

John Griffiths AM
Chair
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Your ref:
Our ref:

30 June 2016

Dear John

Congratulations on your appointment as a committee chair. By electing you to this role, the National Assembly has entrusted you with significant responsibilities. On behalf of the Assembly Commission and the Business Committee, I am writing to explain the Assembly's expectations and the support available to you and the Members of your committee.

The Assembly's committees are at the heart of the democratic process and the chairs of those committees are critical to their success in holding the Government to account, making laws and engaging directly with the people of Wales. I strongly endorse the vision set out by the Commission and Business Committee of the Fourth Assembly:

Committees of the Assembly should demonstrably improve the quality of policy outcomes, legislation, public services and government spending for society as a whole in Wales. They should be respected, influential and accessible, acting with integrity and independence. Their work should be strategic and rigorous.

This vision is underpinned by 10 strategic objectives, which are set out in the Annexe to this letter.

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



I have also included in the Annexe the key responsibilities of a committee chair. These have been endorsed by the Business Committee. They also form the basis for the independent Remuneration Board's assessment of the additional remuneration you will receive for the role. They therefore represent the expectations placed on you in your new role. I understand that the Remuneration Board will be considering the matter of chairs' pay for the Fifth Assembly at their next meeting in July.

You have been allocated a committee clerk to help you establish the committee before Summer recess: Sarah Beasley. Sarah manages a small team providing you and your committee with strategic, procedural and administrative support and advice. Sarah also leads an integrated team of specialists from other services (in research, communications, legal, and translation), and works with staff from across the Commission to deliver the services your committee requires. Sarah is your first point of contact for committee business, but I would encourage you to get to know, and work directly with, all other team members. Though Sarah will typically spend a large proportion of her time working with you, her role also involves supporting the other Members of the committee, and providing support for the scrutiny of Bills even after your committee has finished its consideration of them. As the number of committees has increased since the Fourth Assembly, work is underway to finalise the staffing structures, and my officials will contact you about this before the start of the Autumn term.

Your clerk and integrated team will assist you in convening your committee and designing its initial programme of work. I recommend that you set aside time early in your tenure to work with all Members of your committee on strategic planning and your preferred ways of working. Experience in the previous Assembly suggests that time dedicated for this, away from the routine of Assembly business, will be well spent. A comprehensive programme is available for your continuing professional development (CPD) as chair, and for your committee Members, to help with this process.

I intend to convene a Chairs' Forum meeting as soon as possible. This will provide an opportunity for you to discuss and agree with your peers, on a cross-party basis, how best to maximise the impact of scrutiny through the committee system. I hope that the Forum will meet regularly and I would urge you to



participate actively in order to drive the strategic agenda for committees over the course of the Fifth Assembly.

I am copying this letter to your Party Leader and Business Manager. I will also arrange for a copy to be published on the Assembly website. This will ensure that everybody who has an interest in your committee, from your colleagues to the people of Wales, has clarity on your role and the parameters within which you are operating.

I wish you every success in your role as a chair, and I would encourage you to contact me at any time if you would like to discuss any aspect of your committee's work. Furthermore, please be assured that all Commission staff, from the Chief Executive throughout the organisation, are ready and willing to help your committee achieve its objectives.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elin Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E'.

Elin Jones AM
Presiding Officer



Annexe

1. Strategic objectives for Assembly committees

Committees will:

- a. have a clear, agreed, strategic plan for their work that prioritises their activities and focuses their use of time and resource;
- b. be a top priority for the Members who serve on them;
- c. be guided by chairs who fulfil all of the expectations set for them by the Assembly;
- d. be respected and listened to by the Welsh Government because of the quality of their inquiries and scrutiny, the rigour of their questioning, the depth of their analysis and the value of their legislative amendment. The Government will be mindful of the reaction of committees as it formulates its policy, spending and legislative plans;
- e. scrutinise policy, spending and legislation within their portfolio in the round, not as isolated aspects of their responsibilities;
- f. offer and expect constructive engagement with the Welsh Government but retain their detachment and ability to offer objective criticism;
- g. not be limited by constraints on access to Ministers, information or witnesses and will be able to draw on the expert advice and support they require;
- h. engage with a wide diversity of people, be seen by stakeholder groups as important, influential players and as the natural place to go to with concerns and ideas, and undertake work that enhances the public reputation of the Assembly. Their outputs will be accessible to as wide an audience as possible;



- i. ensure that those who contribute to their work see the value of their participation; and
- j. seek critical analysis and evaluation to improve their performance.

2. Key responsibilities of committee chairs:

The key responsibilities of committee chairs are to:

- set the strategic direction of the committee and ensure the transparent prioritisation of its activity so as to deliver a balanced, comprehensive and effective programme of legislative, policy and financial scrutiny;
- maximise the relevance and influence of the committee whilst maintaining its clear independence from the Welsh Government;
- act impartially at all times, decisively, fairly and in a manner that maintains the confidence of the committee;
- command the confidence of Members, witnesses and the public at large through knowledge of the subject matter of the committee's remit; demonstration of effective legislative, policy and financial scrutiny techniques; maintenance of order; and the application of all relevant legal and procedural requirements on the committee;
- secure the commitment and engagement of all committee Members and build cross-party consensus wherever possible;
- build the culture and skills mix within the committee required to maximise its effectiveness as a scrutiny body;
- ensure that the committee receives the expert advice, information and other support it requires to fulfil its objectives effectively;
- drive the delivery of all aspects of the committee's work with pace and quality;



- represent the committee publicly, in the media and in formal Assembly business; and
- ensure critical analysis and evaluation of the committee's work and drive innovation in its operation so as to increase effectiveness, public engagement and impact.

