

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru / National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Busnes / Business Committee

Etifeddiaeth y Pedwerydd Cynulliad / Fourth Assembly Legacy

Tystiolaeth gan Canolfan Llywodraethiant Cymru / Evidence from Wales Governance Centre



Canolfan Llywodraethiant Cymru  
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Annwyl Y Fonhesig Rosemary Butler AC,

### **Re Consultation: 4<sup>th</sup> Assembly Business Committee Legacy**

I am writing to you following your request for our views about the work that the Business Committee has undertaken during the course of the current Assembly term. Rather than referring explicitly to the questions set out in Annex A of your letter, this response will outline three important areas we believe should be addressed by the successor Business Committee in the 5<sup>th</sup> National Assembly for Wales.

### **Committees in the 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly for Wales**

The abolition of different legislative and non-legislative committees in the 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly for Wales was a logical step and was widely welcomed as such. We would like to see this committee structure continue into the 5<sup>th</sup> Assembly, not least because we feel that it is important to build and maintain continuity. Whilst regular changes to committee system may well have been unavoidable in the past given the regular revisions to our devolved dispensation, there is much to be said for attempting (where possible) to maintain continuity. This not only for obvious internal reasons, but also to aid external understanding of how devolution works. (A further, admittedly minor consideration, is that constant structural change has served to inhibit scholarly engagement with the work of the National Assembly's committees.)

Yet despite the changes made for the 4<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, major challenges remain.

It is now widely accepted that a 60 AM National Assembly is too small. It is certainly our view that the relatively small size of the Assembly in comparison to other legislatures is a barrier to effective scrutiny. The impact is perhaps most keenly felt in terms of the work of the committees where the relatively small numbers of Members leaves them too thinly spread to allow for the development of the kind of specialist expertise that will optimize their effectiveness in

Committee settings. We have set out these views in our publication, *Size Matters*, which is attached to this letter.

### **Appointment of Committee chairs**

As is well known, in recent weeks the operation of the present appointment process for committee chairs has raised serious questions, not only about the patronage powers of the political parties, but also (even more fundamentally) about the relationship between the legislature and the executive. In order to minimise their recurrence, we believe that there is an overwhelming case that AMs should elect committee chairs (as is the case in Westminster.)

### **Time allowed for scrutiny by AMs and the public**

Few if any would argue against the proposition that as much time as possible should be made available for the scrutiny of government legislation and budgets. In this context, we would like to draw your attention to the scrutiny process of the Welsh Government's budget.

As the experience of civil society groups has shown, and as noted by the Finance Committee in their report in March 2015, *Best Practice Budget Process Part 2 - Planning and implementing new budget procedures*, more time needs to be allocated for budgetary scrutiny. In light of taxation powers being devolved to Wales in 2018, we would recommend you review and seek to implement the recommendations of the Finance Committee's report from March 2015.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Do let me know if you have any questions or queries.

Cofion

Richard Wyn Jones

Athro Gwleidyddiaeth Cymru a  
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