



Proposed amendments to Standing Orders 12 in relation to Oral Questions

Purpose

1. In accordance with Standing Order 11.7(iv), the Business Committee is responsible for making recommendations on the general practice and procedures of the Assembly, including any proposals for the re-making or revision of Standing Orders.

Background

2. At its meeting on 24 April, the Business Committee considered a paper outlining how the new ballot procedures for Oral Assembly Questions have operated during the Fourth Assembly.
3. The Business Committee agreed to revise the procedure for tabling questions to the Counsel General and Assembly Commission to remove the requirement for an initial ballot under Standing Order 12.61.

Current ballot arrangements

4. Standing Order 12.61 requires the Presiding Officer to undertake a ballot to select the names of Members who are then eligible to table questions. Although Members generally submit more questions than in the Third Assembly, the number of questions tabled to the Counsel General and Assembly Commission is almost always substantially less than the 15 questions which could appear on the order paper.
5. On the one hand, once a Member has been drawn in the ballot, a Member may feel obliged to table a question even though they did not

initially have an issue in mind. On the other hand, another Member may have an issue they want to raise with the Counsel General or Assembly Commission but cannot do so as they have not been successful in the initial ballot.

6. The Business Committee agreed that these issues could be resolved by reverting back to the procedure in previous Assemblies in relation to questions to the Counsel General and Assembly Commission, whereby all Members are entitled to table questions, with the order of the questions being selected by random means once the relevant deadline has passed.

Decision

7. The Business Committee agreed the changes to Standing Orders in Annex A on 1 May 2012 and the Assembly is invited to approve the proposal.

Annex A

Oral Questions

- 12.61 The Presiding Officer must undertake a ballot to select the names of those Members who may table oral questions to the First Minister and Welsh Ministers~~in accordance with Standing Order 12.64.~~
- 12.62 A ballot under Standing Order 12.61 must be conducted at least one working day before the first day on which questions may be tabled.
- 12.63 Each Member may enter their names into the ballot under Standing Order 12.61 no more than twice for oral questions to a particular Welsh Minister ~~or the Counsel General (or, in the case of questions~~ and once for oral questions to the First Minister ~~or the Commission, no more than once).~~
- 12.63A Any Member may table oral questions to the Counsel General and the Commission.
- 12.63B Each Member may table no more than two oral questions to the Counsel General, and one oral question to the Commission, for any week where they are answering questions.
- 12.64 The order of oral questions must be determined as follows:
- (i) for questions accepted before a deadline agreed by the Business Committee on the first day on which they may be tabled, by random means;
 - (ii) for questions accepted after the deadline agreed by the Business Committee on the first day on which they may be tabled, by the order in which they are received.