



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response to the National Assembly for Wales' Business Committee Review of Standing Orders

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

ATL Cymru welcomes the opportunity to respond to this important consultation. Standing Orders are a vital element to ensure that there is sufficient scrutiny of the Welsh Assembly Government and to allow the public and Assembly Commission and Members to infiltrate business.

ATL would like to highlight certain areas where standing orders can be improved, based on our engagement with the WAG and National Assembly for Wales.

The NAfW needs to issue clarification (not necessarily prescribed in the Standing Orders) about the workings of Welsh Assembly Committees. If the National Assembly is to ensure more effective engagement from outside organisations and individuals who can offer expert advice and guidance, it needs to clarify certain functions. At present, the means to respond to a committee's consultation is often a barrier to certain individuals and organisations. The process for engagement with committees needs to be less formalised to ensure wider engagement and scrutiny is achieved.

Committees in the National Assembly seem to be run in different ways. It is unclear to outside organisations and individuals how they can affect the business of committees. It would be useful if clear guidance and examples could be given about this. It is also unclear at present how a committee decides on its future work programme. We would welcome a sharing of the rationale for inquiries. When seeking evidence from outside organisations and individuals, this often seems to be done on an ad hoc basis with little or no consideration of what the

committee wants to achieve. For instance, ATL has been excluded from certain consultations that other education unions have been called to give evidence on, and invited to other sessions that preclude some of our sister unions.

Conversely, if Committees feel that they wish to hear from all education unions they need to ensure that their inquiry is sufficiently tight in scope for a detailed and in depth dialogue to result, rather than time constrained sound bites. We would also urge that the Chairpersons of committees engage in discussion and dialogue with key stakeholders before embarking on an investigation. The establishment of an informal 'policy group', used in other legislatures, might be helpful in this regard.

At present there is no clear mechanism for communication between Westminster and Wales. It is vital that certain protocols are established for the communication of information regarding relevant legislation, etc.

The WAG itself needs to do more work to promote its role and functions and to outline to the people of Wales how they can find out more and get involved. This is essential, especially in light of the referendum for further powers that is to be held next year.

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