

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Comisiwn y Cynulliad

National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Commission

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Chair of Public Accounts Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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9 March 2018

Dear Nick

Public Accounts Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2016–17

I am writing in response to the Public Accounts Committee report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2016–17. I would like to thank the Committee for their scrutiny and for highlighting our commended use of infographics, which help make our statistics eye-catching and accessible to our users. We will continue to develop our approach of including accessible and transparent information within our Annual Report and Accounts document.

I would also like to again take this opportunity to assure the Committee that we remain as committed as ever to providing assurance through external scrutiny and audit as well as our internal governance framework. This work is vital in underpinning our confidence that we use resources efficiently, economically and effectively in delivering our services to the Assembly.

Both of your Committee's recommendations concerning the Commission are addressed in full in the attached Annex.

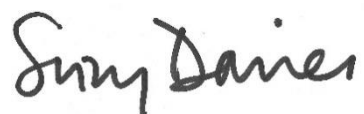


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If you would like any further information on any matter covered in the Annex, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzy Davies". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Suzy Davies

cc Assembly Commissioners, Manon Antoniazzi, Nia Morgan



Public Accounts Committee Report on the Scrutiny of Accounts 2016–17

Recommendation 17. We recommend that the Assembly Commission provide us with details of how its capacity review has tested staffing levels and provide details of how staff are deployed to deliver the Assembly Commissions priorities.

A copy of the Capacity Review Report will be provided to the Committee.

As part of phase 1 of the review, we:

- benchmarked our staffing levels against those from the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- explained the development and expansion of the staffing levels within the constitutional context;
- pinpointed significant events such as the insourcing of ICT which while increasing headcount continues to deliver recurrent financial savings and efficiency to the Commission;
- outlined the impact on staffing levels of having a relatively low number of elected members despite increasing powers;
- provided a service by service breakdown of how staff are currently deployed; and
- explained the process behind the capacity planning process which outlines how resources are allocated to deliver on the Commission's priorities.

As a general principle, the Commission is committed to staying within its current establishment figure of 491 for the duration of the Fifth Assembly.

Phase 2 of the review will now see further detailed work which will include end to end reviews of key systems in order to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency.

We are also gathering more quantitative data to highlight the volumes of work which various teams face as well as undertaking scenario planning exercises to project potential future demands resulting from further constitutional change, which includes Brexit.



Recommendation 18. The Committee recognises the importance of effectively managing staff absences while ensuring the wellbeing of staff. We recommend that Assembly Commission continue to carefully monitor staff absence levels including analysis of the causes of sickness absence to ensure these are managed appropriately.

Since 2014 there has been a focus both on utilising the new HR IT system to improve system management and reporting, and on management capability and support for employees with health conditions. This has improved the accuracy of our data, and enabled a targeted approach to absence management. A focus on support for musculoskeletal-related absences in 2014–2015 has resulted in a subsequent reduction.

The focus over the past 18 months has been on mental wellbeing, and since we signed the Time change Wales pledge in October 2016 we have taken great strides to break down the stigma often associated with mental health, by focussing instead on mental wellbeing for all at the Commission. Our mental health statistics have increased in the first instance, which has been a positive sign that stigma is reducing and staff are increasingly comfortable declaring their personal stories.

The Assembly Commission Management Board take very seriously the need to protect colleagues' wellbeing in the workplace and Commission employee absence statistics are regularly monitored and discussed to ensure patterns are identified or new approaches can be tested. Figures to date consistently fall within the CIPD published public sector average.

Assembly Commission
March 2018



Capacity Review

Contents

Foreword.....	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	7
Why we undertook this review	7
How we undertook this review.....	7
The report structure	8
Staffing the Assembly Commission	9
The constitutional context	9
The development of the Assembly Commission structure	11
The current Assembly Commission structure	12
Approaches to resourcing	14
Culture of the organisation	15
Skills and capabilities	16
Benchmarking	18
Benchmarking establishment size	18
Benchmarking bilingual services	23
Opportunities to work differently	25
Agreement of priorities	25
Improved planning and delivery	27
Agile capacity and capability	29
Development of a shared understanding.....	31
Next Steps.....	32

Foreword

As a publicly funded organisation, the Assembly Commission must consistently demonstrate that it uses its resources effectively and efficiently. It is in this context that in September 2017, we initiated a review of the Assembly Commission's structure and processes to understand how resources are currently allocated within the organisation and to evaluate whether this provides the most effective and efficient deployment of these resources.

Assembly Members, Support Staff and Assembly Commission staff will need to work together to agree priorities and the allocation of resources in order to meet the challenges ahead and have the flexibility to respond to changes in demand.

We are pleased to present this Report, which records the findings from the first phase of the review. The Report also provides an evidence base for the next phase of work, which will look to develop solutions to ensure the most effective and efficient deployment of resources, to deliver the Commission's objectives for the Fifth Assembly and beyond.

Assembly Commission

Executive Summary

In September 2017, the Commission asked the Chief Executive and Clerk to the National Assembly for Wales to lead a review of the Assembly's structure and processes to understand how resources are currently allocated within the organisation and to evaluate whether this provides the most effective and efficient deployment of these resources.

The initial stage of the review, covered in this report, provides an evidence base for the next phase of work, which will look to develop solutions to ensure the most effective and efficient deployment of resources to deliver the Commission's objectives for the Fifth Assembly and beyond. The review has engaged extensively with Assembly Commission staff and with Assembly Members and their support staff. As the review moves into the implementation phase we will need to engage further with Members and their staff to ensure that services continue to meet their needs.

The National Assembly for Wales has undergone a series of radical transformations of its powers and structure in the 18 years since it was established. The UK's decision to leave the EU is likely to bring further changes to the Assembly's role and workload.

These new demands have necessitated a period of growth in staff numbers in order to realise the goals, priorities and needs set by the Commission and Assembly Members. The current size of the Assembly Commission is 491 established posts with 454 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff¹.

As part of the review we have benchmarked our staff numbers against those of the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. We have also carried out specific benchmarking on numbers of staff involved in delivering bilingual services with parliaments who work bilingually to varying extents.

¹ The Establishment figure represents the number of substantive posts determined necessary to deliver the agreed Commission Strategy; it is the established organisational structure and is fairly static over time. Changes to the Establishment figure are as a result of agreed changes to organisational priorities. . The Full Time Equivalent (FTE) number, which is presented in the Annual Report and Accounts to conform to accounting requirements, is the actual number of staff employed, including part time staff, those on reduced working hours, maternity and secondment cover and job share.

Capacity Review

The Scottish Parliament has an establishment of 504 posts, the Northern Ireland Assembly establishment is 344.9; the National Assembly for Wales therefore sits in terms of size between these two institutions.

The benchmarking exercise highlighted the difficulty of making comparisons in this way as there are many variables that affect the resourcing of parliamentary services and the relationship to the number of elected Members is complex. Further work with our colleagues in other parliaments will help us to better benchmark models of service delivery to ensure that we continue to follow and help develop best practice in parliamentary services.

Resourcing the National Assembly for Wales involves a range of challenges, from optimising the efficiency and effectiveness of parliamentary procedures, having to meet numerous statutory requirements, accommodating a wide range of working patterns from term time working to shift systems, being prepared for and reacting rapidly to internal and external political and other imperatives. The Assembly has adopted different approaches to meet these challenges, including a unique integrated approach to support committees, use of call off contracts for demand led services and adopting a mix of approaches to deliver projects.

Being able to better understand and develop the skills and capabilities of our staff was a strong theme emerging from the review; the importance of having the right skills available as well as having the right capacity will continue to be central to our ability to meet changing demands.

The culture of the Commission is centred on the delivery of tailored, high quality and highly responsive 'gold standard' services to meet the needs of the Commission and Members. In order to ensure that we can continue to deliver effective and high-quality services we will have to make sure that these services continue to meet the needs of users, focussing on those things that add the most value.

Opportunities to improve the way we work were captured during the review and fall into two categories: those which have an organisation-wide impact and are discussed below; and those having a service or activity specific impact. The latter will be assessed and developed at a service level. The organisation-wide change opportunities are:

Capacity Review

- Agreement of priorities;
- Improved planning and delivery;
- Greater agility in capacity and capability; and
- Development of shared understanding.

To deliver the outcomes of the review the Assembly Commission will:

- set up a steering group to manage the implementation of the Capacity Review's actions;
- support the Commission in the prioritisation of new projects and initiatives;
- enhance links from priorities to operational planning and personal objectives;
- undertake further detailed analysis of our structures and ways of working to evaluate whether these will remain effective in light of future demands;
- continue to review and challenge existing systems with initial work looking at:
 - Internal management and governance arrangements;
 - The ways in which we enable Members to make more informed decisions about organising their committee work and the detail and frequency of information we provide them with which outlines the resource implications of those decisions;
 - Review the end to end support arrangements for committees;
 - How we resource and deliver internal and external communications; and
- we will take steps to improve communications with staff and other stakeholders. Communicating and reinforcing the responsibilities of teams and empowering the right people to make decisions within the context of a clear set of priorities.

Completing these actions will help to contribute to a greater unity of purpose and direction across the organisation and provide a foundation for the challenges ahead.

Capacity Review

Exceptional and wide-ranging changes to circumstances, such as an increase in the number of Assembly Members may require further assessment of the Commission's required capacity. However, as a general principle, the Commission is committed to staying within its current establishment figure of 491 for the duration of the Fifth Assembly.

We will recommend to future Commissions that a similar Capacity Review exercise is undertaken at the beginning of each Assembly to enable them to plan effectively.

Introduction

Why we undertook this review

Assembly Commission spending is rightly subject to close scrutiny by Members (both in their capacities as individual Members and as members of Assembly Committees) and the wider public. The Commission must continue to be able to demonstrate proper stewardship of public money. It must be clear and transparent in its budget setting and expenditure on staff and resources and to show that its expenditure is efficient, effective and economical.

The Commission has experienced a period of growth in terms of staff numbers as we have faced new and increasing demands including, constitutional change, in-sourcing of ICT, increases in security needs and higher expectations of our stakeholders. We recognise that it will not always be possible to meet these new challenges by increasing the size of our organisation. We will continue to consider whether different ways of working and organizing ourselves, would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of our services

In September 2017, the Commission asked the Chief Executive and Clerk to lead a capacity review of our structure and processes to understand how resources are currently allocated within the organisation and to evaluate whether this provides the most effective and efficient deployment of resources to deliver the Commission's objectives for the Fifth Assembly and beyond.

How we undertook this review

The review has been informed by a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including:

- Surveying all Assembly Commission staff (359 responses with 190 respondents providing detailed comments equating to 665 individual improvement ideas and issues);
- Meeting with all Assembly Commission Heads of Service;
- Attending team meetings of service areas across the Commission;
- Attending a meeting of the Chairs Forum;

Capacity Review

- Individual meetings with Committee Chairs;
- Meeting with party group chiefs of staff;
- Analysis of recruitment decisions, service and capacity plans; HR resourcing reports, internal audit reports, the Annual Report and Accounts and other organisational data;
- Data from the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly to help benchmark, where possible to do so; and
- Benchmarking our bilingual services to those of other bilingual legislatures.

The review team was supplemented by a working group to provide support and challenge. Input and advice from the Assembly Commission's Independent Advisers has also been invaluable in helping shape the review.

The review provides an evidence base for the next phase of work, which will look to agree and develop solutions to implement the accompanying action plan.

The report structure

This report records the findings of the review which are structured around the objectives set in the review's terms of reference:

Staffing the Assembly Commission: To analyse how staff resources are currently allocated within the organisation and evaluate whether this provides the most effective and efficient deployment of resources to deliver the Commission's objectives.

Benchmarking: To benchmark our services against those provided by other parliaments and enable the Commission to take a view about how this aligns with the Commission's evolving priorities.

Opportunities to work differently: To work with staff to identify activities which are no longer a priority or could be delivered differently, bringing together other strands of ongoing work on efficiency and effectiveness to identify and exploit ways of doing things better.

Staffing the Assembly Commission

The constitutional context

The role and powers of the Assembly have increased significantly since 1999. The pressures on the Assembly are very likely to continue to increase as a result of a move to a reserved powers model of devolution, the devolution of taxation and borrowing powers (including income tax-varying powers), further devolution of other responsibilities, and Brexit.

The National Assembly for Wales has undergone a series of radical transformations of its powers and, in one case, its very structure – in the 18 years since it was established. The Government of Wales Act 2006 led the way to the separation of a single corporate body into the Welsh Government, National Assembly and Assembly Commission in 2007, with a further fundamental shift after the Referendum in 2011 to full primary legislative powers. Tax-raising powers and further changes to the devolution settlement and responsibilities of the institution arose from the Wales Acts of 2014 and 2017.

The size of the Welsh Government has changed over time to reflect the Assembly's role and powers. When the Assembly was first established, its Standing Orders limited the size of the Cabinet to nine. The limit was increased to 14 by section 51 of the Government of Wales Act 2006. However, there has remained a capacity constraint of 60 Members on the Assembly itself, which imposes significant challenges when seeking to hold the executive to account.

The size of the Assembly makes membership of two, sometimes three, demanding committees inevitable for most backbench Members from all political parties. As an illustrative example, once the members of the Welsh Government and the Deputy Presiding Officer have been taken into account, there are 15 backbench Welsh Labour Members. These 15 Members must between them fill a place on the Assembly Commission, six committee chairs and 31 committee places. As there are four Labour places on each of the policy and legislation committees, the result is that more or less all the party's backbenchers will be in committee on Wednesday mornings and all day on Thursday, when four committees may be meeting concurrently.

Capacity Review

Looking forward, the Assembly is operating in a context of unprecedented constitutional change in the UK, due to the result of the referendum on EU membership.

The UK's decision to leave the EU is likely to bring further changes to the Assembly's role and workload. The Assembly has a critical role in ensuring that the voice of the Welsh people is heard in the Brexit negotiations. It will need to play its part in overseeing the negotiations, and scrutinising the legislation which will follow.

The precise nature of the impact of Brexit on the Assembly's role, powers and workload is not yet clear, as we cannot know with any certainty at this point what the constitutional arrangements will be in the post-Brexit UK, nor what the repatriation of powers from the EU will mean for the responsibilities and legislative competence of the Assembly. However, the UK Government has indicated that it anticipates the responsibilities of the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament will increase.

It is clear that the Assembly will have a role to play in scrutinising the establishment and operation of any such legal, constitutional and policy frameworks, whatever form they take. We can therefore expect that the Assembly's role during the Brexit process, and within the post-Brexit UK, will include shaping public policy in Wales in areas previously reliant on approaches set at European level; scrutinising a large volume of primary legislation, secondary legislation and Legislative Consent Memoranda; scrutinising intergovernmental working; facilitating and undertaking joint scrutiny with other legislatures; and influencing the debate on where powers returned from the EU should lie.

While there may be uncertainty about the powers the Assembly has as a consequence of Brexit, it is clear that Members' workload will certainly not be reduced and is likely to grow.

The Assembly Commission will also monitor closely any developments regarding the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform and consider the potential implications on the capacity, resourcing and ways of working.

The development of the Assembly Commission structure

From its creation, the Assembly Commission's approach to resourcing and service provision has been to aim for excellence in all aspects. Features of the levels of service it delivers are pace, responsiveness to the demands of Members and delivery that is often tailored to the needs of individual committees and Members. This latter point in particular is one that often marks the Assembly out from other parliaments.

Over the period since the separation of the executive and legislative branches in 2007, the Assembly Commission has seen an increase in the people resources allocated to it in order to realise the goals, priorities and needs set by the Commission and Assembly Members. This has included:

- providing corporate infrastructure to the Assembly Commission as a new organisation following separation from the Welsh Government. This has included establishing and developing a human resources function to support the maturing organisation and equipping the organisation with its own legal, governance and procurement functions;
- insourcing ICT arrangements to resource the organisation with effective ICT skills and expertise which delivers better value for money than pre-existing arrangements of contracting services;
- providing greater levels of security, acknowledging the escalating threats in respect of terrorism;
- better supporting Members and their staff to discharge their duties in the light of increasing roles in respect of legislative and financial scrutiny and broader constitutional change;
- further improving our service provision in relation to bilingual working to ensure that both official languages are treated equally; and
- responding to increased expectations from Assembly Members and the people of Wales on our engagement work and digital services. Including expectations of transparency and accessibility of information and being able to communicate quickly with our audiences in response to the emergence of 24 hour news platforms.

Capacity Review

The Commission has accepted the Finance Committee's recommendations that future changes in our budget should not exceed that seen in the Welsh Block grant and that we do not increase the number of posts for which we budget during 2018–19.

Given the pressures identified during this review, it is imperative we plan prudently during the coming months to make sure we have flexibility to respond to needs as they arise.

The current Assembly Commission structure

The Assembly Commission published its Strategy for the Fifth Assembly in July 2016. For each strategic goal, the Commission's aim is:

*'to set and maintain high standards as a Welsh public service leader during a time of closer public scrutiny and enhance our international reputation as an effective, open, world class parliamentary institution.'*²

The Commission's budget strategy seeks to continue excellent levels of support, whilst also taking account of the broader financial context, which is seeing most public-sector organisations having to economise and maximise the effectiveness and efficiency.

To underpin the Assembly Commission's Strategy senior management has established a planning 'thread' that runs from the strategy and goals, through corporate priorities and into our service and capacity planning. This is supported by an assurance framework, which helps to ensure evidence of effective planning and decision taking.

Since August 2016, the Commission administration has been divided into three Directorates (Assembly Business, Assembly Resources and Commission Services), reporting to the Chief Executive. The Directorates are further sub-divided into service areas, led by Heads of Service.

The Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service make up the Management Board, which regularly meets formally and informally to review, coordinate, and share information on policy and operational matters. The

² Assembly Commission Strategy 2016–2021, July 2016

Capacity Review

Management Board is responsible for ensuring that the alignment with strategy and priorities is consistent.

The Investment and Resourcing Board (IRB) (comprising the Chief Executive and Clerk, Directors and the Head of Human Resources) is responsible for decisions on investment and staffing resources and for oversight of the Commission's budget.

Within the Assembly Commission, there is an established service and capacity planning process with decisions taken on an organisation-wide basis twice a year, informed by detailed proposals from each Directorate. The authority to recruit for all posts, whether new posts as part of an approved capacity plan or 'back filled' posts, can currently only be granted by the Investment and Resourcing Board (IRB).

Details of the current establishment and full time equivalent (FTE) numbers per service area can be found in the table below; changes to the numbers of FTE employed by the Assembly Commission since 2007 are laid out in Appendix A.

Capacity Review

Section	Establishment (Sept 17)	FTE (Sept 17)
Commission & Members Support Service (CAMS)	32	32.34
Legal Services	15	14.08
HR	33	28.59
Estates and Facilities Management (EFM)	30	30.12
Financial Services	14	13.43
ICT	45	42.99
Research Service	44	40.27
Committee and Chamber Services	24	23.30
Translation and Reporting Service (TRS)	47	43.72
Policy and Legislation Committee Services (PLCS)	33	32.41
Communications	32	27.27
Security	74	65.16
Governance, Audit and Procurement Service	15	14.15
Co-ordination Unit	6	6.00
Strategic Transformation Service (STS)	14	14.00
Parliamentary Venues & Visitor Services (PAVVS)	33	26.09
Totals	491	453.92

Approaches to resourcing

Resourcing the Assembly Commission involves a range of challenges, from optimising the efficiency and effectiveness of parliamentary procedures, having to meet numerous statutory requirements, accommodating a wide range of working patterns from term time working to shift systems, being prepared for and reacting rapidly to internal and external political and other imperatives.

Capacity Review

The Assembly is well-regarded among parliaments for the integrated way in which it supports its committees. The approach is recognised as encouraging a holistic approach to providing expertise and supporting Assembly Members to best effect.

Some services which are particularly demand-led or require access to additional temporary resources or specialist expertise at particular points in time have external contracts in place which allows them more flexibility to meet demands, such as Legal Services, Estates, ICT applications development and Translation.

The academic engagement work led by the Research Service is also a means of pulling in additional academic expertise for a short term duration to enhance capacity and capability of teams mainly within the Business Directorate. This has included knowledge exchange partnerships with Cardiff University on geographical information systems (GIS) and inter-parliamentary joint working e.g. on Brexit.

Assembly Commission staff also demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement across all aspects of the services delivered. Recently we have introduced new structures and ways of working following reviews of Assembly events and our security services. We have also delivered new solutions in respect of searching our Record of Proceedings and the processes around tabling of questions and amendments.

While we recognise the many effective ways in which we deliver our services, opportunities for improvement have also been identified. Responses from our survey to staff found that smarter planning of work, increased collaboration across teams and ensuring that work flows efficiently were common improvement themes.

Culture of the organisation

A culture of excellence and striving for continuous improvement is one that the majority of staff recognise in their responses to the review. Many described the culture of the Commission as focused on delivering the highest possible quality outputs and service. This has resulted in high quality services which Members and their support staff tell us they value. Results of successive, annual Member and Member Support Staff surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction with Commission services. Members have

Capacity Review

noted that the level of support that they receive is very extensive and compares favourably to other parliaments.

An integral part of organisational ethos has seen the Commission traditionally adopt an un-hesitating and immediate response to service requests from Members, Commissioners and the Presiding Officer. This approach, combined with the desire to deliver to the highest possible standard, has led to an increase in the resources needed to respond effectively. Analysis of recruitment approval forms and service plans show that increasing demands to deliver more and higher quality services is a significant contributor to the increasing size of the Assembly Commission.

Contributors to the review reported undertaking one-off pieces of work for both Members and internal services that can quickly escalate into weeks of work which adds pressure on existing resources to meet all service requests. Research, Legal and Communications have all reported this issue.

Skills and capabilities

Understanding and developing the skills and capabilities of our staff was a strong theme emerging from the review. Contributors identified the importance of having the right skills available as well as having the right capacity. We have benefitted from good levels of investment in developing staff as evidenced by our repeated attainment of the highest levels of Investors in People (IiP) awards and positive feedback from Member and Commission staff surveys. The staff we spoke to talked about the importance of continued investment in staff development but also in ensuring that training is properly focussed on delivering business benefits and is aligned with our strategic goals.

A review of learning and development needs is currently underway with the purpose of establishing the Assembly's current training offering; undertaking a learning gap analysis; understanding the skills/ knowledge/ learning that is required and how these can be delivered.

It is vital that our learning and development function is aligned to our strategic direction and that our offering is benefits led and is focused on delivering outcomes which enable and enhance the value our services deliver.

Capacity Review

Assembly Member Support Staff (AMSS) have indicated that they place significant value on the support they receive from the Commission in respect of their professional development, noting that the *“professional development team continue to provide a range of increasingly valuable training courses and resources which are helping AMSS to improve their skills so that they can perform their roles more effectively and efficiently”*.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking establishment size

Assembly Commission staff across all Directorates maintain close links with other parliaments in the UK and Ireland, as well as in Australia and Canada, other Commonwealth countries and elsewhere around the world. Among the many benefits of these connections is the opportunity on regular basis to share and identify best practice in delivering parliamentary services which are value for money.

We know from the relationships we have developed that parliaments are resourced in different ways, to meet specific needs. The variables (which are considerable) affecting resourcing decisions include:

- the political and financial context;
- the parliament’s functions and procedures, including the number of official languages;
- the number of Members and the levels of Member support staff;
- the way Members perceive and discharge their responsibilities;
- the resources available to the parliament from other organisations/sectors of society; and
- the choices made by senior managers about how to organise teams to make the most of skills and experience.

As such, direct, clear comparisons are difficult to achieve. By way of illustration, the Scottish Parliament, which is usually cited as the most similar institution to the National Assembly for Wales, differs in many respects, such as:

- History, culture and politics
- Size
- Committee system
- Procedures and configuration of clerking teams
- Services available to Members, e.g. to support backbench legislation
- Legal system (i.e. Scotland has a jurisdiction separate from England and Wales)

Capacity Review

- Legislative competence
- Language policy

At face value, it might be expected that some differences – size, legislative competence – would mean more staff for the Scottish Parliament; whereas others – a less ambitious language policy, less support for backbench legislation – would mean fewer staff. However, in reality, these differences are less distinct. Understanding them will need a detailed examination of why and how services are structured and resourced, as well as of the way staff numbers are reported, tasks undertaken, and responsibilities shared across different teams.

Within the timeframe for this review, we have not been able to undertake this detailed level of analysis in relation to our most familiar comparators – the other devolved parliaments in the UK, nor indeed a wider global benchmarking.

Nevertheless, we have been able to benchmark our staff numbers against those at both the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly and this is presented in the tables below. The Scottish Parliament has an establishment of 504 and the Northern Ireland Assembly reports an establishment of 344.9. For the reasons outlined above, the statistics must be used with significant caution.

The figures in the two tables below have been analysed in line with the structure of the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly, respectively. Consequently, where appropriate we have grouped the comparative services from the National Assembly for Wales together in order to make direct comparisons possible.

Capacity Review

Scottish Parliament Service Area	Scottish Parliament Establishment (Sept 2017)	National Assembly for Wales Establishment (Sept 2017)
Chamber, Reporting and Broadcasting	75	62*
Committees and Outreach	62	59
Digital Services	62	54
HR and Facilities Management	57	58
Finance (including Payroll and Allowances) and Security	110	108
Legal Services, Procurement and Audit	25	30
Research, Communications and Public Engagement	92	103
Offices of the PO, Chief Executive, ACEs International Relations, officeholders	21	17
Total	504	491

Capacity Review

Northern Ireland Assembly Service Areas	Northern Ireland Establishment (Sept 2017)	Wales FTE Establishment (Sept 2017)
Directors Offices and Commission Support	14.0	32
Finance	20.8	14
HR Office and Equality Unit	16.2	33
Estates, porter service, and security services	89.3	104
Committees and Plenary services	73.2	77
Communications, Public Engagement & Official Report	56.9	112*
Information Systems	17.6	45
Legal Services	9.8	15
Research Service	37.1	44
Audit, Governance and Procurement	10.0	15
Total	344.9	491

*Figures for the National Assembly include Translation staff

Each organisation is unique and the three legislatures are all structured differently. We should also note that AMs in Wales are entitled to three Full Time Equivalent Members of Support Staff. The number of Support Staff permitted to Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) rose from two to three following the 2016 election. In Northern Ireland Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are entitled to two staff.

Headline figures show that the Northern Ireland Assembly has much lower staff numbers than either the National Assembly for Wales or the Scottish Parliament.

The three legislatures have differing numbers of Members – there are 60 AMs in Wales, 129 MSPs in Scotland and the Northern Ireland Assembly had 108 MLAs up until the March 2017 election, after which the number of Members reduced to 90.

Capacity Review

The level of bilingual working and commitment to bilingualism of the National Assembly for Wales, marks it out as different to the other two devolved legislatures. This has a big impact on our resourcing requirements and most obviously can be seen in the size of the Translation and Reporting Service. However, it also has a very practical impact on a range of other services.

For example, the Assembly's commitment to deliver increasing levels of briefing support to committees entails considerably shorter deadlines for written work than would be seen in monolingual parliaments and that, in turn, increases demand on services such as Research. The entire legislative process is undertaken in two languages rather than one, doubling the work associated with amendments and accompanying explanatory memoranda, drafting and proof reading. The Assembly Commission's Official Languages Scheme provides for the equal treatment of both languages which draws resource into translation for internal Commission meetings, Welsh Language teaching and training for Members, their staff and the staff of the Assembly Commission.

Other differences between Northern Ireland and Wales and Scotland include a far lower resource for ICT, 17.6 posts in Northern Ireland as compared to 45 posts in Wales and 63 posts in Scotland. The Assembly Commission took a business decision to fully insource all ICT functions three years ago. This resulted in recurrent savings (£1M per annum) and an in-house team which provides dedicated customer account support to Assembly Members, bespoke applications development and digital solutions amongst other services.

Northern Ireland has smaller Members' Business Support and Education Outreach Teams and does not have an equivalent of the National Assembly's, Translation Service. In Northern Ireland, Standing Orders do provide for Members to speak in the language of their choice; however, a Speaker's ruling requires that Members must also provide an English translation. Translation is provided on an agency basis at an approximate cost of £18k pa with no establishment posts

The Scottish Parliament has an establishment figure which is 13 above the National Assembly figure. Again, it is structured in a different way but in many areas staff levels are similar.

Capacity Review

The Scottish Parliament also does not have a direct equivalent to Members Business Support Service, the Remuneration Board, Continuous Professional Development or the Translation Service (a difference in establishment of approximately 48 posts covering services not provided in Scotland).

Benchmarking bilingual services

As previously highlighted, a key distinguishing feature of the Assembly is its bilingualism. It has two official languages, Welsh and English. Under the Official Languages Act 2012, the Assembly is required to publish a scheme for every Assembly term. It sets out our ambition, service standards and improvement themes to which we are held to account annually to ensure that we deliver enshrined duties to provide rights to the public and to Assembly Members to interact with the Assembly in the official language of their choice.

The Assembly Commission's Bilingual Skills Strategy published under the first Official Languages Scheme [OLS] requires service areas to publish their own language plans. The plans give Heads of Service the means to identify the bilingual capacity required in each team in relation to their service's day-to-day functions, and outlines how each team makes the best use of the language skills within the team and beyond.

We have looked to benchmark our bilingual services against those of Scottish Parliament in their provision of support for Gaelic, the legislative Assembly of Ontario, and the House of Commons of Canada, see Appendix B.

The Assembly's specialist bilingual capability is managed through the Translation and Reporting Service (TRS). The team consists of 47 establishment posts covering a mix of specialists and multi-skilled staff able to work across one or more of the three skills covered by this service: transcription of the official report; translation and interpretation.

The reporting service is responsible for the official (written) reports of all Plenary and Committee meetings. The Plenary report is published fully bilingually and its translation is contracted out at a cost of circa £180K per annum. Committee transcripts are published in the spoken language with Welsh contributions translated into English.

Capacity Review

All published procedural documents are made available in both English and Welsh at the same time, internal and private documents may be provided bilingually. Interpretation is available for all Assembly Business and at events and internal meetings upon request. The Assembly operates a fully bilingual website and software systems utilise bilingual interfaces where practicable. Translation work for these are usually handled by Translation and Reporting Services.

The Scottish Parliament supports the use of Gaelic in parliamentary proceedings, interpretation is available providing notice is given. The Official Report is in spoken language with transcription of the English interpretation of any Gaelic spoken (this is also the situation in the Northern Ireland Assembly with respect to the Irish language. Translation and interpretation is provided through two external contracts totalling circa £105K per annum with no establishment posts.

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario with 107 Members uses English and French. The Official Report is published in the spoken language only and is not translated; 21 full time plus 6 on call staff are available to transcribe the Official Report. Interpretation is provided to all House sittings and televised committees by 6 full time staff supplemented by freelance interpreters as necessary. House documentation (e.g. Votes & Proceedings, Orders & Notices) are available in both English and French, with translation provided by specialist translation services. The size of the translation service is not known.

The House of Commons of Canada with 334 Members are fully bilingual, English and French. Committee and Plenary reports and all procedural documents are published in both languages. Approximately 160 employees (75% of which are part-time) cover reporting and interpretation. All translation work is carried out by a separate Translation Bureau which is not part of the House of Commons establishment. The Translation Bureau consists of approximately 117 translators and 10 administrators.

Opportunities to work differently

Opportunities to improve the way we work were captured during the review and fall into two categories: those which have an organisation-wide impact and are discussed below; and those having a service or activity specific impact. The latter will be assessed and developed at a service level. The organisation-wide change opportunities are:

- Agreement of priorities;
- Improved planning and delivery;
- Greater agility in capacity and capability; and
- Development of shared understanding.

Action 1

We will set up a steering group to manage the implementation of the Capacity Review's actions. This group will:

- oversee the prioritisation, resourcing, delivery and benefits of this programme;
- ensure that the Capacity Review programme of work and that of the other Assembly commission change programmes and projects are aligned;
- report into the Assembly Chief Executive and Directors and disseminate information through the Commission's Management Board; and
- Actively engage with staff and communicate regularly on progress.

Agreement of priorities

New priorities for the Commission are being driven by the increasing pressures on the Assembly in terms of legal and regulatory change, constitutional change and the heightened expectations, especially around engagement of our stakeholders: Assembly Members, the people of Wales and partner organisations. The Assembly operates in a rapidly changing environment which can result in multiple, complex and competing priorities.

Capacity Review

Given the finite size of Assembly Commission's resources, all priorities compete for the same resource.

To continue to deliver new initiatives and changes, the Commission will need to be able to better manage these competing priorities and at the same time ensure that its resources are being used in the most efficient and effective ways. A set of prioritisation criteria for use by IRB is currently being developed and is set to be piloted in coming months to help the IRB prioritise the projects and investments into the next financial year and beyond.

In the future on-going effective prioritisation will depend on:

- The supply of accurate and timely information on the costs, benefits and impact of competing investment and change initiatives to support decision making;
- The relative impact, benefits and costs of change initiatives to be assessed against a set of agreed criteria for prioritisation;
- A shared understanding and agreement on the Commission's strategic goals and high-level priorities across the important groups of influence including the Commission, the Business Committee, the Committee Chairs forum and party groups. Mechanisms will be required to strengthen and focus this dialogue; and
- Effective communication of agreed priorities including the reasons behind decisions, to internal and external stakeholders.

Action 2

We will support the Commission in the prioritisation of new projects and initiatives, through:

- the use of agreed and established prioritisation criteria tools and processes;
- the provision of accurate and timely information on the benefits and resource implications of options for change; and
- establishing effective channels of communication and engagement between the various stakeholders.

Improved planning and delivery

The efficient and effective delivery of prioritised initiatives requires aligned planning, such that:

- There is better alignment of budget, service and capacity planning;
- A clear line of sight exists from strategic goals to operational planning and personal objectives; and
- Benefits are realised through effective and proportionate change and assurance activities that supports good governance.

Some of the work now planned includes:

- Review of annual corporate reporting with an intention to reduce potential duplication within the system;
- Renewing the Commission's suite of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- An internal audit review of the Performance Management Development Reports (PMDRs) to ensure that they remain fit for purpose;
- On-going dialogue and review of project and programme governance and assurance arrangements; and
- The use of a cross organisational Working Group to help ensure that the Commission is prepared and compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

In addition to continuous improvement, the Commission delivers change through formally managed projects monitored by the Investment and Resourcing Board (IRB). Investment is approved or declined based upon the assessment of the benefits and costs of project proposals.

New approaches to change management and agile project management have been adopted aimed at increasing the effectiveness of change projects. The Commission is learning from and benchmarking these new approaches with similar organisations including the UK Government Digital Service (GDS), the Parliament Digital Service (PDS) and colleagues in the Scottish Parliament.

Capacity Review

Most new priorities of the Assembly Commission will result in formal projects or initiatives. To deliver these effectively and efficiently the Commission will continue to need to ensure:

- the clear understanding of the purpose and desired benefits of change initiatives;
- the management of the impact on day-to-day business;
- effective monitoring of progress
- the effective allocation of change management expertise; and
- improved clarity of responsibilities.

Action 3

We will improve links from priorities to operational planning and personal objectives, through:

- on-going scenario planning to assess demands for future years and develop options for how those demands can be addressed;
- implementing newly developed cycles for budget, service and capacity planning that will ensure activity is aligned and will minimise the impact on our resources of planning and governance tasks;
- ensure our annual reporting cycle is fit for purpose but does not place a significant burden on resources;
- ensuring a clear line of sight from the Assembly Commission's priorities to personal objectives; and
- enhancing the oversight and management of change across the Assembly Commission bringing together learning and good practice.

Agile capacity and capability

The third theme of the strategic-level opportunities to work differently looks at ways to bring greater agility to the Commission's capacity and capability by:

- Improving the agility and skills of our workforce to respond to changing demands;
- Continuing to review and challenge existing structures and systems with a view to developing options for improved ways of working; and
- Realising the benefits from optimising the use of existing and new technologies.

Work is underway to develop the latest People Strategy for the Assembly. This will reflect the need to create a more agile workforce. We will ensure that, through this strategy, we build our skills and capability to meet future needs as well as those of today.

We will need to consider whether the working patterns that have evolved over time remain effective in meeting the demands placed on the Commission staff, or whether there are benefits to be gained for both the organisation and individuals in introducing changes.

The Assembly Commission must continue to review and challenge existing service structures, systems, internal management and governance arrangements, to develop improved ways of working that are as efficient and effective as possible.

During the Capacity Review we spoke with Members, their support staff and Commission staff, to gather ideas for change. As well as the four main themes for change discussed here, many specific process change ideas were also suggested. Three suggestions stood out as they received a significant number of comments and these are:

- Enabling Members to make more informed decisions about organising their committee work, by providing more regular and detailed information about the resource implications of these decisions;

Capacity Review

- Review of the end-to-end support arrangements for committees, to ensure that all Commission resources supporting committee work are being used as effectively and efficiently as possible; and
- Ensure that the skills, capacity, processes and technology for effective internal and external communications are in place.

Across all services there was an identification of the need to ensure that we take full advantage of information technologies available to the Assembly. This was especially true of the collaboration and document management capabilities offered by Office 365 and SharePoint.

Action 4

Exceptional and wide-ranging changes to circumstances, such as an increase in the number of Assembly Members may require further assessment of the Commission's required capacity. However, as a general principle, the Commission is committed to staying within its current establishment figure of 491 for the duration of the Fifth Assembly.

At present with the commitment to work within the establishment figure and in light of new priorities facing the Commission the Steering Group will undertake further detailed analysis of our organisational structures and working practices and make recommendations to ensure that they remain effective in light of future demands.

We will recommend to future Commissions that a similar Capacity Review exercise is undertaken at the beginning of each Assembly to enable them to plan effectively and ensure that their strategies can be delivered.

Action 5

We will continue to review and challenge existing systems and develop options for improved ways of working. This ongoing programme of continuous improvement will be managed through the Steering Group. The Capacity Review has identified a number of areas for initial investigation.

We will review:

- Internal management and governance arrangements;

Capacity Review

- The ways in which we enable Members to make more informed decisions about organising their committee work and the detail and frequency of information we provide them with which outlines the resource implications of those decisions;
- Review the end to end support arrangements for committees; and
- How we resource and deliver internal and external communications.

Development of a shared understanding

The final strategic change theme to emerge from the review is that of developing a shared understanding of the purpose and functions of Commission Services, to enable:

- clarity of understanding of responsibilities across teams internally and with Members, their offices and other stakeholders;
- the expectations of the important points of influence to be managed within the context of the Commission's priorities; and
- The development of a one organisation ethos ensuring a shared sense of ownership and responsibility.

A lack of clarity of understanding of the changing roles and responsibilities of the Commission's services can lead to inefficiency both internally and between Members, their offices and these internal teams.

Members' support staff reported their lack of awareness of the roles of some teams within the Commission. They suggested that more 'one stop shop' contact points would save Assembly Members' and staff time in having to contact multiple departments over similar issues.

Services designed around users and their needs are more cost effective helping more people to get the right outcome for themselves and for the Assembly. Members' support staff that we spoke to said that they highly valued involvement at the design stage of services and being able to discuss what they needed with Commission staff responsible for delivering services. They noted that in all cases this early engagement resulted in better outcomes for themselves and Members.

Capacity Review

Improving clarity of responsibilities, clear lines of sight in our planning and clear priorities will boost the 'one organisation' culture of the Assembly. Further steps to improve communications with staff, share organisational values and empower the right people to make decisions within the context of our priorities will enhance this culture.

Action 6

We will take steps to improve communications with staff and other stakeholders. Communicating and reinforcing the responsibilities of teams and empowering the right people to make decisions within the context of a clear set of priorities.

Completing these actions will help to contribute to a greater unity of purpose and direction across the organisation and provide a foundation for the challenges ahead.

Next Steps

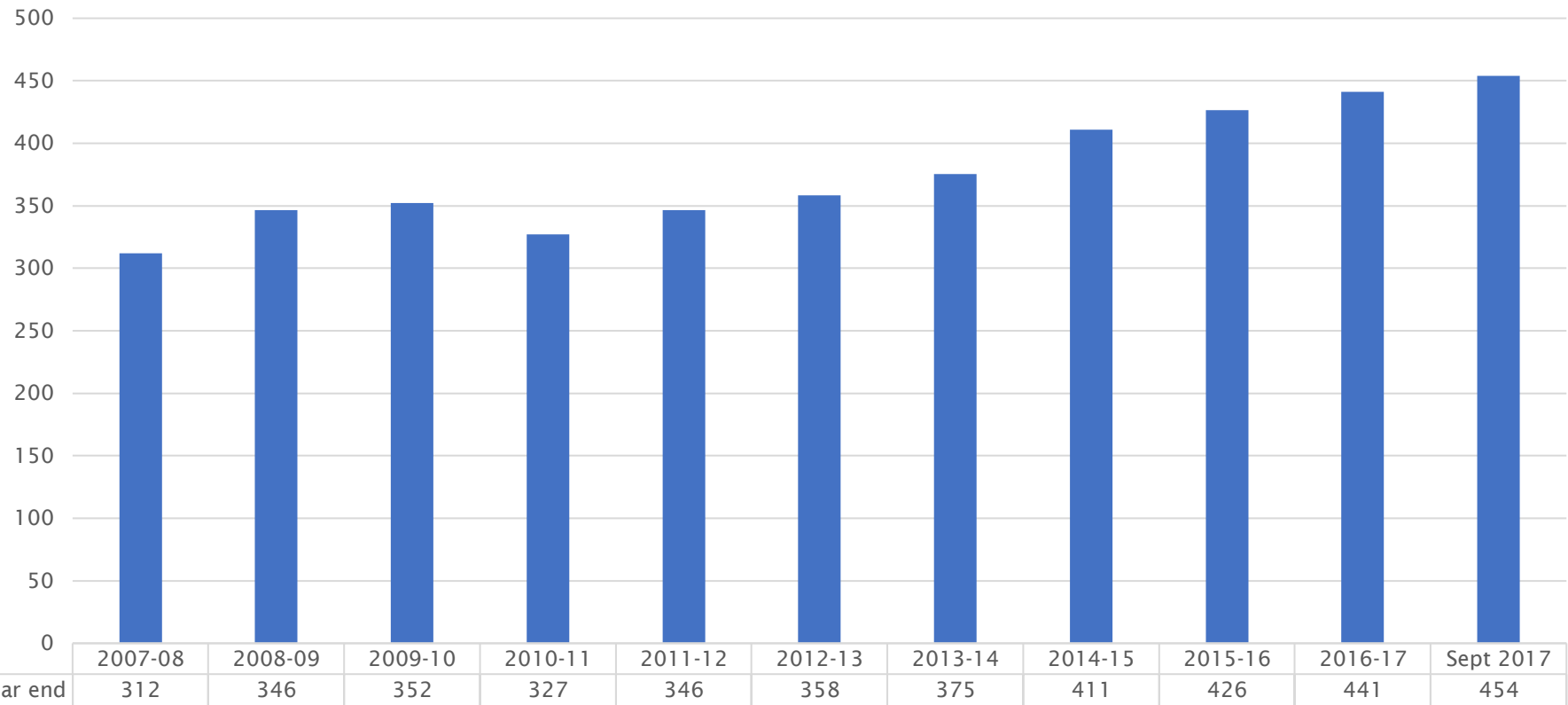
During the next phase of the Capacity Review we will develop our approaches to meet new challenges, many of which are unclear at this stage such as the impact of Brexit and potential electoral reform.

The Steering Group will be chaired by the Director of Resources and its membership will be drawn from across the Assembly Commission. By May 2018, the Steering Group will have in place a plan for taking forward major elements of the work. The Group will keep the Commission updated on progress.

Capacity Review

Appendix A. Assembly Commission Full Time Equivalent 2007 to 2017

FTE at year end, total rounded



Capacity Review

Service Area	FTE at Year End by Service Area (rounded)										
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	Sept 2017
CAMS	21	24	25	33	27	17	33	36	39	32	32
Legal	7	8	9	9	10	9	12	12	12	13	14
HR	19	24	24	14	12	22	32	28	26	31	29
EFM	27	31	32	29	25	28	25	26	29	28	30
Finance	20	19	16	15	15	16	12	16	16	12	13
ICT	13	17	17	14	18	17	20	37	41	43	43
Research	33	37	35	33	35	35	33	36	38	40	40
CCS	20	25	26	23	22	23	17	20	22	24	23
TRS	33	34	34	33	37	36	38	37	40	42	44
PLCS	26	28	28	25	25	25	26	28	27	33	32
Communications	38	43	27	31	25	25	25	23	23	23	27
Security	56	56	59	49	59	60	58	61	61	66	65
Gov & Audit					14*	17	13	14	13	14	14
Co-ordination Unit							4	5	6	6	6
FoH / PAVVS			21"	19	23	26	23	24	24	23	26
STS							4	8	9	10	14
Total	312	346	352	327	346	358	375	411	426	441	454

*previously part of corporate unit in CAMS

#previously grouped with Communications

Capacity Review

Appendix B. Bilingual Parliaments Benchmarking:

Comparison of Reporting, Translation and Interpretation Services, December 2017

Institution	Members	Bilingual services	Resources
National Assembly for Wales	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bilingual Welsh and English (both Official Languages under 2012 Act) – Published procedural documents made available in both languages at the same time – All Assembly Business interpreted from Welsh into English and interpretation available at event on request – All internal & private documents made available in the language of choice – Plenary record fully bilingual – Committee transcripts in spoken language with Welsh contributions translated – Fully bilingual website – Software systems bilingual interfaces where practicable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mix of specialists and multi-skilled staff able to work across one or more specialisms. 47 establishment posts broken down as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 9 Management, Official Languages Scheme, admin & Welsh skills development posts ○ 16 Editors ○ 7 Editor / Translators ○ 1 Senior Interpreter ○ 6 Editor / Translators / Interpreters ○ 8 Translators – Additionally translation of the full Plenary report is contracted out at a cost of circa £180K pa

Capacity Review

Institution	Members	Bilingual services	Resources
Scottish Parliament	129	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Working language is English, Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) is under a legal duty to make and develop provision in Gaelic. – Gaelic may be used in parliamentary proceedings, with notice given and interpretation is then provided. The Official Report is in spoken language with transcription of English interpretation of any Gaelic spoken. – (mostly) Bilingual website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Official Report: No of Staff members and Budget number have been requested as benchmark data has been provided at directorate level – 1 x FTE Gaelic Development Officer – Translation and Interpretation is provided through two external contracts totalling circa £105K pa
Legislative Assembly of Ontario	107	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – English and French – Official Report in spoken language only, is not translated – Interpretation provided to all House sittings and televised committees – House documentation (e.g. Votes & Proceedings, Orders & Notices) available in both English and French provided by specialist translation services – Fully bilingual website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reporting staff: 21 full time plus 6 on call, mix of English only and English / French speakers – Interpretation staff: 6 full time supplemented by freelance interpreters as necessary – Translation staff numbers and costs are not available

Capacity Review

Institution	Members	Bilingual services	Resources
House of Commons of Canada	334	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bilingual English and French – Committee and Plenary reports and all procedural documents published in both languages – Fully bilingual website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Approximately 160 employees (75% of which are part-time) covering reporting and interpretation. – The translation of all work is done by a separate Translation Bureau which is not part of the House of Commons, Translation Bureau staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 43 (41 translators + 2 administration) for the Hansard (Plenary Report) ○ 33 (31 translators + 2 administration) for Committee Deliberations ○ 41 (35 translators + 6 administration) for Documents (any other documents emanating from Parliament – committee reports, letters, householders, financial reports, policies, internal memos, etc.)

Capacity Review