

Committee Chairs
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

21 July 2016

Dear Chair

Committee Statements in Plenary

Over recent weeks, the Business Committee has started considering how greater variety could be introduced to Assembly time in Plenary. Part of the impetus for doing so came from the Legacy Report of the Business Committee of the Fourth Assembly which included the following recommendation:

“The new Business Committee should look at scheduling a greater variety of business during non-government time, including more committee business to increase the integration between Plenary and committees. Types of business could, for example, include statements at the beginning of committee inquiries, annual reports from committees, debate topics chosen by young people and other stakeholders, and series of debates on a particular theme.”

The view that Plenary time is not always used as effectively as it could be is one I share, and during the autumn term I will be bringing forward proposals for change for Business Managers to consider, with a view to expanding Members’ opportunities to scrutinise the government and represent their constituents.

The Committee has however taken an early decision that it would like to see greater integration between Plenary and committee work, and that one way of doing that would be to have committee Chairs make statements in Plenary from time to time regarding their committee’s work and priorities. Whilst it is up to Chairs, in consultation with their committees, to decide when they would wish to make a statement, examples we would like to encourage in the first instance include the beginning of inquiries, possibly to help scope out the committee’s



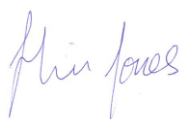
work, and follow-up work on the committee's recommendations, or when a committee was considering its work programme.

We consider that such statements would be a useful tool in increasing the profile of committees' work both among other Members and with the public more generally, and allow greater engagement with, and understanding of, committee inquiries by those who aren't directly involved with them. If properly used, we are confident that such statements and the response to them, could be a valuable tool in informing a committee's thinking and priorities. They would therefore serve a different purpose to the debates on committee reports which are a long-established feature of Assembly business, and which we would want to see continue.

The Business Committee meets weekly to agree the organisation of Assembly business, and while statements can be taken without notice with my permission, we would usually expect any request for time to be received at least a week before the statement is to be made, so that it can appear on the Business Statement and Announcement.

I'd be grateful if you would consider how you and your committee could make use of plenary statements, and I would encourage you to bring some forward in the near future. I am aware that many committees will be launching new inquiries and deciding on priorities during the autumn term, and so the coming period provides a perfect opportunity to trial the use of committee statements. I hope you can play your part in making it a success.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elin Jones'.

Elin Jones AM, Presiding Officer
Chair, Business Committee

