 minutes for preparation and follow-up discussions). Again, the Committee saw no need to change this.

Size of Committee – This will depend on the makeup of the next Assembly but, the Committee is content with the Committee continuing to be Chaired ex officio by the Deputy Presiding Officer and that each party group is represented by a single representative.

Remit – The Committee's remit during the Fourth Assembly has been;

to scrutinise the First Minister on any matter relevant to the exercise of the functions of the Welsh Government'.

In practice, the Committee agreed at an early stage that it would look in each meeting at one broad topic, related to the strategic vision of the Welsh Government, as well as a specific subject area that is central to the Welsh Government's programme. It has also tended to confine itself to matters that are specific portfolio responsibilities of the First Minister or where the First Minister has a clear cross-cutting, co-ordination or leadership role. The Committee is content for the current remit and approach to continue.

Timetabling – Meetings of the Committee are not part of the Committee timetable. This does offer some flexibility to the Committee around where and when it meets. However, it has also led to some practical difficulties in having to agree dates for meetings with the First Minister's Office. Latterly, most meetings of the Committee have been held on a Friday, which may have made it more difficult for some Members, particularly in the North of Wales to attend on a constituency day. The Committee agreed that this should be noted as an issue.



Committee Members were aware of some discussion of whether the functions of some current Committees could be merged in the next Assembly possibly also including responsibility for European issues. The Committee had no opinion on the general merits of such an approach but agreed that there is continuing merit in a Committee that can focus entirely on scrutinising the First Minister.

I hope these comments are helpful. I am copying this letter to the First Minister in case he wishes to add any views of his own.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Melding". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

David Melding AM

Deputy Presiding Officer

Chair, Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

