

SOR 9

Business Committee

Response to the Review of Standing Orders

Nick Ramsay AM

Scrutiny

1. Standing Order 7 should seek further clarification on the aggregate of time allocated between different parties during non-government business. My view is that the current convention - of allocating 120 minutes to Official Opposition and 60 minutes to non-official opposition - is both reasonable and realistic.
2. As far as non-government proceedings are concerned chronological priority should always lie with the Official Opposition.
3. I am broadly content with the wording of Standing Order 14. However, it would be useful if SO14 made an additional reference to the Committee's role in examining the financial aspects of secondary legislation. The Finance Committee should be free to exercise its judgment as to which measures it scrutinises. SO14 must therefore provide for the fullest possible scrutiny on any matter of relevance to Wales or the National Assembly itself.

Dates and Deadlines

4. In three of the last four years it has been necessary to suspend Standing Orders to deal with issues arising due to timing. Standing Order 27 should try to mitigate this problem by setting out a timeline for each part of the scrutiny process. The specific dates could be set out by the Business Committee, owing to vertiginous events such as the Comprehensive Spending Review.
5. In order to scrutinise the Government's budget properly the Finance Committee should be given six weeks to scrutinise the draft budget; other committees should be given three. For supplementary budgets, I am satisfied with the current allocation of three working weeks.