

The Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Early business

Purpose

This paper sets out a programme of early business that is focused on providing the Committee with the opportunity to set strong foundations for its future work.

Setting strategic objectives

“Before you even think about starting work, you need to have a clear idea of what you are trying to achieve. This applies to the overall direction of your committee as well as to specific inquiries.”

Dr Hannah White, Institute for Government

The Assembly Commission has a vision for world class committees and committee chairs have been set a range of expectation by the Llywydd. The approach suggested in this paper aligns with these aims and should prepare the committee well for delivering them.

This paper outlines a suggested approach to the initial business of the Committee. The approach will lead the Committee to a position where it can be clear about its objectives for the next five years and have a high-level work programme established.

The principle of setting clear objectives before embarking on scrutiny work is important. In previous Assemblies, committees have launched into inquiry work as soon as possible after their establishment. This has not allowed much time to consider what they want to achieve and how they want to approach their work – simply what they want to look at. The Assembly is not unique by any means in this regard, and [recent work that looked at House of Commons select committees](#) came to similar conclusions.

Whilst the drive to ‘get on with business’ is understandable, it is vitally important that this does not override the unique opportunity a committee has at this early stage to set a firm foundation for its future work.

Investing a comparatively short amount of time in understanding what the committee and its members want to achieve – its objectives - and how it will achieve these objectives will pay dividends as the Assembly progresses. In turn, this sets the framework for achieving good scrutiny outcomes and for providing a fulfilling experience for the Assembly Members that serve on the committee.

Outline timetable

The dates and activities that follow are only indicative. Stakeholders and witnesses have not been consulted and final arrangements will only be made once a programme of work has been agreed.

Beyond the meeting on (or near) the 22 September, the suggested work strands would allow the Committee to begin scrutinising the Welsh Government without compromising any decisions it might want to take on a longer-term work programme.

More detailed outline agendas are provided at the end of this paper.

Dates	Venue	Business and objective(s)
7 July	Senedd	Initial discussion of the approach to early business.
13 July	Senedd	Agree an approach to early business and activity during the Summer Recess.
20 July	Royal Welsh Show	Establish stakeholder relationships and gather work-programme intelligence.
14 September (tbc)	Senedd	Welsh Government Performance: Ministerial priorities and the response to Brexit.
20 - 22 September (tbc – could also be held in recess)	Pembrokeshire	Day 1: Build subject knowledge (marine policy). Day 2: Strategic planning session – possibly facilitated by the Institute of Government.
Other business that could be taken in the first half of the autumn term		
September/ October	Senedd / External events	Agricultural policy in Wales after Brexit
September/ October	Senedd	Climate change: Approach to scrutinising Welsh performance.
September/ October	Senedd	Welsh Government Performance: Draft budget for 2017-18.
September/ October	Senedd	Natural Resources Wales Performance: Performance during 2015-16 and future priorities (Chair and CEO).

The Committee has also been invited to undertake **a number of site visits around Wales**. Further details of these can be provided should members want to include them in this initial programme. Otherwise, they can be discussed at the strategic planning session.

Summer recess

If Members are content with the approach suggested, then the summer recess provides an opportunity to think about individual and collective objectives, to gather information on key stakeholder priorities; to find out more about the subjects within the committee's remit and consider any professional development that members might wish to target (individually or as a committee).

To facilitate the gathering of information and to enable the Committee to engage immediately with its stakeholders the Committee could consult informally over the summer recess. Utilising engagement technologies the Committee could invite views from the public and key organisation on the areas that they would like to see the Committee consider.

If this is an approach that the Committee wishes to pursue, then the Clerk and colleagues from the Communications team can provide further details at the next meeting.

It is usual for the committee with responsibility for agriculture to hold an event at the Royal Welsh Show. In the past, committees have held a variety of different events. This has included formal evidence sessions with Ministers, informal stakeholder lunches, launches, and 'off the record' briefings.

Past experience has shown that, given the nature of the event, less formal stakeholder lunches coupled with smaller informal meetings and one-to-ones with stakeholders provide the best outcomes for Members and stakeholders

If the Committee wishes to attend this year, there is an excellent opportunity for early engagement with stakeholders and to consider a more structured engagement with some priority stakeholders as a precursor to work on the future of agricultural policy in Wales.

Early business in the autumn

Two suggested early inquiries are outlined below. These inquiries could be explored without pre-empting decisions taken following the strategic planning session. Whilst initial work could begin on these, their future shape and scheduling could be adjusted to align with any strategic decisions taken.

The future of agricultural policy in Wales after Brexit

This inquiry could consider the future of the agricultural industry in Wales post-2020 including the opportunities and challenges facing the industry; future funding of the sector and rural communities and consider Welsh priorities for a new agricultural policy.

Climate Change: Developing an approach to scrutinising Welsh performance

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 set ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and a framework for delivering these reductions, introducing a carbon budgeting approach. The Committee will need to develop an understanding of the reporting and monitoring arrangements, the basis on which the targets and carbon budgets have been calculated, and how best to structure the Assembly's scrutiny of the Welsh Governments delivery of these targets.

Similar scrutiny regimes are in place in the House of Commons and in the Scottish Parliament. The Committee might wish to explore the approaches taken by these legislatures as part of its work to determine the optimum approach to take in Wales.

Action

Members are invited to:

- Note this paper and indicate how they wish to proceed; and
- Agree to a programme for the Royal Welsh Show on 20 July 2016.
- Agree on the level of formality to be observed when conducting any meetings at the Royal Welsh Show.

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Clerk

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Outline agendas for early meetings

The dates and activities that follow are only indicative. Stakeholders and witnesses have not been consulted and final arrangements will only be made once a programme of work has been agreed.

First meeting - Thursday 7 July 2016 09:00 (1hr)

Introductions (30 minutes)

Early business (30 minutes)

Second meeting – Wednesday 13 July 2016 09:30 (3.5hrs)

Early business

Secretariat to return with more detailed plans based on discussions at the first meeting.

Third meeting – Wednesday 20 July 2016 [Royal Welsh Show]

Private roundtable with key stakeholders

Open stakeholder lunch

Autumn Term

Fourth meeting – 14 September 2016 [Cardiff Bay]

Welsh Government Performance: Ministerial priorities and the response to Brexit

An evidence session with the Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs and her officials.

Fifth meeting – 21-22 September 2016 [Pembrokeshire]

Day 1 – Marine policy priorities

Day 2 – Strategic planning session

Alternatively, dates in recess could be considered for this visit and meeting.

Other meetings that could be held prior to the agreement of a longer-term work programme

The future of agricultural policy in Wales after Brexit

Climate change: Approach to scrutinising Welsh performance

Natural Resources Wales Performance: Performance during 2015-16 and future priorities

Welsh Government Performance: Draft budget 2017-18