



Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS

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Right Honourable Elin Jones MS

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Mark Drakeford MS
First Minister of Wales
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Annwyl Mark,

Thank you for your letter, I've had an opportunity to discuss this issue in detail with officials. As you will be aware, while decisions on the admissibility of business are ultimately a matter for me, the Table Office advises on such matters on my behalf and does so on the basis of the Guidance on the proper conduct of Senedd Business issued by me under Standing Order 6.17.

The Table Office received five draft amendments from the government on Friday afternoon, and properly advised that each one was inadmissible under the guidance for either or both of the following reasons:

- **Scope:** the motion in question was a motion under Standing Order 16.5 proposing to establish a Senedd Committee. As such, the scope of the motion was limited not only by its subject matter of a Covid-19 inquiry, but also by the fact that it had to propose the title and remit of a new Senedd committee. Amendments making alternative proposals regarding the title and remit of the new committee are admissible, but any amendments that would result in a motion that did not propose to establish a Senedd committee are not, and two of the government's draft amendments fell into the latter category;
- **Proper conduct of Senedd business:** the three draft amendments that were within the scope of the motion sought to prevent the new committee from starting and/or completing its work until after the UK Covid-19 inquiry has reported. To tie the work of a Senedd committee to an event whose timing is outside the Senedd's control, and

which is likely to be many years away (indeed, quite possibly not even during the current Senedd) is not consistent with the proper conduct of Senedd business, and would negate the effect of establishing the committee. In the case of draft amendments which sought to link the Senedd's ability to debate the committee's report to the same event, they would also bypass the proper methods of scheduling Senedd business set out in our Standing Orders.

The Table Office is always ready to work with Members to advise on the admissibility of amendments and make constructive suggestions where that is possible, and I know there is a good working relationship between the Table Office and your officials. I understand that, for two of the amendments that were within scope, the Table Office proposed alternative wording that would resolve the admissibility issues, but that no response was received to those suggestions on this occasion. I would encourage you and your officials to engage with the Table Office at an early point, especially on a more procedural motion such as this one, so that any potential issues can be identified early and time allowed for solutions to be found.

On your final point, it is of course important that alternative propositions can be debated, but those alternatives must always respect the scope of the original motion which has been properly tabled and scheduled. Where that is not possible, the proper course for those opposing the motion is to vote against it and bring forward their own proposal at another time.

Yours sincerely,



Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS

Llywydd