

Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd

March 2026



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Reviewing Committee Effectiveness in the Sixth Senedd

March 2026



About the Chairs' Forum

The Chairs' Forum is made up of the Chairs of all of the Senedd's Committees, apart from the Business Committee.

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Chairs Foreword

Committees are often described as the engine room of a parliament. They work diligently to examine policy and legislation in detail, helping to secure the best outcomes for the people we represent. This essential scrutiny is undertaken by backbench Members and can make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of both the Senedd and the Welsh Government. It is with this in mind that we, as Committee Chairs, have prepared this report, reflecting on how Committees have operated during this Senedd and how they can continue to work effectively in the future.

For Committees to function well, the fundamentals must be right. A clear strategic plan is essential, providing a sense of direction and enabling a Committee's work to develop throughout the Senedd term. Such clarity helps engage Members and stakeholders alike. We also consider it crucial that all Members receive appropriate training and support so they can maximise their effectiveness and influence as Committee Members and Chairs. Committee outputs should remain focused on the key issues, making robust, evidence-based recommendations that can be tracked, implemented, and delivered.

As we look ahead to the Seventh Senedd, we hope all Members recognise the importance of Committee work and the vital role Committees play in holding the Government of the day to account.

It is a privilege to serve as a Chair or Member of a Senedd Committee. When carried out effectively, this work is immensely rewarding and makes a meaningful difference to the people of Wales.

Elin Jones AS/MS

Llywydd and Chair of the Chairs' Forum

Recommendations

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Recommendation 9. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that Chairs and Committee Members should be encouraged to attend training relating to committee work. This should be part of continuous development rather than a one off session..... Page 22

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Recommendation 12. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that Committees in the next Senedd explore options for approaching Committee work utilising the range of provisions available in Standing Orders and past practice..... Page 27

Recommendation 13. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that the Welsh Government include Senedd Committees formal consultees when issuing draft regulations..... Page 29

Recommendation 14. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that Welsh Government notifies the Senedd as soon as possible after a King’s Speech, where either the UK Government intends to legislate in a devolved area or the Welsh Government intends to use a UK Government Bill to legislate in a devolved area..... Page 29

Recommendation 15. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that the guidance for hybrid and virtual proceedings is reviewed regularly in the Seventh Senedd to ensure that it reflects the working practices of the Senedd. Page 31

Recommendation 16. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that Committees make effective and consistent use of Senedd Research by embedding structured engagement with research briefings into committee pre-meetings, including a short oral introduction from researchers to support the planning of evidence sessions and lines of questioning..... Page 32

Recommendation 17. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that the Senedd Commission explores options for improving the technology supporting simultaneous interpretation early in the Seventh Senedd. Page 33

1. Introduction

- 1.** In preparation for the Seventh Senedd, the Chairs' Forum ("the Forum") has undertaken a review of committee effectiveness during the Sixth Senedd. The aim of this work was to ensure that the Senedd's committees, which are central to scrutiny, accountability and the development of Welsh legislation, continue to operate with clarity, purpose and impact in the Seventh Senedd.
- 2.** Building on the experiences of the sixth Senedd and recommendations from the Future Senedd Committee, the Forum agreed in March 2025 to examine three key areas: committee culture, the organisation of committee business, and interactions with committees, including how committees engage with stakeholders, the Welsh Government and the wider public. The review has also taken account of recommendations from Professor Diana Stirbu's earlier work on committee effectiveness.
- 3.** To help shape this work, the Forum ran a consultation from July to October 2025 and received 14 responses.¹ Responses were received from committees, the Welsh Government, the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Senedd, the Institute for Welsh Affairs and Natasha Asghar MS.
- 4.** This report summarises the findings of the Forum's review, highlighting key themes and setting out reflections to support the continued development of a committee system that is resilient, inclusive and equipped to meet the scrutiny demands of a maturing Parliament. The conclusions of this review are offered to the Seventh Senedd to inform its decisions about the committee structure and timetable.

¹ [Responses to the consultation](#)

2. Committee Culture

5. Over the past six Seneddau, the form and function of committees has greatly evolved – from the initial committee system which included Members of the Government, to the structure of the Sixth Senedd with dual function policy and legislation committees and several other committees with responsibility for specific functions.

6. Committees have developed ways of working to ensure that they are able to hold government to account and effectively scrutinise legislation and budgets. Major developments have been captured in amendments to Standing Orders such as the election of Chairs, but many of the ways of working have evolved from experience and learning.

7. The Future Senedd Committee recommended that the Forum:

“... in consultation with the Business Committee and the Senedd Commission, considers commissioning work to capture and communicate the culture of Senedd committees in the Sixth Senedd, with a view to identifying the informal norms and practices that are valued by Members, and those that are not, to assist in the preservation of positive norms and practices between Seneddau, and inform induction processes”

8. The culture of committees in the Senedd is something that has been built up over successive Seneddau, and is widely considered critical to effectiveness within the Parliament. The key themes emerging from the Forum’s work are around strategic planning, engagement and outputs; and the role of Members and Chairs on committees.

Strategic Planning

9. Policy committees reported that early strategic planning helped establish a shared sense of purpose and provided a clear framework for decision-making. This was seen as particularly effective where planning sessions were supported by some form of external challenge or facilitation. Several committees also highlighted the value of revisiting strategic priorities during the Senedd, especially following changes in membership, to maintain collective ownership and focus.

10. Examples of effective practice were cited by a number of committees. The Local Government and Housing Committee and the Health and Social Care

Committee both undertook strategic planning exercises at the outset of the Sixth Senedd, which set a clear direction for their work and ensured subsequent inquiries aligned with agreed priorities. Similarly, the Children, Young People and Education Committee has continued to use its strategic priorities as a test for potential future inquiries, supported by a structured template prepared by officials and included in committee papers.

11. Alongside the strategic planning sessions, there was support for committees consulting on their work programmes to establish their areas of focus. The Institute for Welsh Affairs gave the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee as an example of a committee which had done this well at the beginning of the Senedd.

12. These approaches reflect the findings of Professor Diana Stirbu, in her report ‘Power, Influence and Impact of Senedd Committees’, who said:

*“Effective committees can **strategically plan and manage their work**, have clarity of goals and purpose, and maintain focus throughout the term without hindering the need to be flexible and agile at times. They focus on outcomes, not activities and have a clear and shared idea of what success looks like and how it could be evidenced.”*

13. Professor Stirbu also recommended that a theory of change model be adopted to help with evaluation, which is something Chairs may want to consider promoting further in relation to the strategic approach to committee work:

“R.9. Adopt a Theory of Change based model to plan, review, evaluate and communicate committees’ ambitions and achievements. This will help shift the focus from outputs to outcomes. Training and development opportunities should be made available for Members and officials to familiarise themselves with the theory of change models and other evaluation tools.”

14. The aim of this recommendation was about connecting goal setting and strategy to legacy work, and implementing a process of reflection, evaluation and consideration of impact. The Theory of Change terminology is not necessarily required to do this, and may be unnecessarily complex. The approach to evaluating recommendations is explored in the next section.

15. The response to the consultation from the Chief Executive and Clerk to the Commission set out that the Commission would continue to provide support to facilitate committees undertaking such strategic planning.

Views of the Chairs' Forum

16. The use of strategic planning is key for committees at the start of a Senedd. It allows Members to input into and understand the direction of a committee. A collective purpose is valuable to ensure that Members feel greater ownership of committee work.

17. This will be particularly important at the start of the Seventh Senedd with a significant influx of new Members, who will have varying levels of experience with regards to committee work and scrutiny.

18. Chairs reflected that there was value in engaging external facilitation in developing these plans.

19. Chairs considered that strategic plans need to be living documents throughout the Senedd, rather than set rigidly at the start. This approach allows for the plans to be responsive and develop as experience grows and potentially adapt in light of membership changes.

20. The legacy reports of committees are a useful resource and should be considered by Seventh Senedd committees alongside setting the strategy.

Recommendation 1. The Chairs' Forum recommends that each committee develops a strategic plan for its term which supports and develops scrutiny of key areas within the remit. Committees should utilise external facilitation where appropriate and the plan should be reviewed periodically during the Senedd.

Committee Recommendations

21. Recommendations are a central output of committee work and are closely linked to effective strategic planning and the setting of clear goals and objectives. Consultation responses and discussions within the Chairs' Forum highlighted the importance of adopting a more strategic approach to the development, presentation and follow-up of committee recommendations.

22. The Welsh Government response suggested that committees should make fewer recommendations, with a clearer focus on outcomes rather than

operational detail. This reflects a letter² previously sent by the First Minister to the Forum. It also emphasised the importance of distinguishing clearly between conclusions and recommendations. The Forum has been clear that it is for committees to decide on their conclusions and recommendations and that the Welsh Government is not, and should not be, expected to accept all recommendations made by committees. However, there was broad agreement that recommendations are more effective where they are focused, clearly framed, and capable of being monitored over time.

23. Consultation responses and Forum discussions identified a number of possible areas for development in the Seventh Senedd, including:

- the introduction of a more standardised approach to tracking and monitoring committee recommendations;
- strengthening follow-up work, including through post-legislative scrutiny or follow-up sessions, and seeking stakeholder views on the impact of recommendations on policy or practice; and
- the development of guidance or a toolkit setting out good practice approaches to follow-up work, including both formal scrutiny of the Welsh Government and correspondence.

24. These themes align with recommendations made by Professor Diana Stirbu, who argued that committees should make fuller use of their powers to drive improvement and hold the Welsh Government to account for its engagement with committee work and recommendations. Her report recommended that committees:

- seek regular reporting from the Welsh Government on the implementation of recommendations; and
- consider collective approaches to scrutiny of the Government's engagement with committee recommendations and work, for example through the Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee or the Chairs' Forum.

² <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s164844/PTN%204%20-%20Letter%20from%20Rt%20Hon%20Eluned%20Morgan%20MS%20First%20Minister%20of%20Wales%20to%20Rt%20Hon.%20Elin%20Jones%20MS%20Chair.pdf>

Views of the Chairs' Forum

25. Chairs recognised that the appropriate number and type of recommendations will vary depending on the nature of the work. For example, reports on legislation may require a greater number of detailed recommendations, whereas policy scrutiny reports may benefit from a smaller number of more strategic recommendations.

26. Drawing on their experience, Chairs agreed that, in many cases, a more focused set of recommendations can have greater impact and would be easier to track and evaluate over time. Chairs also emphasised the importance of building time into committee work programmes to revisit recommendations and assess progress.

27. Chairs suggested that there would be value in considering:

- training on what constitutes an effective recommendation in different scrutiny contexts; and
- agreed approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of accepted recommendations, including how committees assess the impact of these.

Recommendation 2. The Chairs' Forum recommends that committees consider making focused recommendations and monitor the implementation and impact of these during the course of the Senedd.

Engagement with the Welsh Government

28. Engagement between committees and the Welsh Government is a key component of effective scrutiny. Consultation responses highlighted the benefits of early and constructive engagement with Welsh Government officials, particularly in supporting committees to understand work already underway, avoid duplication, and plan their scrutiny activity effectively.

29. The Welsh Government response emphasised the value of early technical engagement, including briefings provided by officials ahead of formal scrutiny sessions. Examples included technical briefings provided to the Finance Committee in advance of budget scrutiny, which were considered to have improved the quality and focus of subsequent evidence sessions.

30. Similar themes were raised through the Business Committee’s legislative review³. In particular, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee⁴ suggested that the process for legislative scrutiny could be strengthened through the sharing of draft Bills and explanatory material with committees, on a confidential basis where appropriate. This was seen as a means of enabling committees to reach a more informed view on the adequacy of legislative timetables and the likely scrutiny requirements at an earlier stage.

31. Overall, responses indicated that early engagement with Welsh Government can support more effective scrutiny by enabling committees to:

- develop a clearer understanding of policy and legislative context;
- plan work programmes more strategically; and
- make better use of formal evidence sessions with Ministers.

32. Chairs raised concerns that international relations have not been subject to sufficient scrutiny during this Senedd. This was mainly because the responsibility sat within the First Minister’s portfolio, and there were a number of challenges securing the First Minister’s attendance at Committee.

Pre-appointment hearings

33. Since 2019 the Senedd has carried out pre-appointment hearings to scrutinise some Welsh Government candidates for public appointment. This was introduced to improve the scrutiny and transparency of the public appointment making process.

34. Pre-appointment scrutiny takes the form of a preferred candidate facing questions from the relevant Senedd Committee. The Committee will publish a report, usually within 48 hours of the hearing, setting out its view on the candidate’s suitability.

35. The operation of pre-appointment hearings has generally improved over the course of this Senedd term. In principle, the process provides a valuable mechanism through which the Senedd’s members can assess the suitability of the Welsh Government’s preferred candidates for key public appointments. However, the experiences of several committees suggest that, despite overall

³ <https://business.senedd.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=586&RPID=1071746383>

⁴ <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s161121/PBMB15%20Climate%20Change%20Environment%20and%20Infrastructure%20Committee.pdf>

progress, there continues to be weaknesses in the process, which have been noted by the forum during the course of this Senedd.

36. The forum welcomes the work undertaken by the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee in relation to public appointments this Senedd, and notes the recommendations made to improve the information in this area.⁵

Views of the Chairs' Forum

37. Chairs reflected that, during the Sixth Senedd, there had been occasions where Ministers were unwilling or unavailable to attend committee scrutiny sessions despite considerable liaison at official level to ensure Ministerial commitments were accommodated. The Forum was clear in its view that it is a reasonable expectation for Ministers to attend committee meetings when invited, and that decisions about witnesses are a matter for committees rather than the Welsh Government. This should apply to all areas of a Ministers portfolio, including international relations.

38. The Forum considered that clearer expectations, set out collectively, could help support effective scrutiny while maintaining appropriate respect for the distinct roles of the legislature and the executive.

39. The Forum agreed that early engagement with Welsh Government officials has brought clear benefits during the Sixth Senedd and that consideration should be given to formalising some of these practices in the Seventh Senedd. Chairs suggested that this could potentially be achieved through the development of a memorandum of understanding between the Senedd and the Welsh Government. Such an agreement could also set out clearer parliamentary expectations regarding Ministerial engagement with committees, including attendance when requested.

40. We would encourage the Welsh Government to publish more draft Bills to enable Committees to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny. We would also encourage Committees to continue to explore opportunities for post-legislative scrutiny of Senedd Acts. This provides for better, more in-depth and effective scrutiny of the entire life cycle of a piece of legislation, as was highlighted by the Senedd's Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee's report into Making Laws in Wales (2015).

⁵ <https://business.senedd.wales/mglIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=40498>

41. The Forum understands that the guidance on pre-appointment hearings will be refreshed in advance of the Seventh Senedd, which will include updating the list of appointments subject to the process. Strengthening the guidance would be a positive step towards addressing some of the issues experienced during this Senedd.

Recommendation 3. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Senedd Commission and Welsh Government officials bring forward a proposed Memorandum of Understanding which formalises the good practice of early engagement and information sharing between government and Committees.

Recommendation 4. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Welsh Government should publish more draft Bills to enable Committees to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny.

Engagement with Stakeholders

42. Engagement with a broad range of stakeholders is a vital component of effective committee scrutiny. Evidence gathered directly from those affected by policies and legislation provides insight into real world impacts and helps committees test assumptions and assess outcomes.

43. During the Sixth Senedd, committees undertook a number of innovative approaches to stakeholder engagement. These approaches supported the gathering of a wider range of evidence and enabled committees to hear from voices that are not always represented through traditional consultation processes. Examples of effective practice are set out in **Annex 3**.

44. Alongside these approaches, Chairs noted the important role the Petitions Committee has played in this Senedd in promoting and facilitating greater levels of public engagement with the Senedd. The work of the Committee has helped with raising matters which are current and important to the citizens of Wales.

45. These approaches align with recommendations made by Professor Diana Stirbu, who argued for committees to experiment with a range of engagement methods to widen participation and ensure that lived experience is central to scrutiny activity. The report emphasised the importance of adequate resourcing for engagement activity, clear methodological considerations when assessing different forms of evidence, and transparency about how lived experience has informed committee conclusions and recommendations.

46. In evidence to the Business Committee’s legislative review, the Welsh Government raised concerns about the potential for committee consultations on legislation to duplicate Government consultation processes⁶. It suggested that committees should continue to explore innovative approaches and seek evidence from a diverse range of witnesses, including those beyond the immediately affected sectors, to ensure that wider public interest perspectives are captured.

Views of the Chairs’ Forum

47. Chairs agreed that scrutiny of policy and legislation is strengthened by hearing from a broad and diverse range of voices. In relation to consultation on legislation, Chairs noted the Welsh Government comments but emphasised that committees are scrutinising Bills as introduced. As such Committees cannot and should not assume that views provided during earlier policy consultations represent stakeholder perspectives at the legislative stage.

48. Chairs emphasised that, in the interests of effective scrutiny, committees must remain open to hearing new or differing views, including those informed by lived experience or by developments since earlier consultation exercises.

Recommendation 5. The Chairs’ Forum recommends that Committees should continue to build on the positive work to widen engagement, and utilise lived experiences where applicable.

Evidence diversity monitoring

49. During the Sixth Senedd, committees have collected data on the diversity of evidence gathered by committees. This information has helped committees to start building a clearer picture of who is contributing to committee activities and where there may be gaps in representation. The latest summary of annual data for 2024-25 is at **Annex 5**.

50. Collecting this data has supported greater awareness of the range of voices contributing to the work of committees and has informed the rollout of new training modules for officials. The results have also prompted individual committee consideration and discussion of how engagement approaches can be improved to reach beyond the ‘usual suspects’.

⁶ <https://business.senedd.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=586&RPID=1071746383>

Views of the Chairs' Forum

51. The Forum agreed that monitoring the diversity of evidence gathered by committees is important to ensure that scrutiny reflects the experiences and perspectives of a broad cross-section of society. Chairs considered that evidence diversity monitoring should continue in the Seventh Senedd, with annual reports being made to the Forum (or equivalent body) and published.

52. Chairs noted that the value of this data lies not only in transparency, but in its use as a tool to inform future engagement strategies and support continuous improvement in committee practice. Chairs suggested consideration is given to providing a further break down of the data per Committee to provide further insight on the diversity of participation in each policy area. This is an area which should be considered in line with the recommendations from the Family Friendly Inclusive Parliamentary Review in the Seventh Senedd.

Recommendation 6. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Senedd Commission officials should consider the range of data collected as part of the evidence diversity monitoring and explore options for developing data collection e.g. by Committee and annual reports should be provided to the Chairs' Forum (or equivalent body) and published.

Role of the Chair and a Culture of Cross-Party Collaboration

53. A consistent theme across consultation responses was the central role played by committee Chairs in shaping the culture, tone and effectiveness of committees. Chairs are responsible not only for leading scrutiny activity but also for fostering constructive cross-party relationships and ensuring that all Members are supported to contribute effectively.

54. Respondents highlighted the value of electing committee Chairs by the Senedd, noting that this strengthens the authority and independence of the role.

55. Along with reflections from committees on representative committee membership, the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee suggested consideration was given to ensuring that diversity is also reflected in those undertaking chairing roles.

56. Across committees, there was broad agreement that cross-party collaboration has been strong during the Sixth Senedd. The Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee suggested that external facing activity, such as promotional work, should involve a wider range of committee

Members rather than relying solely on the Chair. This was seen as a way of further strengthening collective ownership and understanding of cross-party working.

57. Some committees described practical steps they had taken to support a positive culture. For example, the Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee held weekly pre-meetings with Audit Wales and Senedd Research, enabling Members to explore issues in advance of taking evidence and to allocate questioning areas. This collaborative approach helped build confidence, improve understanding of subject matter and foster constructive working relationships. The Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister also held pre-meetings three weeks in advance of sessions to draw together crosscutting themes from across committees and support coordinated questioning.

58. A number of consultation responses, as well as Forum discussions on induction training, emphasised the increased need for support in the Seventh Senedd due to the anticipated number of new Members – including potentially new and inexperienced Chairs. For example, the Health and Social Care Committee response set out that:

“... Members felt there would likely be a number of new and inexperienced committee chairs at the start of the Seventh Senedd and, as such, there would be a need to ensure appropriate training and support was available for them in understanding and exercising their role.”

59. Respondents noted that effective chairing requires a wide range of skills, including managing committee dynamics, maintaining balance within the committee, and representing the committee externally. In light of this, targeted support at the start of the Senedd, building on the Chairs’ responsibilities document (see **Annex 4**) was considered important.

60. Professor Diana Stirbu also recommended embedding regular evaluation and self-reflection into committee practice, supported by development opportunities, guidance for committee Members, and time for premeeting and debriefing discussions.

Views of the Chairs’ Forum

61. Chairs agreed that strong leadership and a collaborative culture are essential to effective committees. This had been enhanced by the election of Chairs, which provides Chairs with a mandate independent of their political groups. Chairs supported the development of further guidance or briefing materials for both

new Members and new Chairs at the start of the Seventh Senedd, complementing the existing document about a Chair's responsibilities (**Annex 3**)⁷. Chairs also agreed on the value of informal opportunities for discussion between Chairs – such as sharing examples of effective practice, approaches to handling challenging situations, methods for supporting constructive working dynamics within committees and providing a collective view from Chairs on cross-cutting matters.

Recommendation 7. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Chairs and Committee Members should be provided with a roles and responsibilities document at the start of the Senedd to make clear expectations on them. Opportunities for informal engagement between Chairs should be encouraged and promoted.

Role of the Chairs' Forum

62. The response from the Chief Executive and Clerk reflects on the value of the Forum by helping ensuring consistency, shared practice, and engagement with Welsh Government. For example, during the course of the Sixth Senedd the Forum has reviewed and amended guidance on virtual and hybrid proceedings, discussed the approach to sharing reports, and the use of Welsh in committees. It also provides an opportunity for Chairs to discuss issues emerging from their committees which was cited as useful in the discussion on training.

63. To date, the Chairs' Forum has been established at the initiative of the Llywydd and there is no requirement to establish one either formally in Standing Orders or informally. In the Scottish Parliament, the convenors group which is made up of the Chairs of the Scottish Parliament is set out in Standing Orders with a number of specific functions, while in the House of Commons the Liaison Committee is made up of the Select Committee Chairs and part of its remit is in line with the work undertaken by the Chairs' Forum in the Senedd.

Views of the Chairs Forum

64. Chairs recognised that the Forum is a useful vehicle for discussing matters, identifying common problems and developing solutions. Chairs discussed the principle of including a requirement for a Chairs' Forum in Standing Orders, but did not reach a decision on whether this should happen. The Forum instead agreed to write to Business Committee suggesting it considered whether the Forum should be incorporated into Standing Orders. The forum welcomes the

⁷ Response from Chief Executive and Clerk

decision from Business Committee to include this as a matter for its legacy report as a matter for further consideration in the Seventh Senedd.

65. There was good engagement by Chairs and Committee Members in various interparliamentary organisations in this Senedd, with the representation being spread across Committees. The Chairs' Forum took an active interest in following the discussions raised at these, and it was a positive example of the Chairs' Forum sharing knowledge and supporting consideration of cross cutting matters.

Recommendation 8. The Chairs' Forum recommends, to strengthen its impact and continuity, that consideration should be given to formalising the Chairs' Forum for the Seventh Senedd.

Training and Support for Committees

66. The Senedd Commission provides a programme of training and induction for Members of the Senedd. This covers the broad range of responsibilities Members have. One important element of this training is committee training.

67. As referenced above, Chairs recognised the value of using external facilitation for the development of strategic plans and discussed wider training requirements at its meeting in November 2025.

Prior to committee establishment

68. Chairs considered that the following areas for committee Members training and support at the beginning of the Senedd would be beneficial:

- Introducing the role of committees (particularly for new members);
- Effective scrutiny skills such as building the narrative around questions; and
- Expectations on being a committee member, such as attendance, cross-party working, hybrid participation and behaviour and respectful interactions with witnesses.

69. Chairs suggested that there would also be value in:

- having sessions which provide information to Members about the work of different committees and their functions;

- Sharing innovative resources – such as a highlights reel / watch list of good scrutiny;
- Sharing suggestions on ways of working which are conducive to effective committees.

Chair specific Support and Training

70. In addition to training for committee members, there was a recognition that training for the role of Chair is beneficial. It is an important role in the Senedd, which requires a broad range of skills, which Members may not have developed in previous roles.

71. At the start of the Sixth Senedd, Chairs were provided with a document setting out the roles and responsibilities of chairing a Senedd Committee (**Annex 4**). Building on this, Chairs considered training would be beneficial on:

- How to build and maintain balance and order between Members in a committee and the formal and informal powers available to them to deal with difficult situations that may arise.
- The external facing parts of the Chair role such as media handling; appropriate ways of dealing with the types of correspondence received by a chair (such as invitations to meet people).

72. Alongside formal training, Chairs considered it would be beneficial to provide informal opportunities for discussions between Chairs on handling issues and sharing examples of ways of working such as the effective use of pre-meetings.

View of the Chairs' Forum

73. Chairs were supportive of a comprehensive ongoing training programme. Committee Members should be encouraged and supported to develop their skills around committee work. These skills will enhance the work of the committees in holding the Welsh Government to account.

Recommendation 9. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Chairs and Committee Members should be encouraged to attend training relating to committee work. This should be part of continuous development rather than a one off session.

3. Organisation of Committee Business

74. The Business Committee is responsible for the organisation of committee business in the Senedd. This includes considerations on size, membership and remit of committees. The Forum has considered the experiences of the Sixth Senedd, to help inform the next Business Committee's consideration in these areas.

75. The responses received in this area focus on structure, size, membership and timetabling of committees.

Committee Structure

76. Some committees raised concerns that remits which are too wide can dilute focus, and that this should be considered when committee remits are being decided. This was particularly the case for the Legislation, Justice and Constitution committee, which set out as a consequence of its broad remit that:

"... it is not possible to give due consideration to the policy areas that fall within the Committee's remit and at the same time properly fulfil our standing order obligations. The amount of documentation, legislation and associated papers considered by the Committee is vast and the volume of this work impacts upon the decisions that we have to take."

77. Chairs noted that, in some Senedd committees, the breadth of portfolios meant that it was difficult for the committee to ensure that all aspects of its remit received appropriate levels of attention. Examples included social care within the Health and Social Care Committee, and local government within the Local Government and Housing Committee.

78. This Senedd has seen two special purpose Committees established this Senedd, one relating to Senedd Reform and one considering Wales Covid-19 inquiry. These types of Committees are established to look at specific issues and dissolve once they have fulfilled the remit.

79. The consultation responses considered alignment with Ministerial responsibilities as a model for committee remits. There are different ways this could be achieved such as using alignment as a starting point but not modify remits in response to changes in Government; reviewing remits occasionally (perhaps at the half-way point in a Senedd) to consider whether realignment is

necessary, or dynamic alignment, with remits changing in response to Ministerial portfolio changes. While many could see the benefit of alignment in simplifying lines of accountability, there was a clear recognition of the difficulties of modifying remits as Ministerial responsibilities change.

80. On the whole, committee responses were in favour of dual-function committees, as opposed to separate policy and legislation committees, due to the ability for their Members to build relevant subject knowledge to support more effective scrutiny. There was support however for the establishment of ad hoc Bill committees, particularly for cross-cutting legislation or where certain policy committees are likely to have significant amounts of legislation.

81. Similar themes were presented in the Business Committee legislative review. For example, the Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations Committee suggested that Bills that cut across multiple committees' remits should be referred to ad hoc Bill committees, with flexible membership determined on a Bill-by-Bill basis based on subject matter expertise and Member interest.

Views of the Chairs Forum

82. The Forum agreed that dual policy and legislation committees provide clear benefits. In particular, members highlighted that the broader policy expertise and strong existing relationships with stakeholders within such committees can strengthen legislative scrutiny, such as by identifying issues that may not be addressed within a bill.

83. Chairs emphasised the importance of retaining flexibility within the committee system to establish additional committees, and where the committee membership permitted, the option of forming sub-committees, when pressures increase, for example when a high volume of bills is remitted to a single committee or when legislation spans multiple committee portfolios.

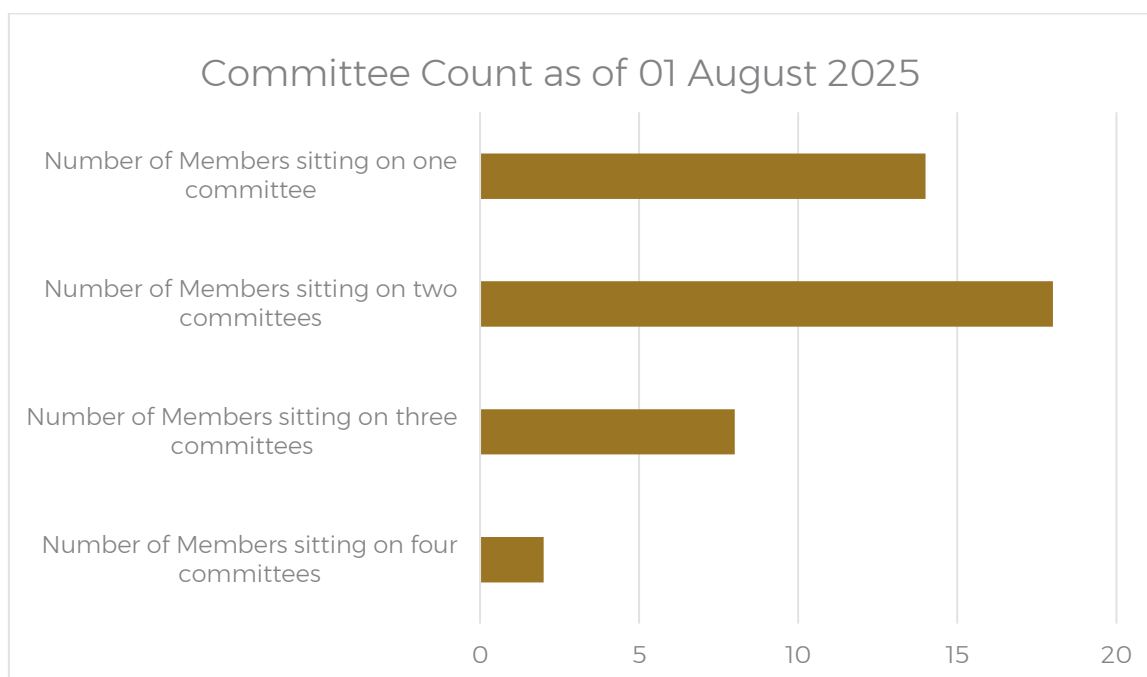
Recommendation 10. The Chairs' Forum recommends that the current model of dual function policy and legislation committees is utilised in the next Senedd, with flexibility being built into the system to establish additional Committees as legislative, and other, pressures require.

Committee membership and size

84. Committee membership was typically between four to six Members in the sixth Senedd. The size of committees varied according to function and political balance requirements.

85. This Senedd saw a reduction in numbers of committee members (per committee) compared to previous Seneddau. Policy and legislation committees generally had 10 Members in the Fourth Assembly [Senedd], with that reducing to 8 at the start of the Fifth Senedd.

86. The chart below shows the number of Members who sat on one or more committees up to August 2025. Half of all Members available to sit on committees sat on multiple committees (as of 01 August 2025). If committee membership had been larger, it is likely that the majority of Members available to sit committees would have sat on multiple committees, which may have impacted committee attendance, which was a matter reflected on in the Chairs' Forum Fifth Senedd legacy report⁸.



View of the Chairs Forum

87. The general consensus among Chairs on the optimal committee size was six Members, although some argued for larger committees. Chairs had a number of

⁸

<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s116660/PTN4%20The%20legacy%20report%20of%20the%20Fifth%20Senedd%20Chairs%20Forum.pdf> (page 10)

significant concerns about committees smaller than six, particularly around maintaining quorum in committees and ensuring that diversity was reflected in committee membership.

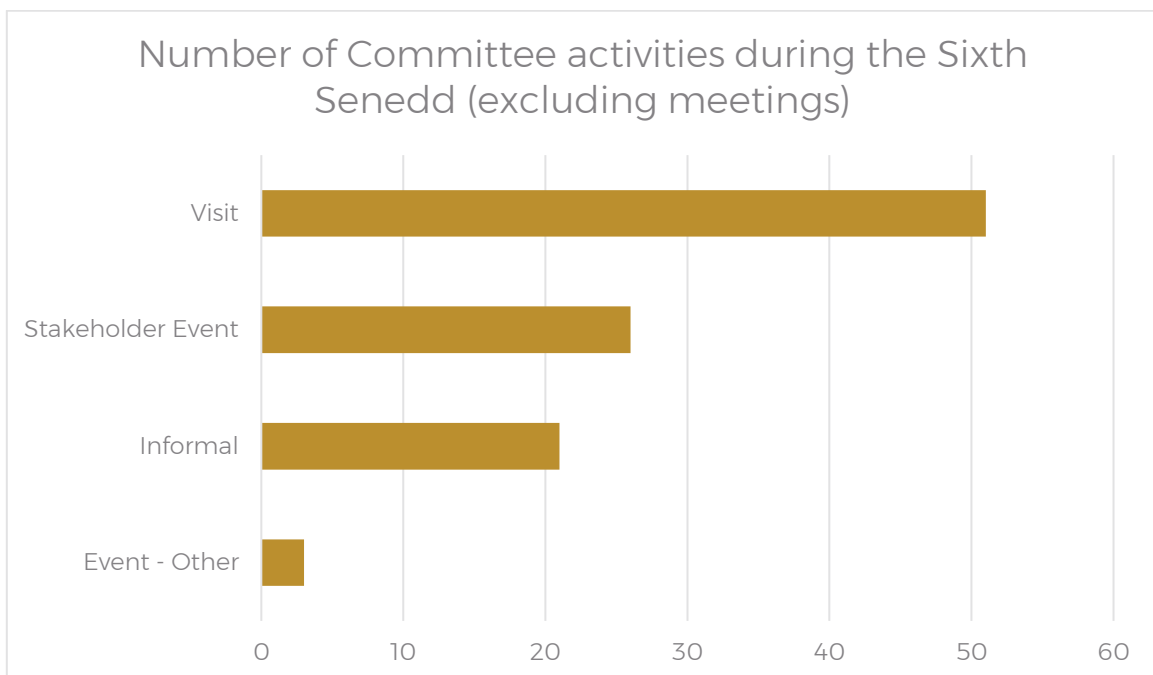
88. Chairs were clear that a Committee membership of four poses significant risks around quorum and should not be considered for those Committees that have substantial remits such as Finance and Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committees.

Recommendation 11. The Chairs' Forum recommends that no Committee with a substantial remit is established with four Members and that the default number for policy and legislation Committees should be a minimum of six Members.

Timetabling and Use of Time

89. The responses from Committees to the consultation reflected that many committees were using the reserved timetable slots, and that these had enabled committees to undertake external visits and stakeholder work. There were calls for more flexible scheduling, particularly when a committee has been allocated legislation which impacts on the ability to undertake wider policy work within the remit.

90. The data shown in the chart illustrates the additional activities, such as external visits and stakeholder events that were held during the Sixth Senedd.



91. Some responses supported having dedicated committee days as this allows Members to have greater focus on committee work.

92. Committees that met on Mondays during this Senedd generally felt that this slot had worked well. Nonetheless, they emphasised the importance of reconsidering both the start time and the format of meetings to avoid disadvantaging members based outside Cardiff. The challenges of Ministerial availability posed by clashes with Welsh Government Cabinet meetings was also highlighted in the responses.

Views of the Chairs Forum

93. Chairs noted the challenges in setting Committee timetables, particularly given that workloads can fluctuate significantly depending on factors such as the legislative programme. The introduction of reserved slots during this Senedd was welcomed, as it created additional capacity for Committees to carry out their work.

94. In previous Seneddau, Committees have made innovative use of Standing Order provisions, including the establishment of sub-Committees and the use of rapporteurs to undertake focused pieces of work. Chairs noted that future Seneddau, with an increased number of Members, may be able to draw on these approaches more extensively, making more effective use of Committee time.

Recommendation 12. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Committees in the next Senedd explore options for approaching Committee work utilising the range of provisions available in Standing Orders and past practice.

Legislative Scrutiny

95. During the course of the Sixth Senedd, the Business Committee has undertaken a review of the Senedd process in relation to Public Bills and Members Bills⁹. The forum inputted its views into this work in March 2025, and welcomes the findings and improvements recommended by Business Committee.

96. This report reflects on the benefits of dual policy and legislation committee at paragraph 82 for the scrutiny of legislation. Alongside scrutiny of bills, Committees are also required to undertake scrutiny of subordinate legislation and report on legislative consent memoranda for UK Bills making provisions in

⁹ <https://business.senedd.wales/mglssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=45113>

devolved areas. These are significant areas of work for Committees, and further consideration should be given to how they are approached as part of the organisation of future Senedd Business.

Subordinate Legislation

97. The scrutiny of subordinate (or secondary) legislation which is made by the Welsh Ministers is subject to deadlines set in the *Legislation (Wales) Act 2019* and in Senedd Standing Orders 21 and 27. That scrutiny, which focuses on more technical matters such as accuracy of drafting while also drawing the Senedd's attention to specific issues of political and legal importance, is currently undertaken by the Senedd's Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee.

98. The relatively short deadlines make it challenging for policy committees to examine subordinate legislation in a meaningful way. Such legislation is important because it will usually contain the detail of how policy set out in an Act is to be implemented, thereby contributing to the success or otherwise of that Act in delivering its objectives.

99. To the end of January 2026, the Welsh Ministers have brought forward 750 pieces of subordinate legislation for scrutiny in the Sixth Senedd. Acts passed by the Sixth Senedd have also delegated a significant number of new powers to the Welsh Ministers to make subordinate legislation, and that is likely to lead to a proportionately similar, if not higher, volume of such legislation being made in the Seventh Senedd (which will be a four year term).

Views of the Chairs Forum

100. Chairs set out a general view that greater detail should be included on the face of Bills, with less left to subordinate legislation. With regards, subordinate legislation, Chairs considered that one way in which Committees could engage with the making of subordinate legislation is during government consultation on the relevant proposals and feeding in views before it is formally laid. This is particularly relevant given that such legislation cannot be amended by Members of the Senedd *after* it has been laid. Departments in the Welsh Government could help Committees identify regulations that could be examined by including the new Committees set up in the Seventh Senedd as formal consultees when issuing draft regulations. This has the potential to deliver not only better law, but better outcomes for citizens.

Recommendation 13. The Chairs' Forum recommends that the Welsh Government include Senedd Committees formal consultees when issuing draft regulations.

Legislative consent

101. During the Sixth Senedd, there has been a significant increase in the number of Bills introduced to the UK Parliament making provision in devolved areas. The devolved provisions in these Bills should only be agreed subject to the consent of the Senedd – this is achieved through the laying of legislative consent memoranda and a vote on a legislative consent motion.

102. The Business Committee sets reporting deadlines for Committees when legislative consent memoranda are laid by the Welsh Government. Meeting these deadlines is often challenging as they are dependent on scrutiny timetables at the UK Parliament and can often appear with little notice.

Views of the Chairs Forum

103. The Forum noted the challenges around legislative consent memoranda. If the volume of Bills making such provision is maintained in the Seventh Senedd, the forum believes benefits would likely arise if the Welsh Government notified the Senedd as soon as possible after a King's Speech, where either the UK Government intends to legislate in a devolved area or the Welsh Government intends to use a UK Government Bill to legislate in a devolved area. This would help Committees plan their work programmes but also provide greater opportunities for them to seek to influence legislation that will impact on Welsh citizens.

Recommendation 14. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Welsh Government notifies the Senedd as soon as possible after a King's Speech, where either the UK Government intends to legislate in a devolved area or the Welsh Government intends to use a UK Government Bill to legislate in a devolved area.

4. Interactions with Senedd Committees

104. The consultation sought views on a range of matters that affect the operation and effectiveness of committees, including hybrid and virtual working, research support and the use of the Welsh language. These issues all play a role in shaping how committees function and how accessible and effective their scrutiny can be.

Hybrid and virtual working

105. At the start of the Sixth Senedd, a significant proportion of committee business was conducted virtually or in hybrid format as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. These approaches are now embedded through Standing Orders and accompanying guidance.

106. Consultation responses expressed broad support for the flexibility provided by hybrid working, particularly in enabling committees to hear from a wider and more diverse range of witnesses. Virtual participation has helped reduce geographical and accessibility barriers to giving evidence. However, some respondents noted limitations, including reduced spontaneity during discussion and challenges in maintaining the natural flow of questioning.

107. Several responses emphasised that key sessions – such as Stage 2 proceedings and Ministerial scrutiny – are generally more effective when held in person. The Welsh Government also highlighted the need for clearer expectations regarding Ministerial attendance at hybrid or in-person sessions.

108. During the Sixth Senedd, the Chairs' Forum considered the practical challenges of hybrid meetings where the Chair participates virtually. In such circumstances, it can be difficult for Chairs to see all Members wishing to speak and effectively fulfil their role in maintaining order. To address this, a "meeting manager" approach was developed, whereby a Member attending in person supports the Chair by managing contributions from those present in the room.

Views of the Chairs' Forum

109. Chairs welcomed the updated guidance on hybrid and virtual proceedings and valued the approach of treating it as a "living document" that can be amended as working practices evolve. Chairs agreed that the meeting manager approach should continue as a practical method of facilitating hybrid meetings where the Chair is participating virtually.

110. Chairs also agreed that, from the start of the Seventh Senedd, the established expectation should be that Ministers attend in person unless there is a clear and reasonable justification for doing otherwise as currently reflected in the guidance.

Recommendation 15. The Chairs' Forum recommends that the guidance for hybrid and virtual proceedings is reviewed regularly in the Seventh Senedd to ensure that it reflects the working practices of the Senedd.

Research support for committees from Senedd Research

111. Senedd Research provides impartial and authoritative research, advice and information to support committees in scrutinising policy and legislation. Consultation responses consistently emphasised the central role of high-quality research briefings in enabling effective scrutiny.

112. When the Chairs' Forum discussed research support on 29 September 2025, Chairs highlighted the value of independent research in helping them set the strategic direction for evidence sessions and frame lines of questioning. Chairs noted that pre-meetings could be used more effectively to engage with research briefings – allowing Members to explore issues with researchers in advance of public sessions.

113. There were varying views on the form briefing materials should take, particularly around the balance between suggested question areas and more detailed lines of questioning. Chairs agreed that different scrutiny activities may require different approaches. Broad question areas may be more suitable for some policy inquiries, whereas more technical legislative scrutiny may benefit from more defined lines of questioning to ensure key issues are covered.

114. Chairs also suggested that Senedd Research could work more closely with Members outside committee meetings to support the development of expertise, and expressed interest in opportunities to involve Members' staff in upskilling and improving information flow.

Views of the Chairs' Forum

115. Chairs agreed that effective committee working relies on Members making full use of research support, both within and outside formal meetings. They supported the use of committee pre-meetings to provide a short oral introduction to research briefings and facilitate early discussion about upcoming evidence sessions.

Recommendation 16. The Chairs' Forum recommends that Committees make effective and consistent use of Senedd Research by embedding structured engagement with research briefings into committee pre-meetings, including a short oral introduction from researchers to support the planning of evidence sessions and lines of questioning.

Use of the Welsh Language

116. The Chairs' Forum has previously considered how to ensure that everyone interacting with committees can do so in the language of their choice. The Local Government and Housing Committee, echoed by the Welsh Government, noted that while interpretation services are of a high standard, the experience of participating in Welsh is not always equivalent to participating in English. In particular, the reliance on headsets for simultaneous interpretation was highlighted as a barrier for some participants.

117. In July 2024, Adam Price MS, as Commissioner with responsibility for the Official Languages Scheme attended the Forum to discuss ways of increasing the use of Welsh in committees. Several practical suggestions were considered, including:

- using simpler bilingual opening wording for Chairs to encourage more frequent use of Welsh from the outset of meetings;
- ensuring that Chairs routinely highlight the availability of interpretation and encourage contributions in both languages;
- allowing adequate space in meetings for Welsh contributions; and
- ensuring that all Members receive bilingual briefings to support more active use of Welsh.

Views of the Chairs' Forum

118. Chairs expressed strong support for actions that may increase the use of Welsh in committee proceedings. They agreed that the proposals discussed in July 2024 provided a strong foundation for further work in the Seventh Senedd.

119. Chairs were also keen for the next Senedd Commission to explore options for improving the technology supporting simultaneous interpretation, to ensure that equipment remains up to date and that it facilitates, rather than inhibits, Welsh participation.

Recommendation 17. The Chairs' Forum recommends that the Senedd Commission explores options for improving the technology supporting simultaneous interpretation early in the Seventh Senedd.

Annex 1: Background Information

What is the Chairs' forum?

1. The Chairs' Forum ("the Forum") is made up of all the Chairs of the Senedd committees and is responsible for maximising the efficiency and effectiveness of committees, through coordination, collective leadership, and information exchange. It provides a space to address cross-cutting scrutiny issues, share good practice, and look more strategically at the work of committees.

Information about Committees

Committee Structure

2. At the end of the Sixth Senedd there were 16 committees in operation. Four committees were dissolved during the Senedd. The Forum is considered an informal committee.

3. The size of each committee varies, ranging from four to seven Members, as noted in **Table 1** below.

4. Standing Orders dictate that the membership of each committee, including the allocation of Chairs, should reflect the balance of the political groups to which Members belong (so far as is reasonably practicable). In addition to this, the Business Committee is required by SOs to offer a place on at least one committee to each Member who is not a member of a group.

Table 1

Active Committees	Membership
Business Committee	4
Children, Young People and Education	6
Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure	6
Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister	7
Culture, Communications, Welsh Language, Sport and International Relations	6
Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs	6
Equality and Social Justice	6
Finance	4

Health and Social Care	6
Legislation, Justice and Constitution	4
Llywydd's Committee	5
Local Government and Housing	6
Petitions	5
Public Accounts and Public Administration	5
Standards of Conduct	4
Member Accountability Bill	5

Table 2

Dissolved Committees	Membership
Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform (2021 - 2022)	5
Reform Bill Committee	4
Future Senedd Committee	5 (including the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery)
Wales COVID-19 Inquiry Special Purpose Committee	6

Remits

5. When establishing and proposing the remits of committees, the Business Committee must ensure that every area of responsibility of the Government and associated public bodies is subject to the scrutiny of a committee or committees. That includes the examination of any expenditure, financing, administration and policy of the Government and associated bodies, as well as any associated legislation.

6. The remits of most cross-cutting policy and legislation committees are proposed by the Business Committee and are subject to a vote of the Senedd. Such remits need not be coterminous with ministerial portfolios, and in practice most committees have operated with broad policy responsibilities which sometimes cut across more than one ministerial portfolio. However, Standing Orders state that certain committees are established with the responsibility to perform particular functions.

- 7.** During the Sixth Senedd, the Senedd has operated a committee system that includes dual function policy and legislation scrutiny committees.
- 8.** Committees are responsible for setting their own work programmes and how they work. There are a number of different approaches to how committees can work, such as inquiries, visits, and stakeholder events.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

1. Committee Culture:

- Considering practices which have worked well and where improvements can be made in relation to Senedd Committees including the tone and dynamics of Committees, effectiveness of recommendations and relations with Government;
- Experiences of interacting with Committees including engagement with stakeholders, matters like diversity monitoring and interactions in language of choice.

2. Organisation of Committee Business:

- i. Explore the benefits of the Senedd's current system (using dual-function policy and legislation committees) compared to a system that utilises separate policy scrutiny committees and public Bill committees; and the benefits of a system linked to the Government's organization of Ministerial responsibilities;
- ii. Timetabling of Committees in relation to other Senedd business;
- iii. Size and composition of Committees.

3. Interactions with Senedd Committees, including:

- i. Hybrid working;
- ii. Research briefing; and
- iii. Welsh Language support.

Annex 3: Ways of Working examples

The following are specific examples of where Commission officials have facilitated different ways of working which has contributed to effective scrutiny:

- PAPAC's work on the Welsh Government's Ministerial Code, as it included constructive engagement with the Welsh Government, including at officials' level, and led to a tangible output (the First Minister implemented the Committee's suggestions in the revised code).
- CCWLSIR's inquiry into funding cuts for sport and culture, where Senedd Research conducted empirical analysis showing Wales ranked among the lowest in Europe for per capita funding. This evidence strengthened scrutiny and resulted in increased funding in the draft budget.
- LGH's work on Gypsy and Traveller site provision, in which the Committee engaged directly with a marginalised community through flexible evidence-gathering methods, and site visits.
- CYPE's novel approach to scrutiny of the implementation of key education legislation passed in the Fifth Senedd (ALN Act, and Curriculum Act), with regular "check-ins" involving refreshed consultation pushes, school visits, oral evidence sessions with stakeholders, and engagement with the relevant Government minister.
- Use of varied tools for engaging with a wide diversity of stakeholders and gathering evidence. For example, in considering Gynaecological cancers the Health and Social Care Committee utilised video evidence, which was particularly effective in engaging with witnesses with lived experience. Similarly, LGH have supported inclusive practices during formal evidence sessions including enabling a non-verbal witness to contribute via Zoom chat.
- CYPE's establishment of an Online Advisory Panel to support its work looking at whether disabled children and young people have equal access to education and childcare. This group consisted of parents, carers and young people who directly informed the latter stages of the inquiry, including: lines of questioning to three Welsh Government Ministers; identifying key issues; suggesting possible recommendations, and providing feedback on the Welsh Government's response to the report.

- Cross-committee collaboration, as seen in the joint scrutiny of the Review of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement by four Senedd committees.
- Publishing information in a way that improves accessibility and public engagement. For example, ESJ Committee have published content in easy read formats, British Sign Language consultations, and summary versions of reports, often in response to identified audience needs. CYPE Committee have also published content in different formats, including video.

Annex 4: Chairs' responsibilities

The key responsibilities of committee chairs

- 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 Senedd 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.

Annex 5: Evidence Diversity Monitoring summary 2024-25

Welsh Parliament
Senedd Business Directorate

Who gives evidence to committees? Evidence diversity monitoring summary of provisional results for 2024-25

February 2026

Committees have monitored the diversity of the evidence they receive through written and oral evidence and (some) citizen engagement activities since November 2021. The data is collected through a voluntary survey and supplemented by other data collected by committee teams.

This paper summarises the provisional findings of data collected between August 2024 to July 2025.¹⁰ Please note that due to the preliminary nature of these results, they should not be quoted more widely until full verification has taken place.

¹⁰ Notes: 1) Data relating to fewer than ten responses has been obfuscated, and a data range is shown instead. 2) Data is calculated based on the number of responses to the question, disregarding those who didn't reply or preferred not to say. 3) Only some participants of citizen engagement activities are invited to respond to the survey.

Key findings

- Response rate: 36% of those invited to complete the survey responded - a similar response rate to 2023-24.
- Fewer people responding in a personal capacity: The proportion of survey respondents participating in committee work in a personal capacity returned to something slightly higher than earlier years at 15%, suggesting the 40% in 2023-24 to be an unusual spike. This was matched by an increase in those participating on behalf of an organisation, to 61%.
- Continued increase in first-time participants: 43% of those responding stated they have not taken part in the work of any Senedd committee before. This is an increase from 36% in 2023-24. The proportion of organisations that had not previously taken part in the work of the Senedd remains steady at 11% with those saying they participate frequently reducing to less than half at 48%.
- More new faces among those giving oral evidence: An increase to 49% of those giving oral evidence had not engaged previously compared to 20-30% in 2023-24. Only 59% of organisations giving oral evidence had participated before, a reduction from 83% in the previous year.
- Continued under-representation of private sector: 33% of respondents came from the public sector, 27% from the third sector, and 12% from professional bodies and trade unions. Whilst rising from previous years, the private sector continued to be under-represented (comprising 6%), while engagement among academics continued the upward trend first noted in 2023-24 increasing from 8% to 11%.
- Remote participation remains popular and most participate in English: Remote participation remains popular with over half of all interactions (52%), but only a third of those giving oral evidence did so remotely this year. 78% of respondents participated in English only - a reduction from 88% in 2023-24 and 90% in 2022-23.
- Maintained level of participation by older people and disabled people : The proportion of respondents aged over 60 remained high at 54%, compared with 34% of the population. 16% of respondents had a disability, compared to 21% of the population. While this represented a reduction from 23% in 2023-24, it was higher than the 12% in 2022-23.

- Fewer people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and more with degrees and in employment: The proportion of respondents from a disadvantaged socio-economic background decreased from 27% to 22%. Respondents educated to degree level and above increased from 83% to 90%, compared to 32% of the population. There was also a rise in respondents who were in employment, from 65% to 84%, compared to 45% of the population.
- More female respondents than male respondents, and more respondents with caring responsibilities: 57% of respondents were female, compared to 51% of the population, a rise from 54% of respondents in the previous year. There was an increase in respondents with caring responsibilities, from 16% to 21%, compared to 10% of the population.
- Other demographic patterns were largely similar to the population of Wales in terms of sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, religion, and national identity.
- Some groups more likely to take part in visits or engagement activities than to give oral or written evidence: this includes older people, disabled people, people who describe their ethnic group as other than 'White', and people who were not economically active. Female respondents were more likely to provide written evidence and participate in engagement activities/visits than give oral evidence.
- Rise in satisfaction levels: Respondents who were 'very satisfied' with their experience of participating in committee work rose from 40% to 51%. Respondents who said it was 'very likely' they would take part in committee work again given the chance also rose from 61% to 73%.

Contributing evidence

- 863 responses to the survey were received, which equates to an **overall response rate of 36%** (compared to a response rate of 18% for 2021-22, 41% for 2022-23, and 37% for 2023-24). 35% of respondents gave oral evidence, 34% provided written evidence, 17% took part in an engagement activity, 6% started a petition, and 7% participated in informal discussions or visits.
- **61% of respondents participated in committee work on behalf of an organisation.** This is closer to the 74% in 2022-23 than the 41% seen last

year. 22% responded in a professional capacity, and 15% in a personal capacity.

- Following the trend from last year, among those contributing on behalf of organisations, the vast majority said that their organisation had participated in committee work before, either frequently (48%), or once/occasionally (32%). 11% had never participated before – broadly similar to the 12% in the previous year. 67% of petitioners had never previously engaged. 59% of those giving oral evidence had engaged previously, and around 17% had done so ‘frequently’.
- 52% of respondents took part in committees’ work remotely, which is a decrease from 56% in 2023-24. 33% of people providing oral evidence did so remotely, compared to 90% of those participating in engagement activities.
- 78% of respondents participated in English only (a further decrease from 88% in 2023-24 and 90% in 2022-23). 13% participated in English and Welsh, and 8% in Welsh only. 74% of oral evidence was in English only, and 15% in both English and Welsh.

Demographic representation¹¹

- The survey data showed an **over-representation of people aged 35-59 (compared with Census population data)**. This is likely a reflection of the fact that most people were responding in a professional capacity, of working age, and at a more advanced point in their career.
- **People aged over 60 represented 30% of people participating in engagement activities/visits**, 22% of those starting petitions, 17% of written evidence, and 18% of people giving oral evidence.
- **57% of respondents indicated that they were female, compared with 51% of the Welsh population**. This year, for the first time, there was no noticeable difference in the balance of sexes between the committees with all being around the average. In addition, female respondents were over-represented (53%) in engagement activities. 57% of people starting

¹¹ 84% of respondents indicated that they were happy to be asked questions about themselves, so the following analysis is only based on those responses. It also excludes those who chose not to answer individual questions or who answered 'prefer not to say'.

petitions were male. Data on gender identity is obfuscated due to low numbers.

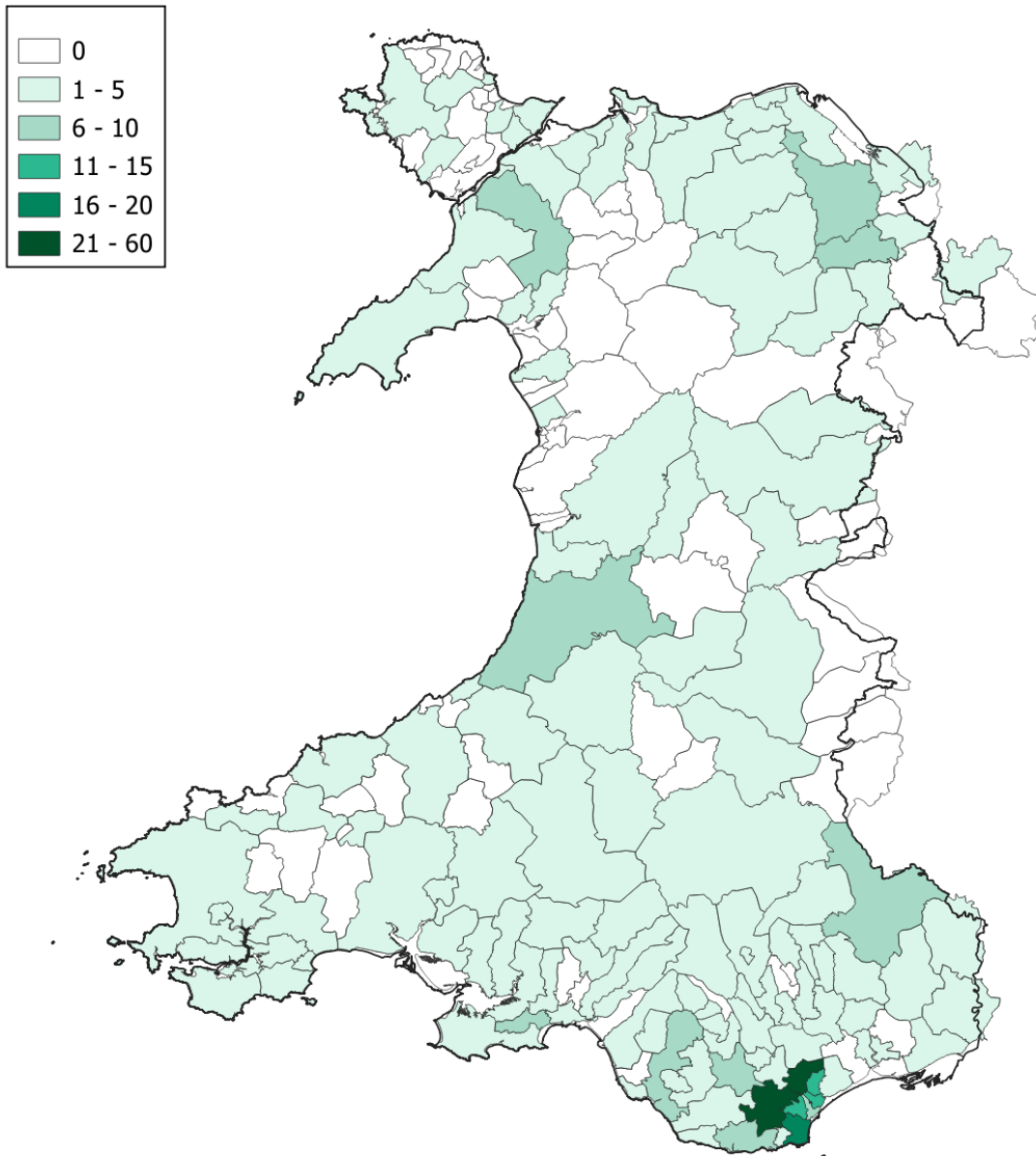
- **Overall, 16% of respondents had a disability, compared with 21% of the population.** This represents a reduction from 23% in 2023-24 but not as low as previous years. Of those who had a disability, 31% had a long-term medical condition, 19% had a mental health condition, and 10-20% (each) had a learning disability, physical disability, and/or sensory impairment. 5-10% of respondents identified as having a form of neurodiversity as a disability.
- **96% of respondents described their ethnic group as 'White',** slightly higher than the Welsh population (94%). Respondents selecting 'mixed or multiple ethnic groups' made up 0-5%. Respondents describing their ethnic group as 'Asian, Asian Welsh, and Asian British', or 'Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean and African' made up 0-5% each (compared to 3% and 1% respectively within the Welsh population).
- **More than half (57%) of respondents stated that they had no religion (compared to 47% of the population),** and 37% were Christian. 0-5% (each) were Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and other religions.
- **88% of respondents described themselves as heterosexual/straight,** compared with 89% of the population. 6% of respondents described themselves as gay or lesbian (compared with 2% of the population), and 6% as bisexual (compared to 1% of the population).
- **21% of survey respondents said they had caring responsibilities for someone because of long-term health conditions, illnesses or problems with old age** (an decrease from 25% in 2023-24, and compared to 10% of the population). More than 97% of respondents were not pregnant, or on maternity/ parental/ adoption leave.
- **90% of respondents were educated to degree level or above,** compared to 32% of the population. **84% of respondents were employed** (this includes those employed full time, part time, casually, or irregularly), compared to 45% of the population. Those who were not economically active continue to be more likely to participate in engagement activities/visits than to contribute oral and written evidence.
- **22% of respondents considered themselves to be from a disadvantaged background.** This was broadly consistent across modes of participation.

- Most respondents were either required to engage with politics as part of their job (32%) or had a great deal of interest in politics (29%). 33% had some interest in politics, and 4% didn't have any interest.

Geographic representation

- As was the case during the 2023-24 reporting period, **respondents were again invited to share postcode information for where they live**. A total of 595 valid UK postcodes were submitted. 518 were either in Wales or within postcode districts that cross the Wales-England border. 77 postcode districts were further afield.
- **Figure 1** is a heat map showing the number of residential postcodes submitted by postcode district.
- **The proportion of engagement with Senedd committees increases as the level of deprivation decreases**. Residential postcodes were also mapped against the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). This showed that the proportion of residential postcodes in the Quintile 5 (least deprived) was higher than the average and the proportion in Quintile 1 (most deprived) was lower. Quintile 1 represents the 20% most deprived areas in Wales, and Quintile 5 represents the 20% least deprived. Each deprivation quintile contains roughly 20% of the population.

Figure 1: Heat map showing number of valid residential postcodes submitted by postcode district



Sectoral representation

- 60% of respondents who took part in a professional capacity or on behalf of an organisation, said they or their organisation represented the interests of people with certain characteristics¹² as a core part of their work (the most prevalent of which were socio-economic background/status, age, and disability).

¹² Respondents could choose as many options as they wanted from a list: Age, Sex, Gender identity, Sexual orientation, National identity, Ethnic group, Disability, Religion, Caring responsibilities, Socioeconomic background or status, Language, None of the above, or Prefer not to say

- 33% of survey respondents said they represented the public sector (an increase from 2023-24, returning to the 33% reported in 2021-22). **The third/voluntary sector remains well represented, with 27% of respondents coming from this sector.** Professional bodies and trade unions represented 12% of the survey responses. These figures are all largely in line with previous years.
- 12% of respondents were from the academic/research sector, which maintains the increase to 11% seen in 2022-23.
- Whilst representation has increased, **the private sector remains very under-represented, representing just 6% of survey respondents.** As a reference point, 69% of the Welsh workforce is employed in the private sector.¹³

The experience of giving evidence

- Most respondents were either satisfied (31%) or very satisfied (51%) with their experience of contributing to committee work, an increase from 24% and 40% respectively in 2023-24. Satisfaction ratings were high for specific aspects of the experience, including the notice given, opportunities to give their views, and any help from staff.
- 73% of respondents said it was 'very likely' they would take part in committee work again given the chance – an increase from 61% in 2023-24.

¹³ StatsWales, [Employment in public and private sectors \(year ending September 2024\)](#)