

Power, Influence and Impact of Senedd Committees

Developing a framework for measuring
committees' effectiveness

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Executive Summary

The nature of parliamentary work (oversight, review, deliberation, representation etc) makes the conceptualisation, application and measurement of *effectiveness* extremely complex. From a corporate perspective, the Senedd Commission defines *effectiveness* as ‘*being focussed on our goals and priorities and implementing the best ways of working to deliver excellent services required by the [Senedd] and its Members*¹’. Whilst this framing of the concept is useful, because it implies that to measure effectiveness one must refer to a set of established clear goals, it does not fully help assess the effectiveness of the business side of parliamentary activity, which is highly political. Framing the concept along the lines of *power, influence, and impact*^{2 3} might better reflect the political nature of committees’ work.

Background

In 2013, the Commission’s Review of Support for Committees set out the ambition for a high performing, world class committee system, at the heart of which sit the integration and excellence of support services, public and expert engagement, and the performance of committee Members and Chairs, amongst others. Additionally, the review emphasises the need for external assessment, as well as having the ‘means of assessing and appraising performance against accepted criteria’. The 5th Senedd Business Committee set out ten expectations for committees which include ‘*seeking critical analysis and evaluation to improve their performance*⁴’.

Despite not currently relying on a comprehensive methodology and agreed criteria for assessing the effectiveness of committees’ activity, significant good practices exist, including monitoring acceptance or rejection of recommendations, monitoring the implementation of recommendations, and assessing the indirect and direct outcomes achieved; conducting follow-up scrutiny; monitoring the level of engagement with stakeholders; annual or legacy reports.

¹ (Senedd) Assembly Commission, [Organisational Efficiency and Effectiveness - Review of the Assembly’s Commission Approach](#), September 2016, Cardiff.

² Monk, D. (2010). A framework for evaluating the performance of committees in Westminster parliaments. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 16(1), 1-13.

³ Benton, M., & Russell, M. (2013). Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66(4), 772-797.

⁴ Business Committee (2016). [Committees in the 5th Assembly](#), National Assembly for Wales: Cardiff

The purpose of this project is to develop a framework that enables the 6th Senedd to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of its committee activity. This report

- articulates the characteristics of effective committee activity and the conditions in which evaluation and self-reflection can take place.
- identifies appropriate measures of effectiveness across the full range of committee roles.
- develops a comprehensive analytical and deliberative framework to assist committees in strategically planning and focusing their work.
- considers how committees can improve the diversity of their evidence and witnesses, be more inclusive, and engage a wider range of people with their work.

Research approach

Given the complexity of measuring effectiveness of parliamentary activity in general, the starting point of this project was to position itself firmly within the reality of committees' work and to consider measures of effectiveness within the process of evaluation. It therefore explores both **conditions leading to effective committee work** (features of effectiveness) and the **conditions in which evaluation and assessment of effectiveness take place**.

The research frames *evaluation* as integral to committees' strategic approach, which includes goal setting, planning forward work, monitoring, tracking progress and assessing the legacy of their work. In this sense, assessing how effective committees are in fulfilling their roles is both a learning and an improvement process. Whilst in practice some of the processes described here may already happen (generally in isolation from one another), the need for consistency between objectives, desired long-term impact and outcomes of committees' work, and the activities undertaken during a Senedd term is firmly acknowledged. To ensure this consistency, the research design employs the deliberative and collaborative *theory of change* [ToC] model to develop a shared understanding of what effectiveness means in the context of the Senedd committees, what factors underpin it, and how committees might assess the success of their work (common criteria). The ToC model provides a roadmap outlining the steps planned to achieve a set of clearly defined goals⁵.

⁵ [Development Impact and You](#) – Theory of Change, by Nesta (last accessed May 2021)

The research design employed consists of a mix of documentary analysis, primary qualitative research, and deliberative engagement with institutional stakeholders. Over the course of five months (between September 2020 and January 2021), the Fellow

- ***Undertook a desk-based evidence and literature review*** exploring the concept and measurement of effectiveness in parliamentary contexts.
- ***Conducted a two-stage field research*** consisting of: *37 semi-structured interviews with politicians and officials supporting the work of committees* at all levels of leadership, and *three group discussions* (12 individuals took part) with different teams in the Senedd. The second stage consisted of conducting *three collaborative workshops with Senedd officials* (19 individuals took part) during which participants explored shared narratives about what effective committees are and suggested ways to evidence and measure effectiveness.
- ***Conducted additional three interviews*** with external and international stakeholders.
- ***Held a feed-back session with internal stakeholders*** at the beginning of May to elicit further input from participants and offer in-depth feedback on the first draft.

Findings

The research reviewed a multitude of frameworks for measuring parliamentary committees' effectiveness, some derived from scholarship, others from practitioner-based literature. Despite the significant contextual differences in which most of these frameworks were developed, there are plenty of useful lessons to draw from these studies such as: the importance of clarifying definitions of *power*, *influence* and *impact*; the limitations of purely quantitative measures and the merits of mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches when measuring effectiveness; the fact that not all forms of impact and influence are (easily) measurable, but can be evidenced; and the significance of contextual factors underpinning how effective committees ultimately are. However, the unique context of the Senedd committees (unicameral parliament, small size, multiple memberships in committees, committees not mirroring executive portfolios etc) is not necessarily reflected in the scholarship. Nor is the scholarship abounding in considerations of the role internal processes, norms and routines play in supporting internal and external evaluation of committees' effectiveness. This is significant since the ambition here is to develop a feasible and usable framework of evaluation that supports committees' improvement.

The field research primarily investigated the *conditions for effective committee activity* and the *institutional conditions for effective evaluation and self-reflection to take place*; the latter is seen as critical to institutional learning and improvement. Therefore, the research explored institutional narratives in relation to what effective committee work looks like, how it might be measured, and the practices supporting the evaluation of effectiveness.

Features of effective committees

The analysis of institutional narratives reveals the following shared understanding of what effective committees look like:

- Effective committees have Members who are **fully engaged and interested in their work**. Members are prepared, are listening and supporting each other in committee sessions. Members and the Chair are prepared to challenge Government and witnesses. Leadership is crucial to creating a positive environment for Members to deliberate, and trust is a cornerstone to committees working effectively as a team.
- Effective committees are supported by **excellent support services**, have access to external advice and expertise, and operate within coherent resource and governance structures, where corporate goals are aligned with committee business.
- Effective committees can **strategically plan and manage their work**, have clarity of goals and purpose, and maintain focus throughout the term without hindering the need to be flexible and agile at times. They focus on outcomes, not activities and have a clear and shared idea of what success looks like and how it could be evidenced.
- Effective committees engage in ways of working that **foster partnership and joint approaches, are evidence led, promote lesson learning, engage in evaluation, self-reflection and continuous improvement**.
- Effective committees work **transparently and communicate their work effectively to a wide range of audiences**. Committee reports are designed to be user-friendly, tell clear and compelling stories about their activity and the impact of their work. Committees cultivate a good relationship with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders. This helps them stay relevant across Wales.

- Effective committees are **ambitious and creative in reaching out to new audiences**, in designing activities that are fit for purpose and maximise impact, and bring relevant lived experience in.

Most of these findings echo existing scholarly and practitioner analysis⁶, including the 5th Senedd Business Committee's expectations for world class committees⁷. Some factors hindering Senedd committees' effectiveness are outside their control (i.e., overall capacity of the Senedd, weak Welsh Media). But others, like the way committees strategically plan their work, how they ensure clarity of goals and purpose, or their ability to regularly reflect on ways of working and their impact, are within their control. Several internal factors impact committees: lack of time to engage in self-reflection, instability in committee membership, a tendency to confound strategic planning with forward work planning, and a focus on outputs and activities rather than outcomes.

Conditions for effective evaluation and self-reflection

In terms of the *conditions for evaluation and self-evaluation* to take place, the research reveals a rich body of institutional practices that support the process of evaluation and improvement.

However, several opportunity areas were identified through this research:

- **A more coherent data infrastructure and system of collecting and presenting information about committees and wider parliamentary activity** would provide more easily accessible insights that would support both internal and external evaluation. The data collected presently about committee activity can support administrative decisions on resource allocation but would not provide sufficient insights into how effective committees' work is. A shift from static (pdf) to dynamic data sets is encouraged.
- **Fragmented vs holistic insights** - a lot of knowledge and intel is stored on individual computers or at the level of individual clerks', researchers', lawyers' experience. Whilst this might not be an impediment when it comes to writing individual reports necessarily, this could be problematic for more in-depth, meaningful, cross cutting and longitudinal evaluation of effectiveness, and for a big-picture type of understanding.

⁶ House of Commons Liaison Committee (2019). *The Liaison Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Select Committees*, HC 1860, September 2019.

⁷ Business Committee (2016). [Committees in the Fifth Assembly](#), June 2016, Cardiff: National Assembly for Wales

- There is strong case for **all Members' engagement in evaluation and self-reflection**. This calls for addressing both structural and cultural issues such as: time constraints, rushing pre-meetings and de-brief sessions, timetabling issues, facilitation issues, the perception that evaluation is just navel gazing.
- Being ambitious but **setting measurable objectives (or at least evidencable)** - Whilst setting strategic objectives happens in most committees, these objectives often read as priority policy areas rather than measurable objectives. Similarly, if higher level objectives or goals are identified (i.e., be a respected committee, be a visible committee whose work the Welsh public can identify, influence policy debates beyond the Welsh Government), there is limited reflection on how they will be measured and evidenced.
- Similarly, **more rigorous follow up, monitoring and reviewing strategic goals** will help committees stay relevant and focused on where they can make novel contributions and achieve impact. The high turnover in committees' membership this term, as well as the difficult circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, has meant that strategic focus has arguably been lost.
- Linked to this, **more clarity on and formalisation of the role of internal strategic influencers in parliamentary business** (for instance the Business Committee, the Chairs' Forum, the Llywydd Committee), coupled with regular review and evaluation of committee organisation, activity and performance would help strengthen accountability.
- **Engagement with government responses at more meaningful level**, beyond acceptance of responses, is necessary to ensure committees maximise their impact and influence. This may include challenging the practice of Government accepting recommendations in principle, as well as assessing whether Government's response to recommendations matches the reality of implementation.
- **External input into evaluation** – there is plenty of scope for committees to solicit regular external feedback on their work (i.e., invite facilitators to review ways of working, solicit feedback formally from stakeholders or from individuals that engaged with the committee over the year / term). Some good practice exists, but more systematic and institutionalised arrangements would certainly benefit committees.

Widening public engagement and diversifying evidence and witnesses

Public engagement and diversity of evidence are cross cutting themes in the discussion over committees' effectiveness. On the one hand, the research reveals that impact of committees' work across their roles is perceived to depend, to an extent, on the degree to which committees communicate and engage successfully with a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public. On the other hand, the research also revealed that widening engagement and diversifying evidence are perceived as important and stand-alone committee functions themselves. The report draws several lessons from good practice across the committees in the 5th Senedd:

- The Citizen Engagement Team's strategic approach (and guidelines) to supporting committees with a wide range of documented and tested tools of engagement: focus groups, video evidence, surveys, online crowdsourcing platforms, webchats, visits, citizen panels, citizen assembly, roundtable discussions. Purpose-fit engagement as well as further testing of new deliberative methods should continue to inform committees' work.
- A genuine strive for meaningful engagement driven both by Members and officials. Members' enthusiasm for engaging with and hearing from wider communities.
- Embedding engagement in committees' strategic approach (i.e., Children, Young People and Education Committee is a good example in the 5th Senedd). This is linked with engagement being perceived as a primary rather than supporting role for committees.
- Digital engagement with stakeholders and witnesses may contribute more diverse witnesses (as the Covid-19 experience has shown). However, more analysis is needed to fully capture lessons from the pandemic and understand digital exclusion in Wales.
- Committee Chairs and support teams' efforts to go beyond the 'usual suspects' in committee engagement practice even in the absence of diversity data.
- Experimenting with different forms of hearing oral evidence (citizen panels, round table events). These considerations about user experience when giving evidence and engaging in committees can shape future procedures that will enable committees to diversify the range of evidence they collate and witnesses they engage with. They can also support and empower marginalised and unheard groups to give formal evidence to committees.
- Informal engagement with stakeholders to capture genuine views.
- Instances of soliciting feedback from stakeholders.

There were numerous examples of good practice in terms of widening engagement in committees. It is important to acknowledge that Senedd committees' engagement practice does stand out amongst wider parliamentary practice elsewhere. Nonetheless, several barriers stand in the way of effective engagement and of diversifying committees' evidence base:

- **Internally**, the extent to which various interpretations of the concept of *engagement* at corporate and committee levels are confusing. Internal narratives reveal that committee engagement is broader (includes communication, information, outreach, visibility etc) than the more specific interpretation and application of the work of the Citizen Engagement Team (primarily focused on bringing lived experience to the evidence base of committees' work).
- The audiences that committees define in their work do not necessarily fall neatly into the audiences defined by the corporate Communication and Engagement Strategy. For committees, primary audiences are: the Government, public bodies, stakeholders in the sector they scrutinise, academics and experts they can rely on for evidence, the Media, political parties, other Senedd committees, UK parliamentary counterparts, and the 'Welsh public'.
- The extent to which committees strategize around engagement and diversity of evidence. This includes the extent to which engagement, media and communication officials are involved early in inquiry work, as well as the extent to which the lived experience captured through engagement initiatives is then reflected in committee reports and outward communications.
- Baselines and benchmarks – in terms of diversifying evidence, chairs, clerks and researchers are relied upon to spot misrepresentation issues in the range of witnesses and stakeholders that committees hear from. Diversity data poverty means that it is difficult to assess improvement or get a sense whether committees need to be doing things differently or not.
- **Externally**, a weak Welsh media creates a very difficult landscape for the Senedd and its committees to effectively communicate their work and stimulate wider engagement.

Overall, the 6th Senedd has a solid foundation to build on and improve its committees' activity. The insights captured in this report will hopefully assist future deliberations with regards to embedding practices of measuring evaluation into committees' work.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The reports concludes that a framework loosely based on the *theory of change* model would help committees ensure coherence between strategic goals, planned activities and the process of regularly assessing and reviewing their impact and influence. The proposed template for an operational and fluid theory of change is presented in Annex 1 of this document.

Secondly, the report concludes that the measurement framework used to assess committees' effectiveness should start from long term impact and outcomes. The framework of measures (Table 12) (indicative rather than prescriptive) outlines criteria assessing committees' ambition, from which a series of measures and ways of evidencing success (or progress) are developed.

Thirdly, the report concludes that evaluation should be done at three different levels: some aspects would be in the remit of committees (micro level evaluation), some at Senedd corporate level to ensure a committee wide perspective (macro level evaluation), and some should be conducted externally (meta level evaluation) for a longitudinal, independent perspective. The report suggests a more formal role of the Chairs' Forum in deliberating, commissioning and reporting on committees' effectiveness, whilst other strategic influencers, such as the Business Committee set guidelines and expectations on committee Chairs and Members.

The recommendations this report makes are structured in two sections. The first set of recommendations (1-6) refer to creating the conditions for effective committee work, based on identified features of effectiveness. The second set of recommendations (7-13) refer to creating the conditions for evaluation and self-evaluation to be embedded at institutional, operational, and behavioural level in committees.

Creating the conditions for effective committees

R.1. Streamline and strengthen accountability lines – this implies consideration and evaluation of committee remits and functions, capacity and resourcing of committees, and clarifying the role of strategic actors in strengthening accountability. **This report recommends:**

- **That in the 6th Senedd the Business Committee reviews the merits and potential weaknesses of the theme based and overlapping committee portfolios** as well as the merits and weaknesses inherent to the dual function committee system.
- **A more flexible approach to setting the size and level of support for committees based on needs and with a future proof approach in mind.**
- **The Chairs' Forum to play a more formal and significant role in strengthening and improving committee activity** by acting as a key forum for committee system evaluation and lesson learning.
- **The Business Committee to play a bigger role in advocating for and emphasising the benefits of more stability in committee membership.**
- **The 6th Senedd should consider the constitutional implications of the lines of accountability (internally and externally) the committee system establishes and ensure that arrangements are evaluated.**

R.2. Ensure stability in committees' membership to get all Members fully engaged in committee work. Guidance should be issued to political parties to prioritise committee work and limit turnover in committee membership. The Business Committee can be a possible avenue for this, with support from other strategic actors (the Llywydd, and the Chairs' Forum).

R.3. Experiment more with various approaches to widen participation and engagement.

Widening engagement and participation in committees' work should be driven by Members and remain a strategic goal for both the Senedd and its committees. Experimentation may include further use of Citizen Assemblies, mini-publics (citizen panels and juries), co-production methods (such as deliberative committees). This report recommends the 6th Senedd committees use at least one jointly commissioned Citizen Assembly per Senedd electoral term and test the deliberative committees model with one committee.

R.4. Make lived experience central to committees' approach to evidence through 1) adequate resourcing of the engagement teams supporting committees, 2) clear methodological considerations around weighting the value of lived experience in the evidence base, and 3) reflecting the lived experience captured and how it informed the committees' work in reports and external communications.

R.5. Make diversity monitoring common practice (engagement activities, evidence, witnesses) and report on year-on-year progress. This report recommends that the 6th Senedd develops a comprehensive diversity monitoring system, with transparent reporting on year-on-year progress.

R.6. Solicit regular formal feedback from those who engage in committees' work formally or informally (witnesses, individuals, stakeholders). This report recommends that: 1) the 6th Senedd develops a systematic way of soliciting feedback from external stakeholders that engage in committees' work; and 2) publish this feedback. The feedback should be considered both in individual committees (during strategic review and evaluation work) and in the Chairs' Forum.

R.7. Use the full range of committees' powers to demand improvement from the Welsh Government. Alongside with targeted scrutiny and follow-up work, this report recommends that committees 1) demand Government report annually on implementation of committees' recommendations, and 2) hold Government to account on how they engage with committees, their work and their recommendations. A possible avenue for this collective scrutiny could be the Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee or the Chairs' Forum.

Conditions for effective evaluation

R.8. Embed commitment to evaluation and self-reflection in committees work (i.e., induction, development opportunities, use of pre-meetings and de-briefing time). The Business Committee should develop (or commission) a guide for effective committee work for Members and for committee Chairs⁸. Similarly, guidelines for committee evaluation should be developed by the Chairs' Forum.

R.9. Adopt a Theory of Change based model to plan, review, evaluate and communicate committees' ambitions and achievements. This will help shift the focus from outputs to outcomes. Training and development opportunities should be made available for Members and officials to familiarise themselves with the theory of change models and other evaluation tools.

⁸ The Institute for Government has developed a useful guidance for [Effective Select Committee Members](#)

R.10. Align corporate strategy with parliamentary business so that it reflects committees' activity. Service level strategies need to reflect parliamentary and committees' business.

R11. Develop a comprehensive Open Parliamentary Data infrastructure. This report recommends the 6th Senedd establish an Open Parliamentary Data Science Fellowship whose scope would be to develop a proof of concept, develop and test principles and standards underpinning such open data infrastructure, establish user needs in terms of parliamentary data (internal and external), audit existing provisions and possible models, and provide lessons from other parliaments.

R.12. Forge funded partnerships and expand engagement with research-based organisations in Wales and beyond. This report suggests that funded partnerships (through UKRI or other sources) can support capacity for evaluation and assessment in committees.

R.13. Build internal capacity through expansion of internships and fellowships supporting evaluative work of committees.

1. Introduction

In 2013, the Commission's *Review of Support for Committees*⁹ set out the ambition for a high performing, world class committee system, at the heart of which sat the integration and excellence of support services, public and expert engagement, and the performance of committee Members and Chairs, amongst others. Additionally, the review emphasised the need for external assessment and appraisal, as well as having the '*means of assessing and appraising performance against accepted criteria*'. In 2016, the 5th Senedd Business Committee set out ten expectations for committees which include '*seeking critical analysis and evaluation to improve their performance*'¹⁰.

Despite not currently relying on a comprehensive methodology for assessing the effectiveness of committees' activity, significant relevant practices exist, albeit perhaps not systematic:

- monitoring the acceptance or rejection of committee recommendations.
- formally monitoring the implementation of recommendations and assessing the indirect and direct outcomes achieved.
- using scrutiny (general, financial or in-year) and evidence gathering sessions with stakeholders.
- annual or legacy reports.
- monitoring levels of engagement with stakeholders¹¹.

This project builds on this wealth of existing practice. It also builds on the Senedd Commission's corporate definition of effectiveness – being '*effective means being focussed on our goals and priorities and implementing the best ways of working to deliver excellent services required by the [Senedd] and its Members*'¹².

This definition is helpful because it implies that to measure effectiveness one must refer to a set of established clear goals, but it frames the concept from a corporate perspective, where Senedd Members are identified as primary beneficiaries of parliamentary services. This obscures the effectiveness of the business side of parliamentary activity, which is highly political. Framing the

⁹ Assembly Commission, [Review of Support for Committees](#), December 2013, Cardiff.

¹⁰ Business Committee (2016). [Committees in the 5th Assembly](#), National Assembly for Wales: Cardiff

¹¹ Internal document: *Assessing the Impact and Outcomes of committee scrutiny in the Assembly*

¹² (Senedd) Assembly Commission, [Organisational Efficiency and Effectiveness - Review of the Assembly's Commission Approach](#), September 2016, Cardiff.

concept along the lines of *power, influence and impact*¹³¹⁴ might better reflect the political nature of committees' work. It is precisely this gap that this project is trying to contribute to: understanding the effectiveness of committees' activity from both a political and organisational perspective and developing a framework of evaluation that helps measure it.

1.1. Terms of reference

The purpose of the project is to develop a framework that enables the 6th Senedd to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of its committee activity. More specifically, the project will:

- identify appropriate measures of effectiveness, in terms of scrutiny of government and other offices/agencies, legislative scrutiny and development of policy.
- articulate the characteristics of effective committee activity and lessons which might be learned for the Senedd's approach to committee work in future.
- consider how committees can improve diversity of their evidence and witnesses, be more inclusive, and engage a wider range of people with their work.

1.2. Approach

Given the complexity of measuring effectiveness of parliamentary activity in general, the starting point of this project was to position itself firmly within the reality of committees' work and to consider measures of effectiveness within the process of evaluation. It therefore explores both *conditions leading to effective committee work* (features of effectiveness) and the *conditions in which effective evaluation and assessment* takes place.

The research frames *evaluation* as integral to committees' strategic approach, which includes goals setting, planning forward work, monitoring, tracking progress and assessing the legacy of their work. In this sense, assessing how effective committees are in fulfilling their roles is both a learning and an improvement process. Whilst in practice some of the processes described here may indeed happen in isolation from one another, the need for consistency between objectives, desired long-term impact and outcomes of committees work and the activities undertaken during

¹³ Monk, D. (2010). A framework for evaluating the performance of committees in Westminster parliaments. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 16(1), 1-13.

¹⁴ Benton, M., & Russell, M. (2013). Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66(4), 772-797.

a term is firmly acknowledged. To ensure this consistency, the research design employs the deliberative and collaborative *theory of change* [ToC] model to develop a shared understanding of what effectiveness means in the context of the Senedd committees, what factors underpin it, and how committees might assess the success of their work (common criteria). The ToC model provides a roadmap outlining the steps planned to achieve a set of clearly defined goals¹⁵.

Derived from this is a focus on two important dimensions in evaluation: a) *the hardwiring of evaluation* - are there institutionalised structures and processes supporting the process of assessment and review of committees' activity? (i.e., internal evaluation capacity, formal arrangements for external assessment, data infrastructure etc); and b) the *soft wiring of evaluation* - are there embedded practices, rituals of regular self-reflection, is there a culture of feedback, bringing in external input into assessment, learning and continuous improvement?

1.3. Methodology

This report is underpinned by a research design consisting of a mix of approaches combining documentary analysis and primary research. This explored narratives of what the effectiveness of committees looks like, how it might be measured, and what structures, processes, resources and practices are needed to support rigorous evaluation that contributes to improving committees' activity. Institutional practices in relation to committees' strategic approach to their work as well as in relation to practices of evaluation were also explored. Institutional narratives and interpretations are significant because they contribute to shaping norms, practices and routines in institutional settings¹⁶.

To elicit this in depth understanding the Fellow employed a qualitative methodology that consisted of:

- ***A desk-based evidence and literature review*** exploring the concept of effectiveness in the context of parliamentary institutions.
- ***A two-stage field research*** based on engagement with internal and external stakeholders:

¹⁵ [Development Impact and You](#) – Theory of Change, by Nesta (last accessed May 2021)

¹⁶ Geddes M (2019) The Explanatory Potential of 'Dilemmas': Bridging Practices and Power to Understand Political Change in Interpretive Political Science. *Political Studies Review* 17 (3): 239–254.

- A first stage of data collection via *37 semi-structured interviews with politicians and officials supporting the work of committees* at all levels of leadership, and *three group discussions* (12 individuals took part) with different service teams.
- The second stage of the field research consisted of conducting *three collaborative workshops with Senedd officials* (19 individuals took part) during which participants explored shared narratives about what effective committees are and suggested ways to evidence and measure effectiveness.
- ***An additional three interviews*** were undertaken with external and international stakeholders.
- ***A feed-back session with institutional stakeholders*** was organised at the beginning of May to elicit further input from participants and offer in-depth feedback on a first draft.

Ethical considerations

The research obtained ethics approval from London Metropolitan University in September 2020. An *Interview Consent Form* was presented to each participant in interviews along with a *Project Information Sheet*. Participants gave consent either by email or by returning the signed consent form. All interviews were conducted online, via Zoom; most were recorded, and a transcript was generated and shared with respective participants. Where participants did not agree to be recorded, an interview note was sent to them to check that it captured the essence of the conversation. Group discussions and the collaborative workshops were not recorded.

In order to protect the identity of Senedd officials that have contributed to this research, the interview transcripts were completely anonymized, and the recordings deleted from the data storage system used by the Research Fellow, in line with provisions in the Fellowship Agreement. When presenting findings, direct quotations will be attributed generically as “*Interview with Official*” and only in those instances where participants explicitly expressed consent. Where consent to quote directly was given by politicians, they will be referenced directly, by name and position, in the report. Because committee related examples may lead to identification of officials supporting them, no direct quotations from officials will be given mentioning specific committees.

1.4. Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows. First, it reviews relevant scholarship and evidence in relation to how the concept of effectiveness is contextualised, applied, and measured in the context of parliamentary organisations. The topic of public engagement in committees and diversity of evidence and witnesses is also considered. Second, it presents findings in relation to a) conditions for effective committee work, b) condition for effective evaluation and self-reflection taking place and c) widening public engagement and diversifying evidence. Third, it will introduce the general framework for evaluation of Senedd committees and highlight a series of features of effective committees. Fourth, the report will make a series of recommendations in terms of evaluating committees' effectiveness in the 6th Senedd, engaging with the public and diversifying evidence in committees.

1.5. Limitations

The fellow acknowledges several limitations in this research:

- Whilst the research involved parliamentary officials and committee Chairs, it did not involve any Senedd Members who were not chairing a committee. Given the multiple memberships in committees, the Fellow used the opportunity to invite committee Chairs to draw on their experiences both as Chairs but also as Members in other committees.
- Engaging with party groups and seeking party groups' views on committee activity and effectiveness would have benefitted the research.
- Views from Welsh Government officials on committees' effectiveness are absent as the Fellow's invite to participate in the research was declined.

2. Literature and evidence review

Parliamentary organisations are complex public institutions, highly political, with multiple loci and types of leadership and power (political, administrative), and with multiple stakeholders and beneficiaries. They are also primarily revising, oversight and deliberation bodies in terms of policy, rather than primarily policy developing entities themselves or in charge of policy implementation. This makes the conceptualisation, application, and measurement of *effectiveness* in parliamentary contexts rather complex. Some of the scholarship explored here can be helpful.

2.1. Effectiveness in the context of parliamentary institutions

From a corporate organisational perspective, *effectiveness* has been defined as depicting ‘the extent to which objectives are reached and the relationship between the desired impact and the real impact of an activity’¹⁷. This definition implies that, on the one hand, a clear set of objectives has been articulated and, on the other hand, a framework of measurement has been developed defining what success might look like in terms of outcomes.

The Senedd Commission also employs a similar type of definition. Being effective is being focussed on goals, priorities and implementation¹⁸. Whilst this framing is useful, it does not fully address the effectiveness of the business side of parliamentary activity, which is highly political.

Given the political nature of committees, ‘a concept such as political *influence* is more appropriate than *effectiveness*’¹⁹. Importantly, distinctions need to be drawn between *power* and *influence*; the former referring to the constitutional arrangements underpinning the formal set of powers and the strength of parliamentary actors, whilst the latter refers to committees’ *de facto* power²⁰. In measuring the legislative *influence* of committees for instance, the focus should be on *the reality rather than the potentiality* of influence.

¹⁷ Matei, A., Ciora, C., Dumitru, A. S., & Ceche, R. (2019). Efficiency and effectiveness of the European Parliament under the ordinary legislative procedure. *Administrative Sciences*, 9(3), 70.

¹⁸ Senedd) Assembly Commission (2016) Organizational Efficiency and Effectiveness. Review of the Assembly’s Commission Approach

¹⁹ Monk, D. (2010). A framework for evaluating the performance of committees in Westminster parliaments. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 16(1), 1-13.

²⁰ Benton, M., & Russell, M. (2013). Assessing the impact of parliamentary oversight committees: The select committees in the British House of Commons. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 66(4), 772-797.

Similarly, the concepts of *influence* and *impact* have been used interchangeably in scholarship, but this report will use *impact* as the longer-term effect of committees' work, thus measurable by looking at the extent to which their recommendations have been implemented or led to changes in policy and legislation outcomes. One issue with assessing impact is demonstrating a direct causal effect of recommendations on policy outcomes. Others differentiate between the two concepts emphasising that *influence is derived from various sources* (i.e., status, formal powers, relationships, expertise, respect, communication), whilst *impact (of committee scrutiny) is manifested* directly (in evidence, analysis, learning etc) or *indirectly* (quality of democracy)²¹.

Committee effectiveness has been defined mostly in relation to functions fulfilled, such as: scrutiny of Government departments or public bodies, scrutiny of legislation, contribution to policy, engagement with the public, contribution to diversifying the evidence base etc. For example, a principled approach to good scrutiny implies:

- Constructive “critical friend” challenge.
- Amplifying the voice and concerns of the public.
- Being led by independent people who take responsibility for their role.
- Focusing on improvement in public services²².

Effectiveness of scrutiny is most often seen as *impact, influence* or *power* in relation to the main stakeholder of their work (the government, or relevant public bodies).^{23 24 25} In legislative scrutiny, effectiveness is often framed as *influence* and *impact* mostly – the extent to which committees' pre-legislative, legislative and post-legislative work leads to visible changes to legislation. Other interpretations refer to ensuring rigour of the legislative process²⁶.

²¹ White, H. (2015). Select committees under scrutiny. *Institute for Government*.

²² Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (2020) [Revisiting the four principles of good scrutiny](#), CfGS, London.
 Monk, D. (2010). A framework for evaluating the performance of committees in Westminster parliaments. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 16(1), 1-13.

²³ Hindmoor, A., Larkin, P., & Kennon, A. (2009). Assessing the influence of select committees in the UK: The Education and Skills Committee, 1997–2005. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 15(1), 71-89.

²⁴ Tolley, M. C. (2009). Parliamentary scrutiny of rights in the United Kingdom: Assessing the work of the joint committee on human rights. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 44(1), 41-55.

²⁵ Idem Benton, M., & Russell, M. (2013)

²⁶ Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee (2015). [Making Laws in Wales](#), Report of the National Assembly's Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, National Assembly for Wales: Cardiff.

The policy development role of committees ‘take the form of internal, iterative debate and analysis, expert research, reviews and consultations, commissions and inquiries’²⁷ with the view to change or influence government policy. Effectiveness refers to the level of autonomy and powers committees have to pursue their own agendas, to initiate policy inquiries, even legislation²⁸, and the extent to which they are able to change government priorities²⁹.

Whilst some regard public engagement as a supporting function in committees, others see it as a primary function (it is now considered one of the core tasks of the Departmental Select Committees in the House of Commons). Effectiveness of public engagement has mostly been framed from the perspective of parliamentary organisations (i.e., the extent to which committees effectively *inform* the public of their work, the extent to which they *involve* the public in their work, the extent to which they *listen to* and *broadcast* public voice, the extent to which they *empower* citizens to take part in the democratic process).^{30 31 32 33 34} Committees’ contributions to the evidence base relate to the extent to which committees bring to light new evidence, or whether they can persuade government to reveal new information.³⁵

These various interpretations reveal the complexity of the task of developing a comprehensive framework for measurement, especially in a parliamentary context where committees play a dual function in scrutinising the government and legislation. The next section maps out existing frameworks for evaluating committees’ effectiveness.

²⁷ McAllister, L., & Stirbu, D. (2007). Developing devolution's scrutiny potential: a comparative evaluation of the National Assembly for Wales's Subject Committees. *Policy & Politics*, 35(2), 289-309.

²⁸ Cairney, P. (2011) *The Scottish Political System Since Devolution: From New Politics to the New Scottish Government* (Exeter: Imprint Academic)

²⁹ *Idem* White (2015)

³⁰ Leston-Bandeira, C. (2012). Studying the relationship between Parliament and citizens. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 18(3-4), 265-274.

³¹ Asher, M., Bandeira, C. L., & Spaiser, V. (2017). Assessing the effectiveness of e-petitioning through Twitter conversations. In *Political Studies Association Annual Meeting 2017*.

³² Rowe, G., & Frewer, L. J. (2005). A typology of public engagement mechanisms. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 30(2), 251-290.

³³ Bochel, C. (2012). Petitions: different dimensions of voice and influence in the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. *Social Policy & Administration*, 46(2), 142-160.

³⁴ Hansard Society (2010) [*Lessons from Abroad. How Parliaments around the world engage with the public*](#), London.

³⁵ *Idem* White (2015)

2.2. Measuring effectiveness of parliamentary committees

Existing methodological approaches focus on assessing effectiveness of parliamentary committees in relation to their scrutiny or legislation role. Table 1 synthesises these approaches. Despite the contextual difference in which most of these frameworks for evaluation of effectiveness were developed (mostly academic, and dealing with Westminster type committee systems) there are plenty of useful lessons to draw from these studies:

- The most common approach to measuring effectiveness of committee work is to assess the *influence* and *impact* of committee reports by looking at government acceptance or rejections of recommendations. Studies of *impact* usually go beyond measuring the initial government responses and track the actual implementation of committee recommendations³⁶.
- Quantitative approaches vary in sophistication and detail: from crude ratings systems of government responses to complex coding (inquiry, recommendation, response and implementation progress).
- Mix method approaches address the limitations of quantitative approaches and improve analysis.
- There is a consensus that acknowledges the significance of contextual factors (both internal and external) in shaping the effectiveness of committees, and of the institutional environment in which committees operate³⁷.

³⁶ For instance, Benton and Russell 2013

³⁷ Idem, Russell and Benton (2013)

Table 1 – Frameworks

<i>Author and focus</i>	Methodological approach	Measures
<i>Hindmoor et al (2009)</i>	Quantitative approach supplemented by interviews	Acceptance of recommendations
<i>Tolley (2009)</i>	Effectiveness framed as <i>influence or efficacy of recommendations</i>	References in the Media, Plenary debates, other committees
<i>Reports / HoC</i>	on various stakeholders: Government, Parliament, Media, Political Parties, Judiciary	
<i>Benton and Russell (2013)</i>	Mix-method longitudinal approach using committee report recommendations: effectiveness as <i>impact</i> on government policy	Acceptance and implementation of recommendations by degree of policy change
<i>Reports / HoC Select Committees</i>	Supplemented by qualitative study (interviews)	Behind the scenes influence of chairs, influence on policy priorities, brokering role, generating fear
<i>Ohja (2012)</i>	Mixed methods: longitudinal study of 235 committee reports between 1996 and 2001 supplemented by interviews with parliamentarians	Defines criteria for effectiveness rather than specific measures: independence in working, efficiency in collecting and collating information, ability to make recommendations, freedom of selection, attitude and response of Government and parliament to committee reports
<i>Reports / Queensland parliament</i>	Effectiveness as <i>influence</i> .	
<i>Unicameral, sub-national</i>		
<i>Aldons (2000, 2003), Monk (2010)</i>	Quantitative approach focused on initial acceptance by government of committee recommendations	Proportion of recommendations accepted by the government
<i>Committee reports / Australian Commonwealth Parliament</i>	Effectiveness is framed as <i>influence</i> of reports on Government	Whether the government accepts at least one of the recommendations
<i>McAllister and Stirbu (2007), Cole 2014</i>	Mixed methods	Scrutiny outputs: number of inquiries, witness appearances
<i>Subject Committees / Wales</i>	Focus on scrutiny capacity and formal powers of committees	Perceptions of parliamentary actors in reference to the effectiveness of the scrutiny process

The Institute for Government’s programme of work on parliamentary scrutiny offers useful practical parameters that may inform an evaluation framework for measuring effectiveness of committees in relation to their scrutiny role. Rather than measures, the suggestion is to identify possible qualitative and quantitative sources to be used in evidencing impact.

Table 2 – Sources of evidence³⁸

Possible qualitative evidence	Possible quantitative evidence
<p>Documentary sources, focus groups, workshops or interviews will give insights into perspectives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those subject to scrutiny • those conducting scrutiny • third parties in the scrutiny process • those providing evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments to bills or regulatory changes made following recommendations in a report • Number/proportion of report recommendations accepted • Evidence of novel research conducted • Quantifiable financial savings arising from recommendations • Quantifiable non-financial benefits or trends, such as reductions in numbers of PQs or FOI requests • Numbers of references to parliamentary scrutiny in government documents, the media, parliamentary proceedings, judicial proceedings, think-tank reports • Independent assessments of impact • Quantitative surveys of interested parties

Whilst this review of scholarship provides some useful reference points for this project, most existing frameworks and methodologies, with some exceptions, do not necessarily account for:

- *the unique context of the Senedd committees* (unicameral parliament, small size of the legislature, high constitutional flux, dual roles, outlier in terms on committees not mirroring executive portfolios). Limited existing analysis highlights the extra importance of committee systems in these contexts³⁹. In unicameral systems a ‘comprehensive committee system can take care of the second chamber review function’⁴⁰.

³⁸ From White, 2015

³⁹ Ojha, S. (2012). The effectiveness of parliamentary committees in Queensland: 1996-2001. *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, 27(2), 71-87.

⁴⁰ Concannon, G. (2013). Committees in a unicameral parliament: Impact of a majority government on the ACT legislative assembly committee system. *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, 28(1), 57-70.

- *broader contribution of committees to political, legislative and democratic life (i.e., socialisation of parliamentarians, democratic legitimacy, political leadership recruitment, public information).*
- *contribution of committees to developing inter-parliamentary relations, significant in the context of devolution in the UK.*⁴¹
- **internal processes, norms and routines underpinning and supporting internal and external evaluation of committees' effectiveness.**

The latter point is significant since the ambition here is to develop a feasible and usable framework of evaluation that supports committees' improvement.

2.3. Features of effective committees

To establish a baseline of what effective committees look like, this report synthesises lessons from two parliamentary reviews of committees from the Scottish Parliament⁴² and from the House of Commons⁴³ along several areas of committee activity. Despite differences between the three committee systems - Scottish Parliament, the House of Commons and the Senedd (the Senedd system, obviously, has more in common with the Scottish one) – there are, nevertheless, relevant lessons, which are mapped below.

Table 3 – Improving effectiveness and influence of Committees: Relevance for Wales

Areas of activity	Recommendations / principles	Relevance for Wales
<i>Planning and organisation of work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for evaluation and strategic approaches • Engage stakeholders in strategic planning • Strategic planning gets well-focused evidence & meaningful stakeholder engagement • Focus on potential outcomes and maximising impact of their work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial in a small organisation limited by its own political capacity.
<i>Dealing with the Government</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onus on government departments to report on recommendations' implementation and impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wise use of resources and formal powers in relation to the government

⁴¹ See Institute of Welsh Affairs, [Inter-parliamentary relations: Missing Links?](#), 2020

⁴² Scottish Parliament Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee (2016). *Committee Reform*, SPCB, SP paper 882, January 2016

⁴³ House of Commons Liaison Committee (2019). *The Liaison Committee Report on the Effectiveness of Select Committees*, HC 1860, September 2019.

<i>Collaboration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with stakeholders to maximise the impact of their inquiry work • Poor relationship between committees and public can lead to lack of effectiveness⁴⁴. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would enhance both the voice of the sector and of committees
<i>Evidence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with diverse research communities • Collect diversity monitoring of witnesses • Accessible formal evidence submission • Experiment with different room layouts and meetings format for oral evidence sessions • Focus on drawing out evidence used by the government to inform their decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question of ‘usual suspects’ is a critical one in Wales. • Diversity monitoring already acknowledged as needed • Senedd committees already known for innovation and experimentation
<i>Public Engagement and Research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early consideration of engagement strategies • Bring in people’s lived experience • Experiment with deliberative methods (mini-public: citizen juries⁴⁵ and citizen panels⁴⁶; citizen assemblies) • Make use of research-based organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Engagement Team part of integrated teams • Citizen Assembly as a method was tested in 2019 in Wales’ first Citizen Assembly⁴⁷ • Link with widening participation, public education and votes at 16/17
<i>Communicating work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early consideration of communication strategy • Digital first in terms of committee reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak Welsh Media • Weak public profile for the Senedd
<i>Membership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members’ engagement, high attendance and committee membership continuity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical in a small organisation and with small committees
<i>Autonomy and capacity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring capacity that committees initiate their own work, balance their workload and remits • Executive legislative overload comes at the expense of quality scrutiny and influence⁴⁸ and limits effectiveness committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee remits do not mirror government portfolios. Whilst this allows flexibility in what committee focus on, it can also blur accountability lines.

⁴⁴ Cairney, P. (2011) *The Scottish Political System Since Devolution: From New Politics to the New Scottish Government* (Exeter: Imprint Academic)

⁴⁵ SPCB (2019) [The Scottish Parliament Citizen Jury on land management and natural environment](#), SPCB: Edinburgh

⁴⁶ Elstub, S., Carrick, J., & Khoban, Z. (2019) [Evaluation of the Scottish Parliament’s Citizen panels on Primary Care](#), Newcastle: Newcastle University

⁴⁷ ‘A large majority of participants (71.4%) felt that citizens’ assemblies to inform committees’ work should definitely be available to people in Wales. (Involve 2019, p. 16)

⁴⁸ Cairney, P. (2013). How Can the Scottish Parliament Be Improved as a Legislature?. *Scottish Parliamentary Review*, 1(1).

From other contexts, we can also draw on other insightful lessons. For instance:

- In German parliamentary context, having an increased number of interest groups (a crowded lobbying space) actively engaged with committees' scrutiny and legislative work is significant for legislative change⁴⁹.
- In Australian Commonwealth Parliament context, Grenfell and Moulds emphasise the importance of factors such as a) timeliness of conducting parliamentary scrutiny, b) adequacy of time to conduct formal parliamentary scrutiny, c) different committee attributes leading to greater influence (i.e., membership, scrutiny criteria, formal powers), d) the power and willingness of parliamentary committees to facilitate public input⁵⁰.

2.4. Public engagement, diversity of evidence and parliamentary committees

Widening engagement and diversifying evidence in committees have become significant preoccupations for parliamentary institutions only recently. The main driver behind public engagement in parliaments has been the long trend of declining trust in politics and political institutions, well evidenced in the UK by the Audit of Political Engagement run yearly by the Hansard Society⁵¹. Given its relative short history, for the Welsh Parliament, widening engagement as well as communicating effectively to the public, have been major preoccupations ever since its establishment in 1999. Scholarship emphasises the role of institutionalisation of the public engagement function over the years, both at strategic level, corporate operational level and at parliamentary business level⁵².

More recently, links between *widening public engagement* in parliamentary institutions have been made with the *ambition of diversifying the range of evidence* parliamentary committees rely on in deploying their oversight and legislative functions. Hendricks and Kay assert that parliamentary committees are central to a paradigmatic shift from: seeing engagement in terms

⁴⁹ Eising, R., & Spohr, F. (2017). The more, the merrier? Interest groups and legislative change in the public hearings of the German parliamentary committees. *German Politics*, 26(2), 314-333.

⁵⁰ Grenfell, L., & Moulds, S. (2018). The role of committees in rights protection in federal and state parliaments in Australia. *UNSWLJ*, 41, 40.

⁵¹ Hansard Society (2009-19). [Audit of Political Engagement](#). London: Hansard Society

⁵² Stirbu, D. S., & McAllister, L. (2018). Chronicling National Assembly committees as markers of institutional change. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 24(3), 373-393.

of ‘opening up’ parliaments (hence, the focus on transparency, information provision, and providing avenues for public voice to be *heard*); to seeing engagement as democratic renewal (hence, focusing on the depth and quality of the deliberation in committees, where public voice is not only heard, but also *considered*)⁵³. The way they mediate knowledge is therefore critical to the role they play in improving the evidence base of their work as well as the government’s.

Whilst scholarship on parliamentary engagement with the public has evolved significantly over the years, there is still scarce insight into the extent to which parliamentary public engagement strategies are effective. Rowe and Frewer propose a typology of engagement supported by a measuring framework according to the structural variability of various engagement initiatives⁵⁴. The forms of engagement identified are classified as: communication, consultation, participation; whilst effectiveness is seen as potentially influenced by maximising relevant participants, maximising relevant information from participants and from sponsors etc.

Whilst this is useful, it does not go far enough in depicting the broader outcomes of engagement (i.e., diversifying evidence, effect on participants - do they feel heard, has their knowledge improved, will they re-engage?). Nor does it fully consider the potential for co-production or help assess the impact of engagement on government (is the government more likely to accept and act on committee recommendations that are strongly anchored in wider engagement?).

Other studies reviewed give more insight to widening engagement and diversifying evidence:

- Diversity of witnesses in committee hearings is well documented, with gender and geographical imbalances among the most significant areas being looked at.^{55 56 57}

⁵³ Hendriks, C. M., & Kay, A. (2019). From ‘opening up’ to democratic renewal: Deepening public engagement in legislative committees. *Government and Opposition*, 54(1), 25-51.

⁵⁴ Rowe, G., & Frewer, L. J. (2005). A typology of public engagement mechanisms. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 30(2), 251-290.

⁵⁵ Geddes, M. (2018). Committee Hearings of the UK Parliament: Who gives Evidence and does this Matter?. *Parliamentary Affairs*.

⁵⁶ Bochel, H., & Berthier, A. (2021). Parliamentary committee witnesses: representation and diversity. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 27(1), 55-72.

⁵⁷ Rumbul, R. (2016). Gender inequality in democratic participation: Examining oral evidence to the National Assembly for Wales. *Politics*, 36(1), 63-78.

- Institutional design strategies, most of which require culture change, to widen and deepen parliamentary committee engagement, include: the re-design of communications and procedures of engagement (formal settings); taking committee deliberations where the public meet (informal settings); and experimenting with citizen forums⁵⁸.
- Engagement initiatives opening up legislative scrutiny to the public (see public reading stage in HoC), are not always effective in integrating the public's voice⁵⁹.

The International Parliamentary Engagement Network⁶⁰ developed a useful toolkit addressing:

- what good public engagement looks like in parliamentary context – inclusive, open and transparent, collaborative, empowering, flexible, and meaningful.
- enablers for effectiveness in public engagement – coherent sequencing, evaluation, resources, trust, community based, endorsement.
- how to evaluate the success of engagement initiatives – focus on three main areas: numbers, qualitative feedback, and impact.

Recently, the Parliament of Belgium's Brussels region has launched a world's first experiment in institutionalising deliberative committees in its work as a way to close the gap between citizens and the decision-making process. This means that 45 randomly selected citizens become permanent Members of a deliberative committee working alongside 15 elected Members⁶¹. This experimentation advances the conversation even further: engagement is not only about opening up, or democratic renewal, but also about democratic co-governance and co-production.

To sum up, this review of the literature offers a number of useful lessons to draw from when thinking about how to improve and measure effectiveness of committees: the importance of clarifying definitions of *power*, *influence* and *impact*; the limitations of purely quantitative measures and the merits of mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches; the fact that not all

⁵⁸ Idem Hendriks and Kay (2017)

⁵⁹ Leston-Bandeira, C. (2019). Parliamentary petitions and public engagement: an empirical analysis of the role of petitions. *Policy & Politics*, 47(3), 415-436.

⁶⁰ International Parliamentary Engagement Network (2021). [Public Engagement Toolkit](#). IPEN.

⁶¹ Minsart, E. & Jacquet, V. (2021) [Permanent Joint Committees in Belgium: Involving citizens in parliamentary debate](#), The Constitution Unit Blog: UCL

forms of impact and influence are (easily) measurable, but can be evidenced; and the significance of contextual factors underpinning how effective committees ultimately are.

However, the unique context of the Senedd committees is not necessarily fully reflected in the scholarship. Nor is the scholarship abounding in considerations over the role internal processes, norms and routines play in supporting internal and external evaluation of committees' effectiveness. Thus, the extensive field work conducted as part of this project aimed to address this gap. Similarly, the engagement process throughout the past months was aimed at co-designing a set of criteria that are feasible and that can guide the work of evaluating committees' effectiveness in the 6th Senedd.

3. Findings

This section presents findings from the field research conducted between November 2020 and January 2021. The research looked at:

- Narratives on the role of committees and measures of effectiveness in the context of their principal roles: scrutiny of government, policy development and scrutiny of legislation.
- Existing practices around measuring the effectiveness of committees – in particular, practical aspects around strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Factors determining effective or ineffective committee work.
- Public engagement as well as diversity of evidence and witnesses to committees' activity.

This section is structured as follows: first, this section outlines institutional narratives in relation *conditions for effective committee work* – this looks at individual and shared beliefs around what successful committee work looks like and how to measure it. Second, it reviews current practices that determine the *conditions in which evaluation of effectiveness takes place* – it looks at practices around strategic planning and how committees deploy their functions. Third, it synthesises institutional narratives in relation to effective public engagement and diversity of witnesses and evidence.

These findings reveal a rich body of shared and personal views that help us 1) understand existing practices around evaluation of committees' effectiveness and 2) identify opportunity areas where a more consistent approach to measuring effectiveness could be implemented.

3.1. Conditions for committees' effectiveness

Internal institutional actors were asked to comment on what makes committee work effective in their view, and what features of effective committees they could identify. The narratives reveal a great deal of shared perspectives on what makes committees effective as well as what may hinder their work. The features of effectiveness identified can be traced to narratives from committee chairs and officials that were interviewed during the research and to the three co-design workshops held with officials in January 2021.

Understandings of effectiveness

Whilst understandings of committees' roles are generally convergent (i.e., what committees should do), there is some divergence in interpreting what makes them effective in these roles, and what areas of work should be prioritised. One stakeholder pointed at the macro and micro levels of committees' effectiveness:

I guess that is effectiveness in the macro perspective: have you achieved what you set out to achieve? [Then at] micro level of individual committee meetings, [you can be] effective to achieve what you want. Did they work in the way that Members wanted them to work, to get what they wanted out of them? (Interview with official)

One of the strongest generic narratives on effectiveness was linked to the goal of **influencing government**. This is in line with findings from scholarship, which focuses largely on making links between committees' recommendations and government responses. However, perhaps diverging from scholarship somewhat, is the breadth and depth of what counts as influence: from changing government priorities, to changes in spending, in legislation, changes in policy and even changes in governments' behaviour and processes.

Another significant narrative is the broader influence and impact: committees aspire to not only influence the Welsh Government but become **respected actors on a wider stage** (for example in inter-parliamentary relations, or at constitutional level).

But it was getting those bodies [organisation] that are influential in the development of engagement with [UK] government on processes, such as the Institute for Government; being able to influence that, being seen as a player within that. And it is about profile. There is absolutely no point in us turning up to any of these meetings [events] unless we have something to say; and we say it there and we add something to it [broader constitutional debate] so that we are continually pushing the Welsh case within those [forums] (Mick Antoniw MS, Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, 5th Senedd).

Another consistent theme throughout the research is the acknowledgement of **how difficult it is to gauge effectiveness of committees** (whether it is trying to establish causal relationships between committees' recommendations and government's action, whether one measures the

extent to which committees connect meaningfully with the people of Wales, or whether they exert any influence in Wales and beyond).

Lastly, another significant narrative is on **widening public engagement** – this is seen as a role in itself, rather than just supporting committees’ scrutiny, legislation and policy development roles. One internal stakeholder points at this emphasising the ‘publicness’ of committees’ work:

I do think there is there is also a set of goals around bringing some things into plain sight, into the public view and into the public consciousness and that communicating an engaging role is something that definitely requires improvement (Interview with Official).

How people define effectiveness is also shaped by the different roles committees fulfil: scrutiny of the government, scrutiny of legislation and policy development⁶². The interviewees made strong links between clarity of goals, level of aspiration and how effective committees are. The next section synthesises findings from interviews and from the co-design workshops, outlining how internal narratives on committees’ aspirations (ultimately, the criteria they will be evaluated against) translate into measures of success for committees’ activity.

Effective scrutiny of government

In terms of **fulfilling their role in scrutinising the government and other public bodies**, the prevailing view is that committees aspire to achieve *impact and influence* over the government. This has been expressed in many ways by those interviewed:

I think you would have to say, wouldn't you, that the real measure is the reports that a committee has produced and an evaluation of how many of the recommendations were not just accepted but, you know, acted upon, implemented, because there has been quite a level of concern across committees that Welsh Government, for example, will often accept in principle recommendations, and sometimes that means that, you know, that they're not rejecting them, you know, but they won't actually do anything to further that (John Griffiths MS, Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, 5th Senedd).

⁶² Policy development should be understood as the role of committees in seeking to change or influence government policy by conducting independent policy reviews, building an evidence base, and raising awareness on policy issues.

The focus of scrutiny is improvement as well as keeping the Government in check. One official stated that:

[...] the purpose of scrutiny isn't to criticize; the purpose of scrutiny is to try and highlight areas for improvement or to show where things aren't working as well as they could be, and to make corresponding improvements (Interview with official)

The table below synthesises the varied understanding of what effectiveness means for committees when scrutinising the Government and other public bodies. Most of these views were expressed as goals, and aspirations internal stakeholders have in relation to the scrutiny function.

Table 4 – Government scrutiny	Top level goals	Policy level goals
<i>Overall</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be respected as a committee • Act as a critical friend to the Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Government policy • Influence Government
<i>Agenda setting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaving no stone unturned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep things on the agenda
<i>Formulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the best they can • Reflecting on current events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncover new evidence
<i>Implementation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add value to the evidence base • Keep at issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow-up on how Government implements recommendations
<i>Monitoring and evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a roadmap for reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight failures and demand change

Follow-ups and a focus on the Welsh Government's implementation was a theme addressed by many. Mentions were made about 'keeping at issues', not letting issues 'drop'.

I have felt very frustrated over the years as well, because you can be as vocal as you like, but it's not always easy to deliver things. And I think I saw the committee's role as one that would be a vehicle to try and deliver change in some areas as well. [...] that's been very important to me, really, that the committee is sort of action focused and that we don't let issues drop, that we stay on issues. Because you do find in the Senedd the same issues of come up really the whole time that I've been here, which is 21 years. (Lynne Neagle MS, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee, 5th Senedd)

Others focused on uncovering new information or evidence from the Government and witnesses:

Getting something from the witnesses we weren't expecting and, which would be very helpful for our consideration. I think that's effectiveness, if you're scrutinising, That's your effective scrutiny. (David Rees MS, Chair of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 5th Senedd)

Overall, committee chairs and supporting officials also recognise the reality and the constraints in which they operate, which may hinder how ambitious and how effective committees can be.

When articulating measures of effective scrutiny, institutional actors mention a range of things:

- Getting committee report recommendations accepted by the Government.
- Government implementing committees' recommendations.
- Recommendations resulting in changes in Government spending.
- Ability to gather data and evidence, hold robust sessions where Government and witnesses are appropriately challenged and present recommendations for improvement.
- Demonstrating relevance to all parts of Wales.

Admittedly, there are aspects of committees' work that are almost impossible to measure:

[...] because there's [also] that unwritten, all that unclear impact I suppose, what we call the deterrence factor. So, for example, if the Government and the public bodies that we scrutinize know that we will scrutinize them, there must be a level of them actually performing better because they know we could call them in (Interview with official).

Annex 2 presents a more detailed synthesis of how the narratives on committees' scrutiny role and their general aspirations translate into measurable and evidencable criteria for success.

Effectiveness of legislative scrutiny

Changes in the Senedd's legislative competence over the years have marked the evolution of the institution as a whole and the committee system, as well as the legal support available to committees, have reflected some of those dynamics. This research reveals a number of themes in relation to how institutional actors perceive effectiveness of legislative scrutiny.

The first theme is the acknowledgement of the critical role committees play in the legislative process in a small, unicameral parliament. The Presiding Officer, Elin Jones MS, emphasised the importance of legislative scrutiny in committees:

Legislation is the area where [...] it's at most fragile as a process since we don't have the second chamber here. But the committees do provide an element of quite lengthy, strong scrutiny on the legislation. (Elin Jones MS, Llywydd, 5th Senedd)

One of the strongest narratives emerging is that **effective legislative scrutiny (a goal for all policy and legislation committees) ensures probity of legislation and adds rigour to the legislative process**. This was particularly emphasised by the human rights implications of bills.

one of the questions that often comes up is around whether or not there's been proper scrutiny, particularly of human rights issues. And so that's one clear area where it [committees' work] can actually have an impact on the law that is made by the Senedd. It's not just a nice to have (Interview with official)

Aspirations such as committees' legislative scrutiny contributing to **legislation standing the test of time** and **increasing public confidence in the legislative process** have been expressed by committee officials and committee chairs. Helen Mary Jones MS (acting Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee, 5th Senedd) emphasised that the most important deliberation takes place in committees, hence they can push the Government to think more about the proposals and the legislative approach they have. This was echoed by other interviewees (including the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, Mick Antoniw MS), who all raised points around the necessity to legislate, about legislative drafting behaviour, or the practice of introducing substantial concepts at Stage Two.

Some interviewees emphasised lesson learning by Government as a potential area to measure the effectiveness of committees:

It would be interesting to see the Government's perspective in terms of whether they learn any lessons from the scrutiny reports of our committee, [...] Do you see that the same kinds of mistakes keep appearing in the legislation? (Interview with official)

Other key themes emerging are more pertinent to individual bills or to certain stages in the legislative process - for example, bringing in the public views in Stage 1 of the legislative

process as a way of legitimising the process, educating, and raising awareness about the Senedd's powers, and increasing public confidence in the legislative process.

Overall, the research found a high level of ambition in terms of legislative scrutiny across committees. This is somewhat toned down by recognition of various internal and external constraints. In this case, doing all they can and doing their best is a measure of success: *'leave no stone unturned, being able to make sure they look back and say that they did all they could'* (Interview with official).

Table 5 presents a more detailed synthesis of views on committees' aspirations in relation to legislative scrutiny.

Table 5 - Legislative scrutiny	Top level goals	Bill level goals
<i>General</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the <i>guardian</i> of the Welsh Constitution • Government learns from committees' legislative scrutiny reports • Add rigour and probity to the legislative process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve all legislative proposals • Legislation stands the test of time
<i>Stage 1 – general considerations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on current events • Engage the public to educate and raise awareness about the Senedd's powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick up translation errors in legislative proposals • Challenge Government on whether legislation is needed in the first place
<i>Stage 2 – line by line consideration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve public confidence in all legislative proposals • Skills development on legislative scrutiny • Change Government bad legislative habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amendments are taken on board • Pick up drafting errors in legislative proposals
<i>Post-legislative scrutiny</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate whether the legislation is still fit for purpose and whether it is achieving its goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep at things, follow-up
<i>Scrutiny of Westminster legislation with implication for Wales (i.e. LCM process)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on raising awareness (both ways) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight legislative implications for Wales

When articulating measures of success in relation to committees' legislative activity, internal stakeholders mentioned:

- Deliberative quality – Members are engaged and understand the topic of legislation.
- Getting the public to engage with new legislative proposals.
- Getting amendments in when necessary and seeing the change.
- Spotting translation errors in legislation.

- The level of Members' interest in the legislative scrutiny work.
- The level of media attention and coverage.

Annex 3 presents more detailed synthesis of how narratives on committees' legislative scrutiny role and general aspirations translate into measurable and evidencable success criteria.

Effectiveness of policy development

In terms of **fulfilling their role in policy development**, there are several similar themes as above, for instance the aspiration of influencing Government's policy priorities or the aspiration to collate and contribute to the evidence base.

Policy development should be understood as the role of committees in seeking to change or influence Government policy by conducting independent policy reviews, building an evidence base, and raising awareness on policy issues.

Helen Mary Jones MS noted that an important contribution of committees in terms of policy development is to '*shine light onto dusty corners*' or onto issues that the Government is not looking at (either because it doesn't want to or because it has not time to). Other committee chairs emphasised this aspect:

We've done some good work, for example, on asylum seekers and refugees. And I think that was quite interesting because I think it was an area that wasn't as central to Welsh Government activity as many others within our remit. So, it hadn't had as much focus from ministers and officials. So, I think that gave us more scope, more leeway really to do some work and presented to Government, which Government might not already have had a very developed view about. (John Griffiths MS, Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities, 5th Senedd)

No one ever bothered much about the marine environment until the committee got involved in it. (Mike Hedges MS, Chair of Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs, 5th Senedd)

Other themes emerging in relation to committees' policy development work emphasise aspirations in relation to other stakeholders or beneficiaries of that work (aside from the Government), committees facilitating and contributing to public discourse, raising awareness about issues, and connecting with the public, amongst others.

The table below outlines the range of narratives in relation to what institutional actors see as goals for committees in policy development.

Table 6 - Policy development	Top level goals	Inquiry level
<i>Overall</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influence Government • Broaden influence across the UK • Leadership role • Shining light in dusty corners • Accountability and transparency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change Government policy priorities • Change Government spending priorities
<i>Agenda setting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about issues • People to see committees as avenues to express their views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marshalling public views in ways that influence Government – a receptacle of both public opinion and lived experience
<i>Formulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to increase spending in some areas • Facilitation • Be seen as a forum of respected authoritative and expert deliberations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep issues on the agenda • Collate and contribute to the evidence base • Engage with stakeholders • Highlight where there is no political consensus
<i>Monitoring and evaluation</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing effectiveness of what is already in place

When articulating what success might look like (and how one knows whether committees are successful), institutional actors mention a range of potential measures:

- Public, media and other stakeholders' engagement in inquiries improves year on year.
- Perceptions of engagement in committee work (from stakeholders, witnesses, members of the public who shared lived experience with the committee) improve year on year (i.e., feeling heard, feeling as if their contribution was considered or made a difference, engaging with the committee improved their confidence, engagement with the committee improved their trust in the policy process, willingness to re-engage).
- Committees' work is (positively) mentioned in the media, Plenary, Government, other committees' and stakeholder organisations' statements or annual reports.

- Government Ministers and officials acknowledge the contribution of committees' work and provide clear examples of where changes were made as a result.
- Committees engage with diverse range of witnesses nationally and internationally.

A more detailed synthesis of how narratives on committees' policy development role and general aspirations translate into measurable and evidencable criteria are presented in Annex 4.

This discussion helps us contextualise the level of ambition within the committee system as well as the more detailed and nuanced ways that success and effectiveness might be measured.

Features of effective committees

This section presents an analysis of the internal stakeholders' perceptions of what contributes to effective committee work and what hinders it. This helps outline a set of features of effective committees that could inform the 6th Senedd committee system's organisation, resourcing, operation and strategic approaches.

Membership

Committees have had small but unstable membership during the 5th Senedd. The size of the policy and legislation committees was reduced from 8 to 6 members to increase capacity. To what extent an increase in capacity was in fact felt by Members and committee Chairs remains unclear. Some committee chairs appreciated that smaller committees tend to be more effective; one emphasised the potential to experiment more with the deliberative function of committees when there are fewer numbers of Members that share the questioning in evidence gathering sessions. However, to what extent this constituted a perceived increase in capacity could not be determined since the research only engaged with chairs of committees and not with other backbench Members or political party groups.

Other committees tend to be smaller (Petitions – 5; Standards of Conduct and Legislation, Justice and Constitution – 4 members). Only Finance, Public Accounts (7) and the Committee on the Scrutiny of the First Minister (13) committees had more members.

Committee chairs were elected for the first time in the 5th Senedd, thus ensuring more stability at leadership level. The election of committee chairs has been highlighted as a factor conducive for more effective committees both in the scholarship and in the interviews conducted:

[Chairs being elected] gave them a powerful mandate and that I think is part of the importance of the success of our committees, that the chairs [...] are able to command the agenda in that way (Elin Jones MS, Llywydd, 5th Senedd)

Characteristically for the Senedd committees, and uncharacteristically for most other legislatures, is the inevitable multiple memberships in committees. Most Senedd backbenchers will be members of at least two principal committees (policy and legislation, finance, business, public accounts etc) that meet weekly, in addition to being members in other, less frequent committees (i.e., Scrutiny of the First Minister, Standards, Petitions, Llywydd's Committee etc).

Committee membership is perceived as an important determinant for effective committee work. The combination of small size and unstable membership has been mentioned by many of the internal institutional actors as hindering effective work. Multiple memberships in committees raises issues around effective timetabling of committee meetings as well as the ability of committee Members to fully engage in committee work, especially if they are Members in two policy and legislation committees that have rather broad remits. The extent to which Members can fully engage in committees' work is variable and some of the committee chairs interviewed brought this up in the interviews:

I know there are some Members who are on three committees, some have been on four committees. And really that's... I'm on two and I really struggle to do more because you don't do it properly. You just pick up your brief and you just sort of you don't really read it. I mean, I make an effort to read as much as I can, but if you're on four committees then you can't fill four committees properly. (John Griffiths MS, Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee, 5th Senedd)

The level of scrutiny does depend on how many non-Government Members of the Senedd you have, you know. Because sometimes you could be on four different committees. You know, I chair Health, I'm a member on the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, I'm a member of the External Affairs Committee. There's a Llywydd's

Committee, there's a Scrutiny of the First Minister's Committee, actually I am on more than four committees. (Dai Lloyd MS, Chair of the Health, Social Care and Sports Committee, 5th Senedd)

Whilst sitting in 3 or 4 committees is rather an exception than the norm, multiple memberships can translate in hardly manageable workloads for some Members, leading to, potentially, a selective prioritisation of committee work, thus affecting their overall level of engagement.

Committee system organisation

The Senedd committee system features committees that blend the roles of government scrutiny and scrutiny of legislation (in a similar fashion to the Scottish Parliament), in this sense having more in common with committee systems on continental Europe than with the Westminster parliament. Somewhat atypically, ***the remits of committees in the Senedd do not mirror the executive portfolios*** - the policy and legislation committees covering broad thematic remits – making the Senedd an outlier in terms of committee system organisation. This raises both questions about ‘what things are scrutinized; what things aren't scrutinized’ - in other words the fuzziness of accountability lines - and questions about the opportunities for committees to pick up on issues from multiple angles. With regards to potential problems, during the interviews, questions were raised (for example) about the most appropriate committee to scrutinise the implementation of landmark and overarching pieces of legislation, such as the *Future Generations Act 2015*.

The balance between the committee remits and roles (scrutiny and legislation) is another area impacting on effectiveness. Some interviewees pointed out some committees (i.e., Equality Local Government and Communities Committee and Children, Young People and Education Committee) have been busier than others in terms of legislation, with impact on their ability to lead policy inquiry and scrutiny work. The Presiding Officer, Elin Jones MS, commented:

I'm not sure whether we finally got to the right balance of how our committees work in terms of legislation, whether the subject committees doing legislation or whether we should have a totally separate legislative scrutiny process. I haven't got an answer to that. I haven't got a preferred option, but I'm not totally convinced what we have at the

moment is exactly the right way when we have some committees that do find that they are doing Government work, then mainly rather than their own independent work.

Accountability

Effective scrutiny of independent public offices also requires clear and robust accountability structures and processes. The creation of the statutory Llywydd's Committee as a vehicle to scrutinise financial estimates and plans submitted by the Electoral Commission in discharging their functions in relation to devolved Welsh elections and referendums provides an opportunity to rethink the most effective and appropriate avenues for parliamentary oversight of the independent offices established to support the Parliament in its work (i.e., Wales Audit Office, the Public Service Ombudsman, and the Auditor General). This research has heard that current arrangements around the Wales Audit Office's Estimate approval process (in the Welsh Government's own Budget Motion), sits oddly, from a constitutional perspective, with the Auditor General for Wales' independence (Interview with stakeholder) and parliamentary practice elsewhere.⁶³

For accountability to be streamlined and strengthened the role and strategic influence of oversight committees (i.e., Business Committee, the Chairs' Forum, Scrutiny of the First Minister, the Llywydd's Committee) needs to be further clarified, expanded, and formalised. The scope of clarifying, expanding and formalising the role of the Chairs' Forum as a strategic influence structure within the Senedd has been brought up in some of the interviews and groups discussions held.

Support and capacity

Overall, institutional narratives by political actors suggest that support for committees – through the integrated teams that consist of clerks, researchers, lawyers, translators, engagement, and communications officials – is excellent. Committee chairs have praised the level of support they

⁶³ In the Westminster Parliament, The Public Accounts Commission [TPAC] exercises the oversight function over the National Audit Office, whilst in New Zealand the Auditor General, along with some other parliament-appointed commissioners, report to a separate 'Officers of Parliament' Committee chaired by the Speaker.

get, the quality of the briefings they receive, and the work supporting committees' engagement and external communications. On the officials' side some brought up training and development for staff, whose role in supporting committees is so critical:

I think a key thing for me is training. I'm not convinced that our training is as good as it could be. I don't think our training is focused enough on the business end. And I think that the problem then manifests itself in a number of ways, because you have so few people with knowledge and detailed knowledge. (Interview with official)

The areas of training and development identified ranges from effective use of social media by committees, strategic planning, evaluation, and measurement of impact, to peer reviewing, report writing skills and planning effective engagement with stakeholders.

Whilst the support received from integrated teams has been praised by the chairs interviewed, there are dangers in over-reliance on support. Any praise such as the one below exposes the extent to which committees and the Senedd are over stretched in term of political capacity⁶⁴.

I think I've been lucky, really, that the CYPE team are absolutely phenomenal. Without that, if there wasn't such a good team, I don't think the committee would have been able to keep track of all these issues. (Lynne Neagle, Chair of the CYPE, 5th Senedd)

The consequence of this is that the deliberative quality of the committee work may be affected as well as the quality and depth of the scrutiny process. Elin Jones MS states that

It's very difficult because [...] the research services provide very detailed excellent briefings for Members and sometimes, as you know, I feel that Members are far too well supported because then they think that they can just turn up and read a question. [...] I'm not probably in favour at the moment of putting the emphasis back on the Commission or the research services to provide more detail for the Members, because there's only so much you can funnel through a member. (Llywydd, 5th Senedd)

The Senedd's long standing capacity issue has so far been tackled by providing additional support to Members, party groups and committees, streamlining the committee system (i.e., reducing number of committees, and membership). However, political capacity remains an issue.

⁶⁴ The issue of capacity has been thoroughly debated and analysed by a series of reviews, the most recent one being the Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform (2017).

Strategy

Committees' ability to strategize their work, set goals, and prioritise work has been highlighted previously in our review of the literature and practice. Senedd committees have improved their strategic approach to their work significantly in the past ten years (this will be discussed in more depth in the next section). Institutional actors point out the importance of committees needing to *'look up above the trees and on onto the horizon because some policy outcomes are not going to be affected for decades'* (Interview with official). Clarity of goals, focus on long term impact, and developing a culture of self-evaluation are seen as significant in improving a committee's strategic work. Despite the progress, there is still a notable tendency from some institutional actors to confound strategic goals with priority areas for possible committee inquiries.

Ways of working

Linked with committees' strategy work is the ways of working they develop. The research has heard from committee chairs and officials how important teamwork and trust is in committees. Others have mentioned developing ways of working that put evidence at the heart of committee deliberation, learning at the heart of the evaluation process and flexibility as a way of being responsive and breaking silos: *'I'd like to see less silo work in them. I think there's an opportunity for much more crosscutting work across committees'* (Interview with official).

Ambition and creativity

Another feature of effectiveness is the level of ambition and the degree to which committees can be innovative in the way they reach out to unheard groups, in the way they hear evidence from a wide range of witnesses, and the way they bring lived experience into committees' work. Whilst some practices have now been institutionalised (i.e., consultation process, hearings etc) there is scope for innovation and re-design of some of these traditional engagement methods, especially at the level of hearing evidence from witnesses and enhancing the questioning:

You don't have to speak all the time. In one session, you could only have four members really digging deep, and that's no reflection upon the other two members that don't speak, because they may speak the following week. (David Rees MS, Chair of the External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 5th Senedd).

Mick Antoniw MS brings up the issue of innovation in how committees hear evidence:

I've often thought that what is far more interesting is that instead of taking evidence from the experts, you get them together and they challenge one another in terms of their ideas. I just find you learn a lot more about that a lot more efficiently and a lot more quickly. [...] I think the committees, by and large, are too dependent on paper evidence, you know, written evidence ahead of time. Then you get them [witnesses] in to tell you what they've already written [...]. (Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, 5th Senedd)

Effective communication and engagement

In exploring features of effective committees, communication, transparency, engagement and diversity were themes that came across strongly in interviews. Building and nurturing good relationships with the stakeholders was also mentioned:

Something that we've done on quite a regular basis, probably, well, annually, we met with our stakeholders - by stakeholders, those that give evidence regularly. [...] what we do is at the end of every yearly term, we ask for feedback about what the committee has done, and we ask about priorities going forward. And then we take all those comments into consideration and that fits into our forward work programme suggestions. (Russell George MS, Chair of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, 5th Senedd)

Others mentioned the importance of closing the feedback loop between the Senedd (including committees) and its various stakeholders (including the public). This may take the form of eliciting feedback from individuals and organisations that engage with committees, shifting communications from broadcasting mode to listening and dialogue, and shifting the emphasis from out-reach to co-production mode.

Table 7 presents a more detailed analysis of the features of effectiveness that the field research revealed. Below, we summarise the main points:

- Effective committees have Members who are **fully engaged and interested in their work**. Members are prepared, are listening, and supporting each other in committee sessions. Members and the Chair are prepared to challenge Government and witnesses. Leadership

is crucial to creating a positive environment for Members to deliberate and trust is a cornerstone to committees working effectively as a team.

- Effective committees are supported by **excellent support services**, have access to external advice and expertise, and operate within coherent resource and governance structures, where corporate goals are aligned with committee business.
- Effective committees can **strategically plan and manage their work**, have clarity of goals and purpose, and maintain focus throughout the term without hindering the need to be flexible and agile at times. They focus on outcomes, not activities and have a clear and shared idea of what success looks like and how it could be evidenced.
- Effective committees engage in ways of working that **foster partnership and joint approaches, are evidence led, promote lesson learning, evaluation, self-reflection and continuous improvement**.
- Effective committees work **transparently and communicate their work effectively to a wide range of audiences**. Committee reports are designed to be user-friendly, tell clear and compelling stories about their activity and the impact of their work. Committees cultivate a good relationship with a wide and diverse range of stakeholders. This helps them stay relevant across Wales.
- Effective committees are **ambitious and creative in reaching out to new audiences**, designing activities that are fit for purpose and maximise impact, and bringing relevant lived experience in.

Some of these features of effectiveness resonate with the 5th Senedd Business Committee expectations for committees (i.e., strategic planning, importance of Members' engagement and the role of chairs' leadership, diversity of engagement, communicating relevance of their work to new audiences etc). Where the findings of this research diverge from the Business Committee's expectations is the fact that any expectation in terms of relationship with the Welsh Government is seen as a by-product of the above-mentioned features of effectiveness.

Table 7 – Features of Effective Committees

Dimensions	Features of effectiveness	Relevant quotes
Committee Chairs and Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence of Chairs and willingness to challenge government • Members get engaged and excited about the work • Committee membership is stable over time • Deliberative quality in committees is high • Members have time to prepare for scrutiny sessions • Effective Leadership and Chairing 	<p><i>[Chairs being elected] gave them a powerful mandate and that I think is part of the importance of the success of our committees, that the chairs, you know, are able to command the agenda in that way.</i></p> <p><i>Members have had sufficient time to prepare that they aren't relying on the brief. They're using it as a starting point.</i></p> <p><i>They need to listen to the not only to what the witness is saying, but also to what their colleagues in the committee are saying and to work together to try and back each other up with good supplementaries</i></p> <p><i>Trust between the members and the chair and the members and each other</i></p>
Structures, Resources and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability mechanisms for holding the Welsh Government to account • Corporate and business strategic approach integration • Access to external advice, and expertise • Excellence of services (clerking, research etc) • Integration of services 	<p><i>Is the support that we're giving them appropriate, [...] or are we spending too much time on detailed briefs? We need to get more to the point, you know. Yeah, are we asking the right questions?</i></p> <p><i>And so the excellence of our research and clerking backup makes up for the fact that there aren't half as many members of the Senedd as we are now as they should be.</i></p>
Strategic Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term impact • Sense of collective endeavour • Prioritisation • Focus on outcome not on activities • Culture of self-reflection • Flexibility to respond to current events • Evidence led 	<p><i>Need to look up above the trees and on onto the horizon because, you know, some policy outcomes are not going to be affected for decades.</i></p> <p><i>Has to understand its purpose, has to understand, you know, in a broad sense what it's there to do and what it wants to do</i></p>

Ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep coming back at issues • Teamwork • Partnership • Lesson learning 	<p><i>A need for committees to find time together, periods of self-reflection, thinking about the work that they have done, thinking about what they can do better</i></p> <p><i>[need to] Work together well as a committee of members and particularly on some of these issues, members are coming with very, very different personal preferences, party preferences.</i></p> <p><i>I'd like to see less silo work in them. I think there's an opportunity for much more crosscutting work across committees.</i></p> <p><i>We've got five-year terms - a real opportunity for committees to learn year on year on the processes and the way they work</i></p>
Effective communication and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency • Cultivating good relationship with stakeholders • Communicating the work of committees • Be relevant across Wales • Reaching out beyond the usual suspects • Level of ambition 	<p><i>Make sure that the public are fully aware of what the committee's doing and why it's working in a particular way</i></p>
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit for purpose approaches • Bringing lived experience in • Designing evidence sessions to get most out of witnesses • Questioning style in meetings 	<p><i>Getting a wide range of people and, you know, increasingly going beyond the usual suspects, which is a terrible temptation in a small country like Wales</i></p> <p><i>Understanding the worth of bringing in this type of engagement with this type of audience into their work and what that brings to their inquiry and the effectiveness of their scrutiny</i></p> <p><i>You don't have to speak all the time. In one session, you could only have four members really digging deep, and that's no reflection upon the other two members that don't speak, because they may speak the following week</i></p>

3.2. Conditions for effective evaluation to take place

As the previous section highlighted, stakeholders identify a wide range of goals and aspirations for the work of committees. These go beyond the default preoccupation with influence and impact over the Government, although this, of course, remains one of the most important strategic goals they set. More important is the depth to which the narratives uncovered by the field research go in terms of defining what success might look like. The next step is to understand what existing practice currently supports the assessment of whether the Senedd's committees' ambitions are achieved or not. During the interviews, focus groups and co-design process, the research explored the theme of strategic planning and evaluation in committees to understand both the practice of measuring success and people's interpretations of whether these practices work well or need to be improved.

The first consideration is that internal stakeholders identify the scope for improvement in the process, whilst highlighting the progress in the past 10 years in terms strategic approaches to committees' work: *'Strategic planning is probably not as embedded as you would want, but it's a significant improvement, I think, on how we were maybe five, 10 years ago (Interview with Official)'*. The second consideration to make is availability of time (both Members' time but also staff time) to engage in the meaningful evaluation of committees' effectiveness, therefore prioritisation, focus and wise use of resources is central.

Perhaps the most embedded and institutionalised practices are around **goal setting** and forward work planning. Most committees will engage in some form of strategic planning at the beginning of a Senedd. Some have strategy sessions that are led by external facilitators this being a practice that several interviewees find very useful. Some innovative approaches to goals setting, yet with variable degree of application across committees, include:

- Crowd sourcing of committee priorities
- Involving stakeholders in the work prioritisation process
- Linking strategy session with development opportunities for Members
- Using internal tools for prioritisation based on objective criteria.

Less formalised, embedded and institutionalised are practices around monitoring and tracking progress. For example, whilst many committees have some form of tracking their recommendations and Government responses (the ELGC Committee internal impact log is a good example of that), internal stakeholders also recognise that the process of assessing and monitoring the impact of committees' work is rather ad-hoc and does not necessarily link strategic objectives with measurable outcomes or sources of evidence pointing to measures of success.

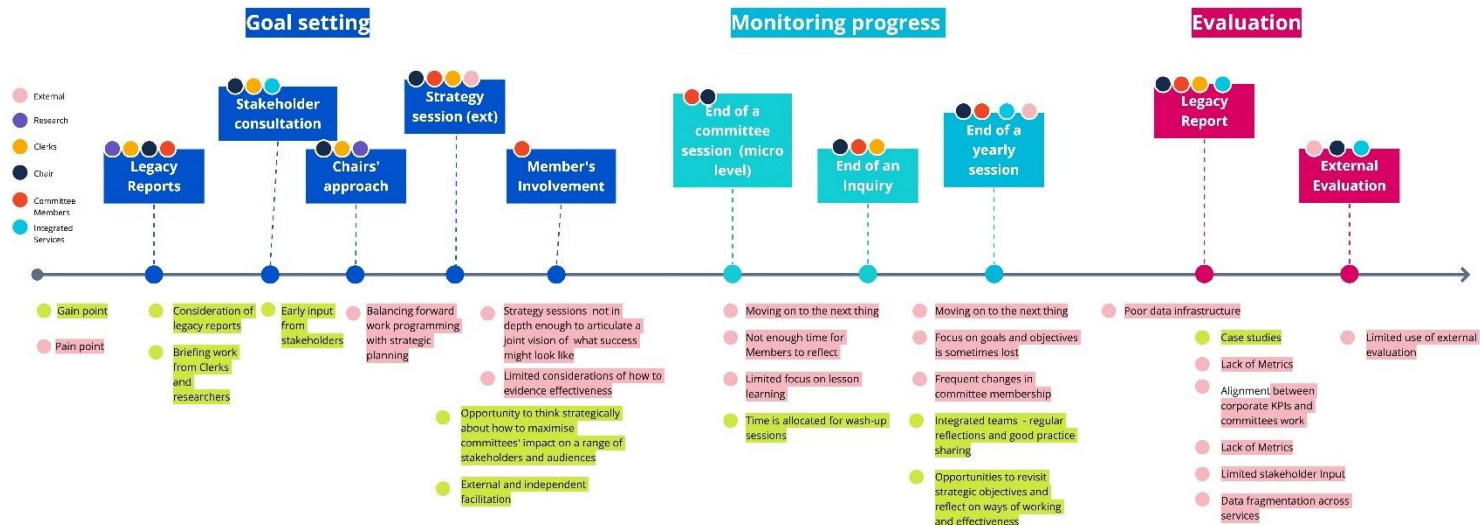
What I don't think we have in place, though, is [...] those shared sets of objectives and aims, and, you know, an agreement in terms of how specifically we are going to start measuring this stuff and how we can collect this information. (Interview with official)

In terms of **evaluation**, legacy reporting is a well embedded practice across all committees. Legacy work offers the opportunity to engage Members in meaningful reflection over ways of working, effectiveness of approaches to scrutiny, public engagement, diversity of witness, influence over Government as well as broader measures of impact, such as contribution to public debate, overall visibility of the committees' work, raising awareness of the Senedd's powers, etc. However, as participants in one of the focus groups conducted mentioned, the information and data may sit in different computers of different people so full and useful insights may be difficult to draw whilst writing the legacy reports.

Figure 1 synthesises existing practice across the range of strategic planning stages (goal setting, monitoring, and tracking progress and evaluation) and highlights opportunity areas for improvement. As good practice, the research fellow coded mentions from internal stakeholders that included 'what works', 'beneficial', 'useful' etc. As gaps in the process or areas of improvement, the researcher coded mentions including: 'not helpful', 'not enough', 'does not work', 'what is needed', 'what we lack', 'what is missing', 'what is hindering the process' etc.

Figure 1 – Journey mapping Evaluation Practice in Senedd Committees

[A plain text version is provided in Annex 5]



The purpose of the mapping exercise is to identify best practice (gain points) and gaps (pain points) in the process of evaluation, as well as identify actors that may be involved in the process at any point in time.

The pink areas below the horizontal line represent opportunity areas for improvement. The light green areas represent already existing good practices

As illustrated, a number of good practice areas exist and should be capitalised on. Committees engage in strategic planning at the beginning of each parliamentary term, and some continue that work with annual reviews of strategic priorities. To assist with their prioritisation work, some committees involve stakeholders or crowdsource priorities more widely. The practice of bringing in external facilitators to lead strategy sessions has been praised by many; external, authoritative and expert figures can provide a useful steer as well as challenge to committee Members. The use of legacy reports to assist strategic planning, as well as a focus on follow-up and revisiting issues that have not satisfactorily been addressed by the Government, are also good practices in monitoring and evaluation.

Overall, this analysis reveals scope for improvement both in terms of the structures, processes, and hard infrastructure of evaluation (i.e., systematic collection of data), as well as the softer aspects of it: culture, routines and habits supporting evaluation of committees' effectiveness:

- **A more coherent data infrastructure and system of collecting and presenting information about committees and wider parliamentary activity** would provide more easily accessible insights that would support both internal and external evaluation. The data collected presently about committee activity can support administrative decisions on resource allocation but would not provide sufficient insights into how effective committees' work is. A shift from static (pdf) to dynamic data sets is encouraged.
- **Fragmented vs holistic insights** - a lot of knowledge and intel is stored on individual computers or at the level of individual clerks', researchers', or lawyers' experience. Whilst this might not necessarily be an impediment when it comes to writing individual reports, this could be problematic for more in-depth, meaningful, cross cutting and longitudinal evaluation of effectiveness, and for a big-picture type of understanding.
- There is strong case for **all Members' engagement in evaluation and self-reflection**. This calls for addressing both structural and cultural issues such as: time constraints, rushing pre-meetings and de-brief sessions, timetabling issues, facilitation issues, the perception that evaluation is just navel gazing.
- Being ambitious but **setting measurable objectives (or at least evidencable)** - whilst setting strategic objectives happens in most committees, these objectives often read as priority policy areas rather than measurable objectives. Similarly, if higher level objectives

or goals are identified (i.e., be a respected committee, be a visible committee whose work the Welsh public can identify, influence policy debates beyond the Welsh Government), there is limited reflection on how they will be measured and evidenced.

- Similarly, **more rigorous follow up, monitoring and reviewing strategic goals** will help committees stay relevant and focused on where they can make novel contributions and achieve impact. The high turnover in committees' membership during the 5th Senedd, as well as the difficult circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, has meant that strategic focus has arguably been lost.
- Linked to this, **more clarity on and formalisation of the role of internal strategic influencers in parliamentary business** (for instance the Business Committee, the Chairs' Forum, the Llywydd Committee), coupled with regular review and evaluation of committee organisation, activity and performance, would help strengthen accountability.
- **Engagement with Government responses at more meaningful level**, beyond acceptance of responses, is necessary to ensure committees maximise their impact and influence. This may include challenging the practice of Government accepting recommendations in principle, as well as assessing whether Government's response to recommendations matches the reality of implementation.
- **External input into evaluation** – there is plenty of scope for committees to solicit regular external feedback on their work (i.e., invite facilitators to review ways of working, solicit feedback formally from stakeholders or from individuals that engaged with the committee over the year / term). Some good practice exists, but more systematic and institutionalised arrangement would certainly benefit committees.

3.3. Public engagement and diversity of evidence and witnesses

This section outlines some of the areas of good practice as well as some opportunity areas, where improvement and solutions were suggested by the participants in the research. Senedd committees are well placed to excel in engaging the wider public and in diversifying evidence given their access to integrated teams that include dedicated communication, media, and engagement specialists. Additionally, the Senedd is still a relatively young and most certainly a small organisation, hence one would expect experimentation and innovation still find a fertile ground here. Allowing experimentation to happen (at committee level) is therefore critical.

Most institutional narratives converge around the value of diversifying the range of evidence (types and sources) and witnesses committees engage with and recognise the issue of the ‘usual suspects’ in committees’ work. David Rees MS, sums it up:

There are occasions when you keep seeing the same faces every time, all the time [...] But we must look at diversification of that as much as possible because we need to have sometimes a different view, something which may perhaps shock us or may reinforce what we’re hearing. (Chair of External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee, 5th Senedd)

Another general finding is the frustration with the perceived inability of committees and the Senedd to break through to the wider Welsh public in terms of visibility, profile, knowledge and understanding of what the Senedd does etc, despite the good work done by media, outreach, and engagement teams. The landscape has been acknowledged as being difficult, given the perceived weakness of the Welsh Media.

We are our own too best kept secret, [...], we do all this great work, but I really think that because of the weakness of the Media here, we are uniquely disadvantaged. (Interview with official)

Internal stakeholders highlighted a multitude of existing practices and suggested potential areas that could further support the goals of widening committees’ engagement and diversifying the evidence and witnesses in committees. Table 8 synthesises views on what works well.

Table 8 – What works well | Instances of good practice

<i>Widening engagement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutionalization of public engagement (strategy, structures, operations) • The Citizen Engagement Team supporting committees’ work and the media and communication support available via the integrated teams • A wide range of documented and tested tools of engagement: focus groups, video evidence, surveys, online crowdsourcing platforms, web-chats, visits, citizen panels, roundtable discussions • Strive for meaningful engagement driven by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collective desire to bring lived experience in committees’ deliberation ○ Engagement being perceived as a primary role for committees • Members’ enthusiasm for engaging with wider audiences
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Diversifying evidence

- Some committees really embed engagement in their strategic approach (i.e., CYPE is a good example of that)
- Bringing the lived experience of regular citizens in
- Supporting those whose voices may only be normally heard in more informal settings to engage in formal evidence sessions
- Covid-19 presented an opportunity to hear from a different range of individuals both across Wales and internationally
- Experimenting with different forms of hearing oral evidence (i.e., whether the round-table formats, citizen panels, more focused questioning and forensic questioning led by one or two members)
- Informal engagement with stakeholders to capture genuine views
- Instances of supporting and empowering witnesses and stakeholders
- Instances of soliciting feedback from stakeholders

There were many accounts of meaningful reflection on the issue of widening public engagement and diversifying evidence. One stood out because it encapsulated the strategic role committees have in addressing some of the challenges:

We've always been clear right from the start that the voices of young people are absolutely central to what we do. So, in every piece of work we've done, that's been an absolutely core consideration and it's built in at every stage, really. So, we always have sessions with young people, surveys, where possible, we've heard directly from young people in sessions, you know, that we've had young people speak at our launches. So that's been a really key consideration.

And I think we're always mindful as well when we do that work to try and get a good spread of young people [...] I've always been very concerned about [...] this 'usual suspects' thing that we do in the Assembly when you hear from the same organizations, and I didn't want it to be just the confident, articulate young people that we heard from. So that's always been there as well in our planning that we were trying to reach out to young people who maybe didn't always get their voices heard. (Lynne Neagle MS, Chair of the Children, Young People and Education Committee)

However, it is evident from the data collected that a number of barriers stand in the way of committees' effectiveness when it comes to widening engagement and diversifying evidence:

- **Internally**, the extent to which the various interpretations of the *engagement* concept at corporate and committee level are confusing. Internal narratives reveal that committee engagement is broader (includes communication, information, outreach, public profile and visibility) than the more specific interpretation and application of the work of the Citizen Engagement Team (primarily focused on bringing lived experience to the evidence base of committees' work).
- The audiences that committees define in their work do not necessarily fall neatly into the audiences defined by the corporate Communication and Engagement Strategy. For committees, primary audiences are: the Government and Government public bodies, stakeholders in the sector they scrutinise, academics and experts they can rely on for evidence, the Media, political parties, other Senedd committees, UK parliamentary counterparts, and the 'wider public'.
- The extent to which committees strategize around engagement and diversity of evidence. This includes the extent to which engagement, media and communication officials are involved early in inquiry work, as well as the extent to which the lived experience captured through engagement exercises is then reflected in committee reports and outward communications.
- Baselines and benchmarks – in terms of diversifying evidence, chairs and clerks / researchers are relied upon to spot misrepresentation issues in the range of witnesses that committees hear from. Diversity data poverty means that it is difficult to assess improvement or get a sense whether or not committees need to be doing things differently.
- **Externally**, a weak Welsh media creates a very difficult landscape for the Senedd and the Senedd committees to effectively communicate their work and stimulate wider engagement.

Several opportunity areas identified by the participants are synthesised in the table below.

Table 9 – Opportunity areas

<p><i>Widening engagement</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for quality of insights about engagement activity in committees (i.e., regular assessment of engagement initiatives, soliciting feedback from participants (closing the loop), diversity monitoring). Committees having detailed insights into what works, innovations etc • Better alignment between corporate strategy and committee activity. Alignment with corporate engagement initiatives and campaigns. Committees sit at the heart of parliamentary processes and this needs to be reflected in the Senedd Commission’s engagement and communication strategy • Early involvement of engagement, media, and communication teams in planning committees’ inquiry work • A purposeful approach to engagement with different groups • Members taking part in engagement activities • Soliciting and learning from feedback from participants • Make engagement opportunities relevant and worthwhile for participants (move emphasis from committees needing to hear / engage, to the value of engagement from people’s perspective) • Going where people are and where discussions are taking place • Committees experimenting jointly with larger scale deliberative methods (like Citizens’ Assemblies)⁶⁵.
<p><i>Diversifying evidence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson learning from the Covid-19 remote working experience • Re-design of formal oral evidence sessions • Diversity monitoring and reporting year on year • Focus on new evidence and challenging the status-quo • Challenging Government on diversity of their own evidence

Overall, the 6th Senedd, has a solid foundation to build on and improve the effectiveness of its committees’ activity. The insights captured here will hopefully assist future deliberations.

⁶⁵ The work of the first Wales Citizens’ Assembly is important. The method has now been trailed and tested in the Welsh context. A number of local authorities in Wales are also considering experimenting with Citizen Assemblies ([Blaenau Gwent Council announced](#) that it will hold Wales’ first Climate Assembly).

4. Developing a framework of evaluation for measuring committees' effectiveness

The framework developed here has been inspired by the Theory of Change (ToC) model, which is a flexible and participatory methodology that underpins planning and evaluation in organisations. Theories of change are models of how change is expected to happen (*ex ante* case) or how change has happened (*ex post* case)⁶⁶. The model provides a *roadmap that outlines the steps by which you plan to achieve your goal. It helps you define whether your work is contributing towards achieving the impact you envision, and if there is another way that you need to consider as well*⁶⁷.

The use of the ToC is varied and there is no monopoly on the framework, this being deliberately left flexible and adaptable for different type of organisations, interventions and purposes. The model can be used to navigate and manage complex institutional environments, to explore shared understanding about organisation goals and priorities, to communicate, plan and strategize work.

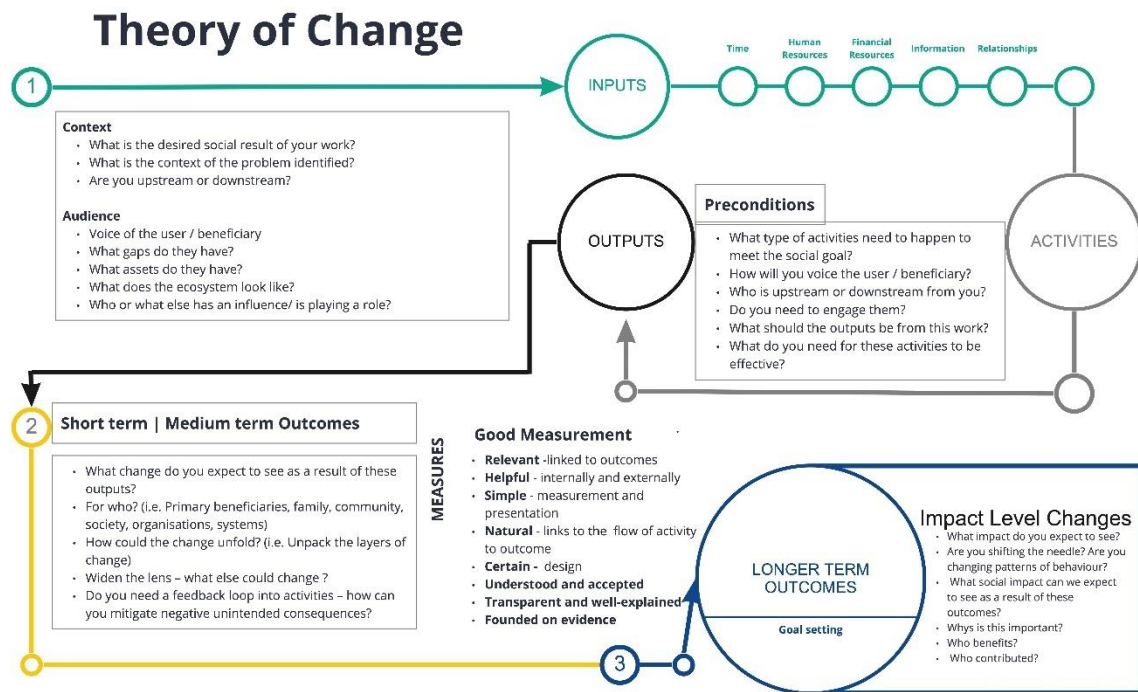
In the context of the present project, the application of this model makes sense because it can potentially tie together existing practices in strategic planning and evaluation into a coherent framework and narrative. The main advantage of taking this approach is its holistic and flexible nature. The measures of effectiveness suggested in this framework are not disjointed from the practical realities of setting objectives, identifying desired outcomes and tracking and monitoring progress. The framework can be easily adaptable to the needs of different committees and to different levels of complexity. For example, a simplified version of it could be used to communicate the strategic approach of the committee in a visual manner. More complex and detailed versions could be used internally for planning and evaluation purposes.

A visual representation of a generic Theory of Change is depicted in Figure 2.

⁶⁶ Mayne, J. (2017). Theory of change analysis: Building robust theories of change. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 32(2).

⁶⁷ [The Development Impact Toolkit](#) – Theory of Change

Figure 2 – Theory of Change Model (general)⁶⁸
[A plain text version is provided in Annex 6]



Many of the guiding questions represented here will be familiar to institutional actors, especially clerks and researchers, as their strategic planning and prioritisation work employs a similar deliberative question led approach. At the beginning of each Senedd term, or at the beginning of an inquiry, committees consider many of these questions. The evidence from the field research revealed some scope for improvement exists in terms of the depth and consistency with which these questions are considered and whether they are part of a coherent strand of work that focuses on maximising impact and influence of committees.

⁶⁸ This diagram is loosely based on a template from the [Accountability Lab](#)

The structure of the next section is as follows: first this section maps out the different elements of the evaluation framework and the main sequencing of the proposed evaluation process; second, it provides a more in-depth set of considerations for developing a consistent theory of change framework for committees; thirdly, it outlines criteria and measures for effectiveness.

4.1. Dimensions in evaluation

It is evident from the field research that committees are extremely busy. Time is an important commodity both for Members and officials supporting committees. Similarly, given the sheer complexity of committees' dual role in scrutiny of Government and legislation, evaluation of effectiveness becomes extremely complex. One early conclusion the Fellow could draw from the findings presented in the previous chapter is that it is not feasible to expect committees to undertake all types of evaluation work themselves. For example, for a better understanding of a committee's long-term impact on Government policy, spending and behaviour, a longitudinal mix method approach is perhaps preferable, therefore independent research might be a better and more feasible avenue to follow. For understanding the scale, quality, and overall impact of committees' engagement with a wide range of individuals and stakeholders, cross-committee analysis over a period of time (with highlights of good practice) is a better approach than committee by committee comparison, or inquiry level analysis.

The table below maps out a possible differentiation of the different types of evaluation, but committees ultimately can interpret and adapt this as they see fit. The point made here is that all these types of evaluation are useful for committees to engage with (either by commissioning work or doing the work themselves) to inform improvements in their work.

Table 10 – Dimension of evaluation

Dimension	Types of evaluation of effectiveness	Supported by
<i>Committee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reflection and evaluation in terms of strategic goals, ways of working, communication with the public, lessons learned, impact sought. Consideration of stakeholders' feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular space and time for evaluation Timely, accessible and relevant data insights

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of Government response to committee recommendations in conjunction with scrutiny of Government reports on how they have made progress on recommendations • Follow-up work (both inquiry and legislation) • Consideration of analysis of the scale, type and quality of engagement in individual inquiries • Consideration of diversity analysis • Consideration of longitudinal analysis on committee's impact on Government policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear reporting arrangements with the Government • Availability of internal and independent analysis (i.e., Media analysis, stakeholder feedback, engagement feedback, academic studies)
<i>Committee system</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of scale, quality and impact of committees' engagement activity (both stakeholder engagement and wider, lived experience focused engagement) • Diversity monitoring year on year (witnesses, engagement) • Evaluation of stakeholder feedback with data on committees • Analysis of committees' parliamentary activity (meetings, outputs, development opportunities etc) • Media and social media analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive data infrastructure • Access to committee and committee and parliamentary data made easily available to research organisations
<i>Independent evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term policy and legislative impact of committees or particular inquiries. • Longitudinal analysis on knowledge, interest in politics and voter turnout in elections • Independent evaluation of committees' contribution to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ democratic process in Wales ○ improving governance and accountability ○ improving legislation ○ Senedd's profile within the UK's parliamentary landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fellowships, internships supporting the research and evaluation function • Commissioning of in-depth studies • Other institutional arrangements

Supporting the evaluation process on all these levels are several factors:

- ***The hardwiring of the evaluation process*** – the structures, processes, and data infrastructure:
 - *Are there clear processes in place to support evaluation of effectiveness?* – for instance: a comprehensive strategic planning process; means to reflect from past activity, like legacy report work; timetabled and signposted sessions dedicated to reflection and evaluation.
 - *Do Members and staff have sufficient data insights about committees' activity, that can be easily accessed and used to inform their analysis?* – for instance, a centralised system documenting certain aspects of committees' activity (i.e., witnesses, public engagement, communication with the public

and stakeholders, recommendations made, committee stage amendments, follow-up work conducted, ministers and public officials summoned).

- ***The soft wiring of the of evaluation*** – a culture of committee Members and supporting officials reflecting on ways of working. A simple and useful tool that can be used at the end of committee meetings (i.e., evidence gathering sessions) or at the end of discrete piece of work is asking three questions: *What went well? What did not go so well? What can we improve in the next similar activity?*

4.2. The ‘Golden Thread’ in a theory of change approach

The field research revealed a wealth of good practice thus giving a solid basis on which to build improvement. Most committees used strategic planning sessions to set out goals and objectives and plan their work. Some engage stakeholders in this exercise of prioritisation. Committees keep track of the Government responses to their recommendations and frequently engage in follow-up work. The legacy work at the end of each Senedd is an important opportunity to engage Members in evaluation. In terms of a culture of self-reflection this happens routinely in integrated teams and at clerk-chair level. However, a significant missing factor in current practice is the consistency between and clarity of the strategic work done at the beginning of a Senedd term and the legacy work at the end– the ‘***golden thread***’ guiding work of committees.

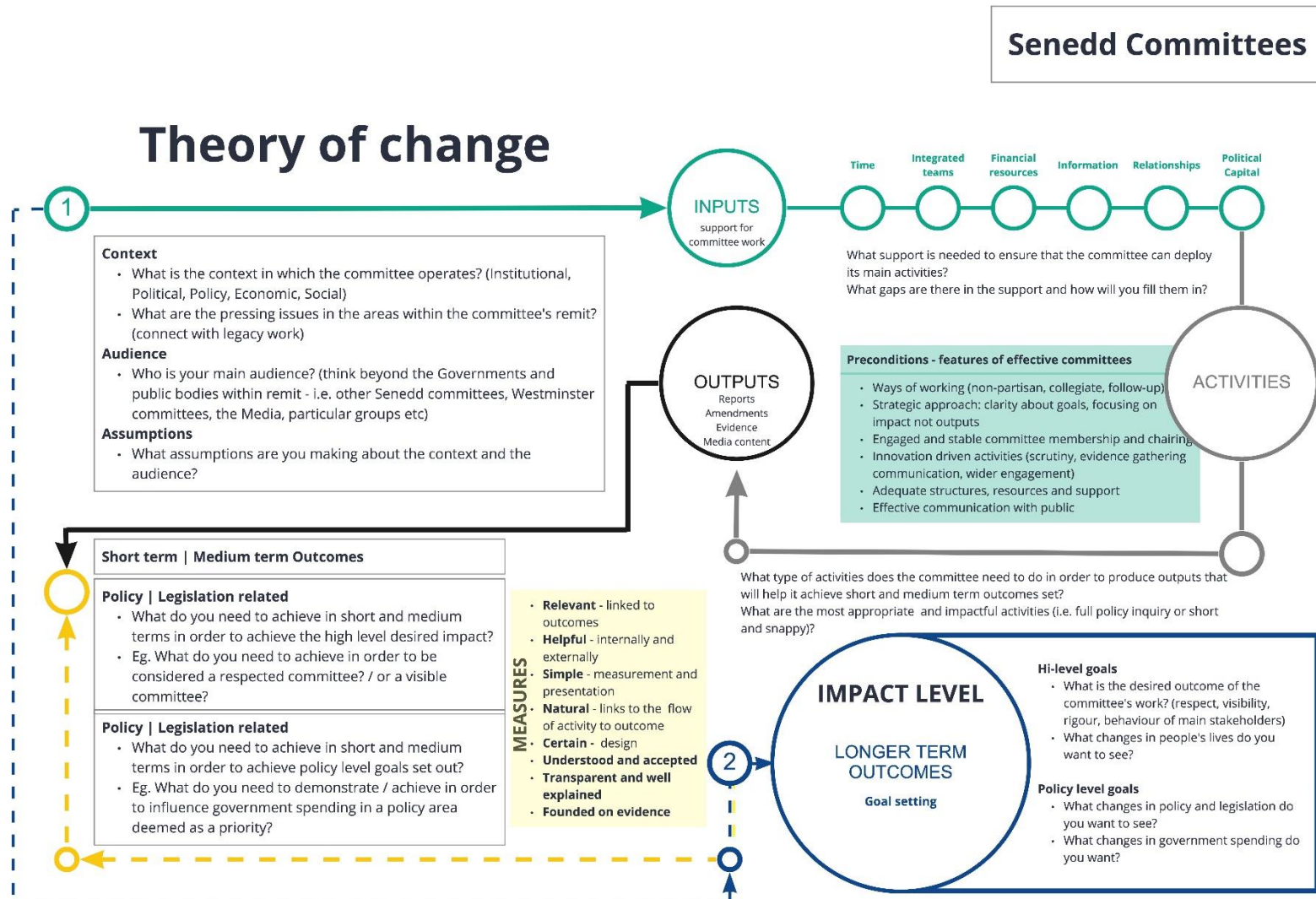
The framework proposed here aims to help committees articulate and pursue that ‘golden thread’; this links strategic objectives, measures of success, sources to help evidence success, committees’ activity and outputs in a process focused on improvement and long-term impact. Rather than creating totally new processes, the aim is to link existing ones into a more coherent sequence that supports Members’ engagement in assessment and review. Figure 3 provides an overall template to guide committees during their strategic work over the parliamentary term.

Some considerations are useful in applying this framework on committees’ strategic work:

- ToC implies a developmental process – the framework is not a static document but is revisited with each discussion on strategic approach conducted over the course of a parliamentary term.
- In early considerations of committees’ strategic approach, it is important to articulate what the long-term desired impact of the committee’s work is.

- The programming of activities (individual inquiries for instance) should reflect necessary steps to achieve the long-term objectives (i.e., *for the committee to become a respected influence in tackling poverty in Wales, what scrutiny work is necessary, what follow up work does the committee need to do, what area of the Government's policy needs reviewing, whose voices need to be brought into the conversation etc?*)
- External facilitators, and stakeholders, should be involved in developing and reviewing the ToC.

Figure 3 – A Possible theory of change framework for Senedd committees [A plain text version is provided in Annex 1.1.]



The table below synthesizes considerations at each stage in the evaluation process. It also indicates possible timings for scheduling evaluation activities.

Table 11 – Stages in evaluation

Stage	Considerations	What and who is involved
<i>Setting Goals and regularly reviewing their strategic fit</i>	<p>Context: What is the context in which the committee operates? (policy, economic, social, political landscape)</p> <p>What are the pressing issues in areas within the committee's remit? Is the committee upstream of downstream from the problem?</p> <p>Audience: Who is the main audience of the committee's work?</p> <p>Who is affected by issues identified?</p> <p>Assumptions: what assumptions are you making about the context and the audience?</p> <p>Success: What does success look like?</p> <p>How would we measure or evidence success?</p> <p><i>Clear set of strategic goals and objectives / Strategic approach to ways of working</i></p> <p><i>Forward working programme, strategic communication and engagement approach to supporting these goals / Indicative list of measures of success and sources of evidence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings from research and scoping papers by clerks already high standard • External facilitators have been praised for their ability to guide committees through strategic planning • Chairs and clerks to consider legacy reports • Full committee to consider existing assessments of committee's work (if any)
<i>Activities & Outputs</i>	<p>What activities are needed to achieve long term goals? What do we know about the Government's legislative programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is upstream of the issues the committee trying to address? • Who is downstream (beneficiaries or the ones affected)? • How will the committee engage their views? • What type of outputs are envisaged? <p>Support: What do you need for these activities to be effective? (Increased media profile? Access to expert evidence? Lived experience?)</p> <p><i>Preconditions for effective committee activity: features of effective committees</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Members • Integrated teams (engagement, communications) • External facilitators • Researchers • Stakeholders • Experts
<i>Short and Medium term outcomes</i>	<p>What change can we expect from the outputs of committee activity? Once a committee report is out, what change can you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work early with communications to create narratives about the work

Long term desired impact	<p>expect? (i.e., generate discussion in the media, prompt Government response, stakeholders acknowledging your work etc)</p> <p>How would you measure and evidence change?</p> <p>Who are the primary and secondary beneficiaries?</p> <p>What else can change?</p> <p>Do you need a feedback loop?</p> <p><i>Measures should be relevant, helpful, simple, certain, understood and accepted, transparent and well explained, founded in evidence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work early with engagement to tap into lived experience • Solicit feedback from witnesses and stakeholders • Work across integrated teams to collate sources of evidence that would help measure short- and medium-term outcomes
	<p>Ultimately what impact do you want the committee's work to have? Are you making a difference, shifting the needle? (i.e., in people's lives, in the way the Government behaves, in the way policy making is based on best available evidence, in the way people engage with devolution in Wales, in the way Wales' needs and profile are taken into account at UK level?)</p> <p>Why is this important?</p> <p>Who else is contributing to this goal?</p> <p>Who else benefits from the work the committee does?</p> <p><i>Clear statement of intent and ambition</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Members are ultimately those who need to articulate these overarching measures of success as this will establish the level of ambition in the committee • External facilitators of strategy sessions can guide this process • Clerks and researchers can highlight scope, necessity and areas where committees can maximise impact. • Communications can assist in communicating the level of ambition to Media and the general public.

Positioning work (understanding the context, the audiences, setting the level of ambition) at the beginning of a term is important to keep committees focused and to help them prioritise work. Long-term outcomes can be general or specific to the policy area relevant to committees' work. As seen from the field work, one of the most important narratives around committees' aspirations is that they become '*a committee of influence*'; others stated that they wish to be a '*respected committee*' not only in relation to the Welsh Government but also across the UK parliamentary arena. More specific goals may refer to the various areas policy committees oversee – for instance, changes in policy and legislative outputs, changes in public spending etc.

4.3. Measures of committees' effectiveness

This section outlines specific measures of committees' effectiveness. This is intended as an indicative rather than a prescriptive list. The framework outlines several criteria in terms of committees' ambition, from which a series of measures and ways of evidencing success (or progress) are developed. These were articulated by committee chairs in interviews and further explored with officials in three workshops conducted in January 2021.

Considerations are made here around how to evidence the measures outlined. The field research revealed that committees have improved (from previous terms) on planning their work strategically and on prioritising their work. However, not many set out clear criteria for success or clear measures of their effectiveness at the start of term. Additionally, the infrastructure supporting the process of tracking and measuring the effectiveness of committees is poorly developed. The rather loose alignment between corporate service level strategy and the committees' work, also means that, at times, reporting on effectiveness and performance is an exercise of 'fitting square pegs into round holes'.

One of the biggest hurdles in developing a coherent framework for evaluation of committees' work is that not everything can be easily quantifiable and measurable. For instance, the 'deterrent' effect of committees' work has been mentioned by many in our interviews, but this is generally difficult to measure. One can evidence through a qualitative study of narratives and perceptions of Government ministers and the bureaucracy supporting them in relation to the indirect effect of committees' work. White emphasises the importance of using both qualitative and quantitative sources to evidence effectiveness of committees⁶⁹.

The table below synthesises the types of measures committees could pursue. These measures of success can be used to inform committees and improve their work, articulate narratives that could be communicated with stakeholders and the public, and showcase committees' work national and internationally.

⁶⁹ Idem White (2015)

Table 12 – Measures of committees’ effectiveness

<i>Goals / Criteria</i>	<i>Possible measures</i>	<i>Methodology and sources of evidence</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
<i>Influence : Committees of influence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of recommendations accepted by Government 	Recommendations tracker - qualify recommendations ⁷⁰	Internal External (Open Data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % committee stage amendments accepted • % of bills getting pre and post legislative scrutiny 	Tracking bill modifications at committee stage (qual) Legislative process tracker	Internal (Internships) External (Open Data) Internal External (Open Data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subordinate legislation considered Changes in the levels of negative and affirmative resolutions 	Legislative process tracker	Internal External (Open Data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning - Changes in Government legislative behaviour • Changes in Government’s policy, spending and legislative priorities 	Make explicit recommendations and highlight changes in Government’s legislative behaviour Tracking Government legislative, budget and policy priorities yearly linked to committees’ work	Internal External Qualitative study across committees External Internal potential for fellowship focus
<i>Impact : Committees’ work has lasting impact</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of recommendations accepted and implemented by government 	Qualify progress (i.e., plans to implement have been made drafted, implementation in progress)	Government Annual Report + Internal Scrutiny
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in Government spending on areas highlighted by committees year on year 	Analysis of Government spending year on year	Internal External (research-based organisations)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of legal challenges to Senedd passed legislation 	Tracking judicial mentions to committees’ legislative scrutiny	Internal Open data External analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in policy outcomes • Improvement in public accountability 	Long term policy evaluation Public Accountability study	External Internal through fellowships External
<i>Respect : Committees are respected actors in the decision making process Democracy and legitimacy : Committees are champions for widening</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive references made about committees’ work by: Government & Public bodies Other Senedd Committees Senedd Members in Plenary Other parliamentary committees in the UK Judiciary Other Government bodies UK Internationally 	Content analysis of ministerial statements, plenary records, annual reports, committees’ reports, etc.	Internal Potential for internship input
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders’ perceptions on committees’ influence, impact and inclusive approach 	Anonymous stakeholder feedback survey – follow year on year change	Internal External (Open Data)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of individuals taking part in committee F2F engagement events • Level of online engagement in committees work (across all digital channels) 	Logging engagement levels by type of engagement activity and purpose using a Centralised public engagement tracking system with committee engagement insights Use dynamic engagement dashboards	Internal External Open data
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New individuals getting involved in committees’ work year on year • Participants’ perception of committee engagement work 	Feedback surveys (before and after events) – improved knowledge and understanding of devolution & Senedd	Legacy report to reflect learnings (what works) across a full term Internal External

⁷⁰ The word “qualify” here refers to giving a weight to individual recommendations. Not all recommendations are the same in terms of importance: some may suggest quite radical transformations, others may be less transformational.

<i>public engagement</i> <i>Diversity : committees as inclusive deliberative forums</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnout in Senedd elections • Deliberative exercises facilitated 	Likelihood to vote, turnout Case study approach	External External & Internal
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of male and female witnesses in committee evidence sessions • % ethnic minority witnesses in committee evidence sessions • Geographical spread of committee witnesses (including UK and beyond) • % non-usual suspects in committee hearings • Year on year increase in new individuals or organisations giving evidence 	Comprehensive Senedd strategy for diversity monitoring Clarify what and who the usual suspects are	Internal potential for fellowship work Open data External Internal Legacy report to reflect learning across a full term
	<i>Evidence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witnesses' perception of evidence gathering sessions (were they able to give their best accounts? Were they supported to provide best available evidence? etc) • New evidence uncovered • Lived experience as evidence • Level and quality of engagement with research-based organisations 	Witnesses feedback survey Witnesses round table event / focus group Tracking instances on new evidence uncovered Qualitative study of committees' approaches to evidence See above	Open data External Legacy report to reflect learning across a full term External Commissioned
<i>Visibility and public profile :</i> <i>Committees are relevant, representative and visible</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive mentions in the Media • Committees' Social media channels' performance • Level of knowledge and understanding of devolution, Senedd powers, and committees • Level and quality of engagement with Welsh Media 	Media analysis on committees Social media analysis Annual polling Welsh election survey Lesson learning - Case study	Media Analysis could be done internally or with the support of internships schemes External Participation in Media summits (see IWA for instance)
<i>Learning : Committees learn and improve their work</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member engagement • Membership turnover • Development opportunities (effectiveness and take in) 	Attendance Committee membership Qualitative study on role of committee in socialisation and leadership development in committees	Internal External Open data External commissioned

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This project explored institutional narratives and practices in relation to committees' effectiveness with the view to develop a framework of measures to support evaluation of the Senedd's committees in the 6th term. The research relied on extensive engagement with internal stakeholders in the Senedd (both politicians – committee chairs – and officials supporting the work of committees) over three months (November 2020 till January 2021). Supported also by a thorough literature review exploring various frameworks of measuring effectiveness in parliamentary context, this research provides a wealth of evidence around:

- How institutional stakeholders define committees' roles and aspirations.
- How they define measures of success and effectiveness in relation to the different roles of committees.
- What practices, beliefs and structures support the process of evaluation of committees' effectiveness.
- What practices, beliefs and structures support the process of widening engagement and diversifying evidence and witnesses.

The report concludes that a framework loosely based on the **theory of change model** would help committees ensure coherence between strategic goals, planned activities and the process of regularly assessing and reviewing their impact and influence. The proposed template for an operational and fluid theory of change is presented in Annex 1 of this document.

Secondly, the report concludes that the measurement framework used to assess committees' effectiveness **starts from long term impact and outcomes**. The framework of measures (Table 12) (indicative rather than prescriptive) outlines several criteria in terms of committees' ambition, from which a series of measures and ways of evidencing success (or progress) are developed.

Thirdly, the report concludes that **evaluation should be done at three different levels**: some aspects would be in the remit of committees (micro level evaluation), some at Senedd corporate level to ensure a committee wide perspective (macro level evaluation), and some should be conducted externally (meta level evaluation) for a longitudinal, independent perspective.

The recommendations presented below support a coherent approach to evaluation of committees' activity, which in turn supports the Senedd's aspiration of world class committees. Many academic studies as well as parliamentary reviews emphasise the need for regular internal and external assessment of committees. The framework developed here adheres to the principle of continuous improvement of committees. The recommendations this report makes are structured in two sections. The first set of recommendations (1-6) refer to creating the conditions for effective committee work, based on identified features of effectiveness. The second set of recommendations (7-13) refer to creating the conditions for evaluation and self-evaluation to be embedded at institutional, operational and behavioural level in committees.

Conditions for effective Committees

R.1. Streamline and strengthen accountability lines – this implies consideration and evaluation on the following:

R1.1. Committee remits and functions – the Senedd committee system is an outlier in terms of committee portfolio organisation in that committees do not mirror executive portfolios. This research has heard both pros and cons in relation to this. The experience of the 5th Senedd (and to an extent that of the 4th Assembly as well) is that the imbalances in terms of portfolio distribution can create both a blurriness of accountability lines (what gets scrutinised and what does not?), and a number resourcing issues when a few committees (usually committees with legislation friendly remits) get overloaded with legislation. Although this research has not revealed substantive evidence that the dual role of committees hinders effectiveness, it also did not reveal any overwhelming evidence that this model enhances effectiveness either. **This report recommends that in the 6th Senedd the Business Committee reviews the merits and potential weaknesses of the theme based and overlapping committee portfolios** as well as the merits and weaknesses inherent to the dual function committee system.

R1.2. Capacity and resourcing of committees - Resourcing committees such as Legislation, Justice and Constitution, in the light of enhanced justice functions but also the increased importance of constitutional issues brought about the Brexit and repatriation of powers, seems paramount (are four Members enough for the committee,

for instance?). **This report recommends a more flexible approach to setting the size and level of support for committees based on needs and with a future proof approach in mind.**

R1.3. Role of strategic parliamentary actors in strengthening accountability and the committee system – Committee Chairs play a crucial leadership role in ensuring committees work effectively and maximise their impact across the whole spectrum of their functions. **The Chairs’ Forum, as a result, can play a much formal and significant role in strengthening and improving committee activity** by acting as a key forum for committee system evaluation and lesson learning. The Business Committee already plays an important procedural role and sets expectations for committees and Committee Chairs. As a significant strategic influencer, **the Business Committee can play a bigger role in advocating for and emphasising the benefits of more stability in committee membership.** Similarly, the creation of the Llywydd’s Committee brings about the opportunity to ensure a systemic approach is taken to the oversight of independent bodies such as the Wales Audit Office, Auditor General of Wales or the Public Services Ombudsman. **The 6th Senedd should consider the constitutional implications of the lines of accountability (internally and externally) the committee system establishes and ensure that arrangements are evaluated.**

R.2. Ensure stability in committees’ membership to get all Members fully engaged in committee work. The election of committee chairs in the 5th Senedd has had a positive impact on ensuring stability in committees’ leadership. However, the high turnover in committees’ membership during the 5th Senedd was mentioned by many institutional actors (committee chairs and officials) as hindering both the effectiveness of committees (it affects Members’ ability to catch-up and fully engage in committee work), and the extent to which Members can engage in evaluation. Guidance should be issued to political parties to prioritise committee work and limit turnover in committee membership. The Business Committee can be a possible avenue for this, with support from other strategic actors (the Llywydd, and the Chairs’ Forum)

R.3. Experiment more with various approaches to widen participation and engagement.

Widening engagement and participation in committees’ work should be driven by Members and remain a strategic goal for both the Senedd and its committees. Experimentation may include

further use of Citizen Assemblies, mini-publics (citizen panels and juries), co-production methods (such as deliberative committees). The first Wales Citizens Assembly (2019) suggested there was both an appetite for more deliberative work to be conducted and benefits to the process. Whilst rather expensive, time consuming and complex, citizens assemblies can be great vehicles to tackle complex issues (i.e., climate change, future relationship with Europe and the rest of the UK, recovery post Covid-19) and support joint work by Senedd committees. Similarly, the Senedd could test institutionalising citizens' input in committees work through deliberative committees (model currently adopted in Belgium's Brussels Region Parliament). This type of work ensures enhanced profile, public visibility, media coverage etc. For more specific pieces of policy work, citizen panels, juries, and user reference groups could be more appropriate. This report recommends the 6th Senedd committees use at least one jointly commissioned Citizen Assembly per Senedd electoral term and test the deliberative committees model with one committee.

R.4. Make lived experience central to committees' approach to evidence through 1) adequate resourcing of the engagement teams supporting committees, 2) clear methodological considerations around weighting the value of lived experience in the evidence base and 3) reflecting the lived experience captured and how this informed the committees' work in reports and external communications. When conducting major inquiries as well public consultations on legislative scrutiny work committees should involve the Citizen Engagement Team and the communication team as early as possible in the planning work.

R.5. Make diversity monitoring common practice (engagement activities, evidence, witnesses) and report on year-on-year progress. The lack of benchmarks and full insights into how diverse witnesses and evidence used by Senedd committees is makes any strategy of diversifying evidence difficult. There is also a strong argument around ensuring diversity of public engagement. This report recommends that the 6th Senedd develops a comprehensive diversity monitoring system, with transparent reporting on year-on-year progress.

R.6. Solicit regular formal feedback from those who engage in committees' work formally or informally (witnesses, individuals, stakeholders). Closing the 'loop' is a crucial element of keeping committees' work relevant. This report recommends that: 1) the 6th Senedd develops a

systematic way of soliciting feedback from external stakeholders that engage in committees' work; and 2) publish this feedback. There are merits in conducting this type of exercise at macro (Committee system) level annually to get a holistic system level perspective on perceptions and experiences on stakeholder engagement with committees. Individual committees too should seek regular feedback (formally or informally) to allow stakeholders to provide suggestions of how committees can improve their engagement work (understood here in its widest definition). The feedback should be considered both in individual committees (during strategic review and evaluation work) and in the Chairs' Forum.

R.7. Use the full range of committees' powers to demand improvement from the Welsh Government. Alongside with targeted scrutiny and follow-up work, this report recommends that committees should 1) demand Government to report annually on implementation of committees' recommendations and 2) hold Government to account on how they engage with committees, their work and the recommendations committees make. A possible avenue for this collective scrutiny could be the Scrutiny of the First Minister Committee or the Chairs' Forum.

Conditions for effective evaluation

R.8. Embed commitment to evaluation and self-reflection in committees work (i.e., induction, development opportunities, use of pre-meetings and de-briefing time). The Business Committee, should develop (or commission) a guide for effective committee work for Members and for committee Chairs (Institute for Government model). Similarly, guidelines for committee evaluation should be developed by the Chairs' Forum. Evaluation on the three levels identified (see Table 10 on page 63-64) should be conducted regularly and fed back in the strategic planning process as well as the legacy reporting process. On a micro level, committees may choose to evaluate effectiveness of approaches taken in specific inquiries, whilst every Senedd term they may commission more in-depth external evaluation pieces.

R.9. Adopt a Theory of Change based model to plan, review, evaluate and communicate committees' ambitions and achievements. This helps focus on outcomes not outputs. Training and development opportunities should be made available for Members and officials to familiarise them with the theory of change models and other evaluation tools.

R.10. Align corporate strategy with parliamentary business so that it reflects committees' activity. Service level strategies need to reflect parliamentary and committees' business.

R.11. Develop a comprehensive Open Parliamentary Data infrastructure (the UK Parliament, Canadian Parliament, Scottish Parliament, and Scandinavian parliaments all have made important strides on this front). This report recommends the 6th Senedd establish an Open Parliamentary Data Science Fellowship whose scope would be to develop a proof of concept, develop and test principles and standards underpinning the open data infrastructure, establish user needs in terms of parliamentary data (internal and external), audit existing provisions and possible models, and provide lessons from other parliaments.

R.12. Forge funded partnerships and expand engagement with research-based organisations in Wales and beyond. External input into committees' work can be facilitated by formal partnerships with research-based organisations. The Welsh Centre for Public Policy is an interesting model to look at, with a three-way funding that includes ESRC, the Welsh Government and Cardiff University. This report suggests that joint bidding for UKRI and match-funding can significantly support capacity for evaluation and assessment.

R.13. Build internal capacity through expansion of internships and fellowships supporting evaluative work of committees.

**** Acknowledgement**

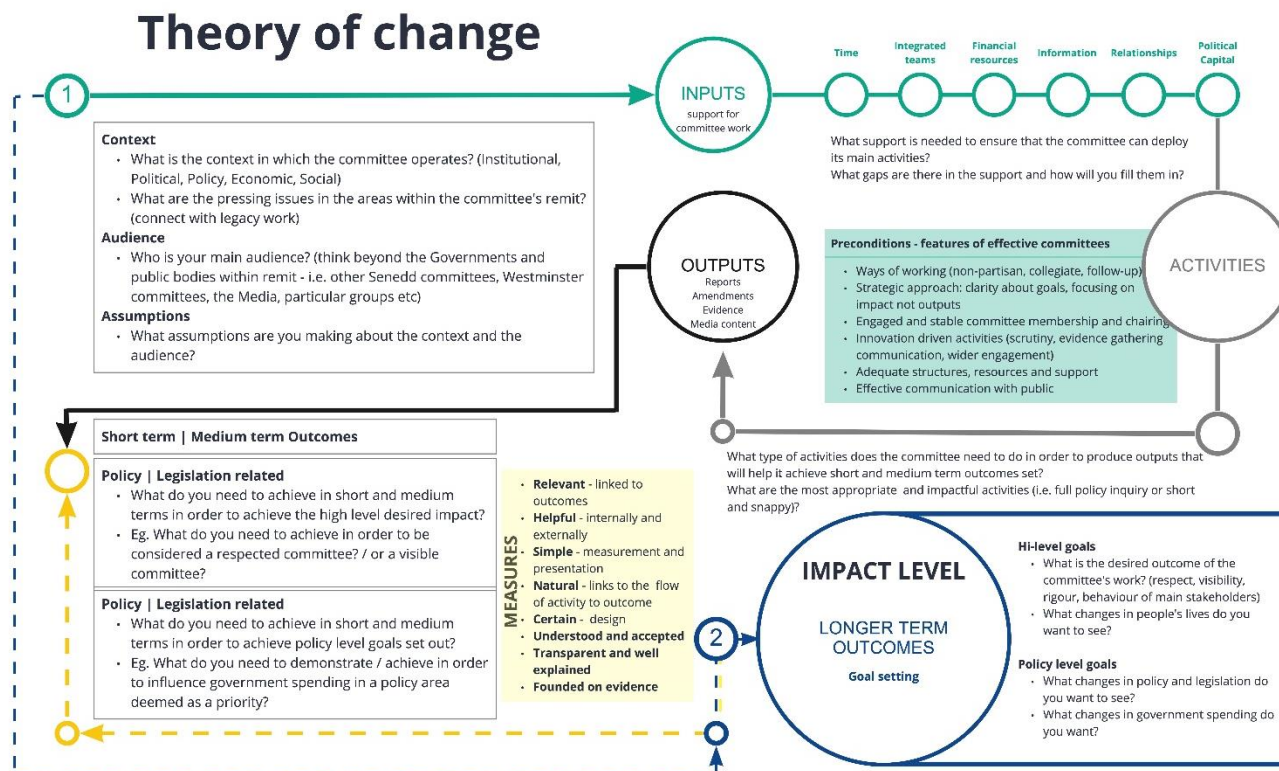
I would like to express my gratitude to all participants in this project, who gave up their time and who made such important contributions to this project.

Special thanks to Bethan, whose tremendous help with co-ordinating diaries and arranging meetings helped me a lot. Special thanks also to Julian for supervising this work and for the infinite patience shown throughout.

Annex 1. Theory of Change Template for Committees

[A plain text version is provided in Annex 1.1.]

Senedd Committees



Annex 1.1. Plain text version of Figure 3 and Annex 1: A Possible theory of change framework/template for Senedd committees

Context

What is the context in which the committee operates? (Institutional, Political, Policy, Economic, Social)
What are the pressing issues in the areas within the committee's remit? (connect with legacy work)

Audience

Who is your main audience? (think beyond the Governments and bodies within remit - i.e. other Senedd committees, Westminster committees, the Media, particular groups etc)

Assumptions

What assumptions are you making about the context and the audience?

Stage: Inputs (support for committee work)

Contributing parts of this stage

- Time
- Integrated teams
- Financial resources
- Information
- Relationships
- Political Capital

What support is needed to ensure that the committee can deploy its main activities?

What gaps are there in the support and how will you fill them in?

Activities: Preconditions - features of effective committees

Ways of working (non- partisan, collegiate, follow- up)

Strategic approach: clarity about goals, focusing on impact not outputs

Engaged and stable committee membership and chairing

Innovation driven activities (scrutiny, evidence gathering communication, wider engagement)

Adequate structures, resources and support

Effective communication with public

What type of activities does the committee need to do in order to produce outputs that will help it achieve short and medium term outcomes set?

What are the most appropriate and impactful activities (i.e. full policy inquiry or short and snappy)?

Stage: Outputs

Contributing parts of this stage

- Reports

- Amendments
- Evidence
- Media content

Short term | Medium term Outcomes

Policy | Legislation related

What do you need to achieve in short and medium terms in order to achieve the high-level desired impact?

Eg. What do you need to achieve in order to be considered a respected committee? / or a visible committee?

Policy | Legislation related

What do you need to achieve in short and medium terms in order to achieve policy level goals set out?

Eg. What do you need to demonstrate / achieve in order to influence government spending in a policy area deemed as a priority?

Measures

Relevant - linked to outcomes

Helpful - internally and externally

Simple - measurement and presentation

Natural - links to the flow of activity to outcome

Certain - design

Understood and accepted

Transparent and well explained

Founded on evidence

Stage: Impact level – Longer term outcomes (goal setting)

Contributing parts of this stage:

Hi-level goals

What is the desired outcome of the committee's work? (respect, visibility, rigour, behaviour of main stakeholders)

What changes in people's lives do you want to see?

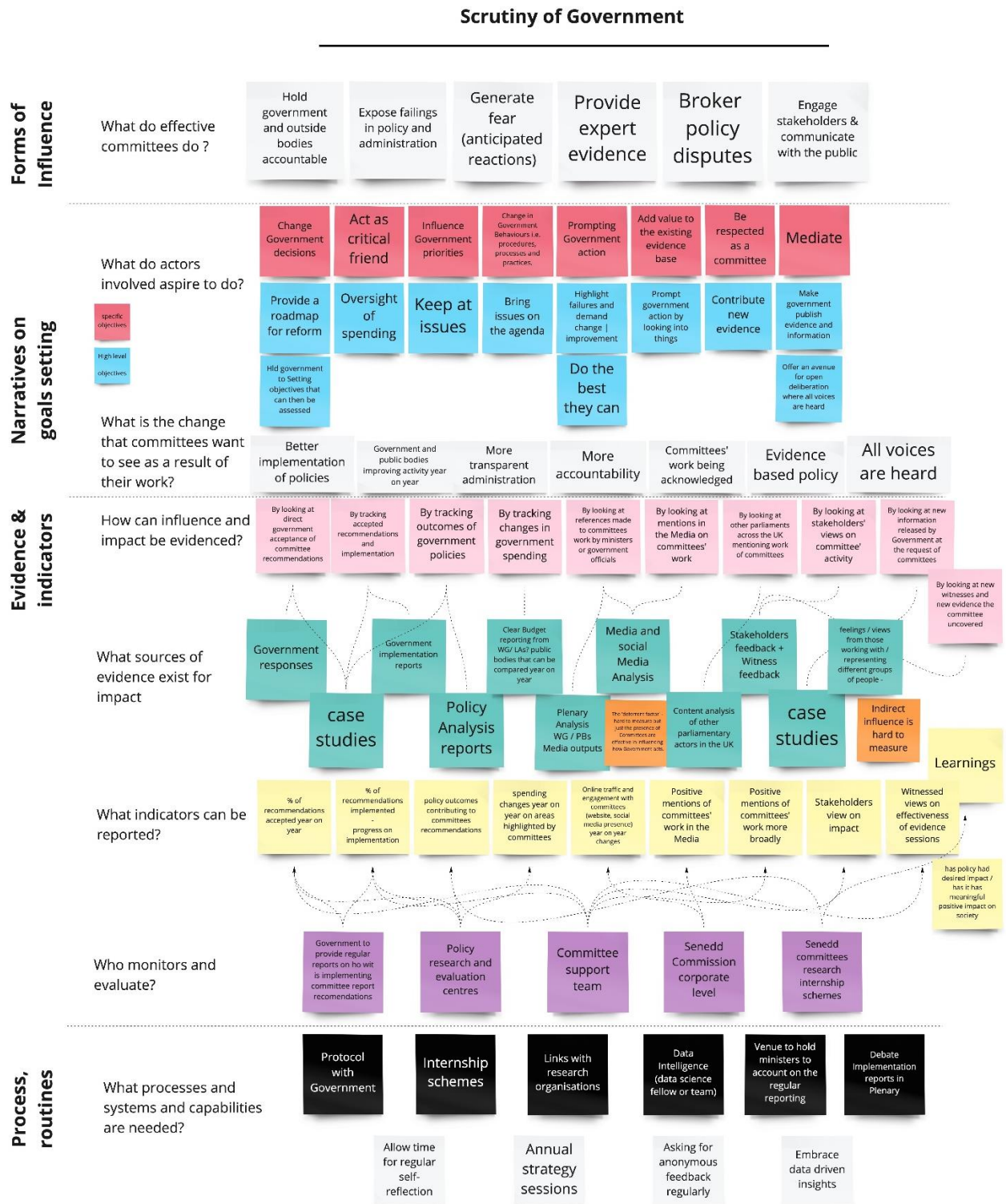
Policy level goals

What changes in policy and legislation do you want to see?

What changes in government spending do you want?

Annex 2. Effectiveness of government scrutiny

[A plain text version is provided in Annex 2.1]



Annex 2.1. Plain text version of Annex 2. Effectiveness of government scrutiny

Scrutiny of Government

Forms of Influence

What do effective committees do?

Hold government and outside bodies accountable
Expose failings in policy and administration
Generate fear (anticipated reactions)
Provide expert evidence
Broker policy disputes
Engage stakeholders and communicate with the public

Narratives on goals setting

What do actors involved aspire to do?

Specific objectives

Change Government decisions
Act as critical friend
Influence government priorities
Change in government behaviours i.e. procedures, processes and practices
Prompting government action
Add value to the existing evidence base
Be respected as a committee
Mediate

High level objectives

Provide a roadmap for reform
Hold government to setting objectives that can then be assessed
Oversight of spending
Keep at issues
Bring issues on the agenda
Highlight failures and demand change | improvement
Do the best they can
Prompt government action by looking into things
Contribute new evidence
Make government publish evidence and information
Offer an avenue for open deliberation where all voices are heard

What is the change that committees want to see as a result of their work?

Better implementation of policies

Government and public bodies improving activity year on year

More transparent administration

More accountability

Committees' work being acknowledged

Evidence based policy

All voices are heard

Evidence & indicators

How can influence and impact be evidenced?

By looking at direct government acceptance of committee recommendations

By tracking accepted recommendations and implementation

By tracking outcomes of government policies

By tracking changes in government spending

By looking at references made to committees' work by ministers or government officials

By looking at mentions in the media on committees' work

By looking at other parliaments across the UK mentioning work of committees

By looking at stakeholders' views on committee activity

By looking at new information released by government at the request of committees

By looking at new witnesses and new evidence the committee uncovered

What sources of evidence exist for impact

Government responses

Case studies

Government implementation reports

Policy analysis reports

Clear budget reporting from Welsh Government/ local authorities/ public bodies that can be compared year on year

Plenary analysis Welsh Government/ public bodies media outputs

Media and social media analysis

The 'deterrent factor' - hard to measure but just the presence of committees are effective in influencing how government acts

Content analysis of other parliamentary actors in the UK

Stakeholders feedback and witness feedback

Feelings / views from those working with / representing different groups of people

Indirect influence is hard to measure

What indicators can be reported?

Percentage of recommendations accepted year on year
Percentage of recommendations implemented - progress on implementation
Policy outcomes contributing to committees' recommendations
Spending changes year on year on areas highlighted by committees
Online traffic and engagement with committees (website, social media presence) year on year changes
Positive mentions of committees' work in the media
Positive mentions of committees' work more broadly
Stakeholders view on impact
Witnessed views on effectiveness of evidence sessions
Learnings
Has policy had desired impact / has it has meaningful positive impact on society

Who monitors and evaluates?

Government to provide regular reports on how it is implementing committee report recommendations
Policy research and evaluation centres
Committee support team
Senedd Commission corporate level
Senedd committees research internship schemes

Process and routines

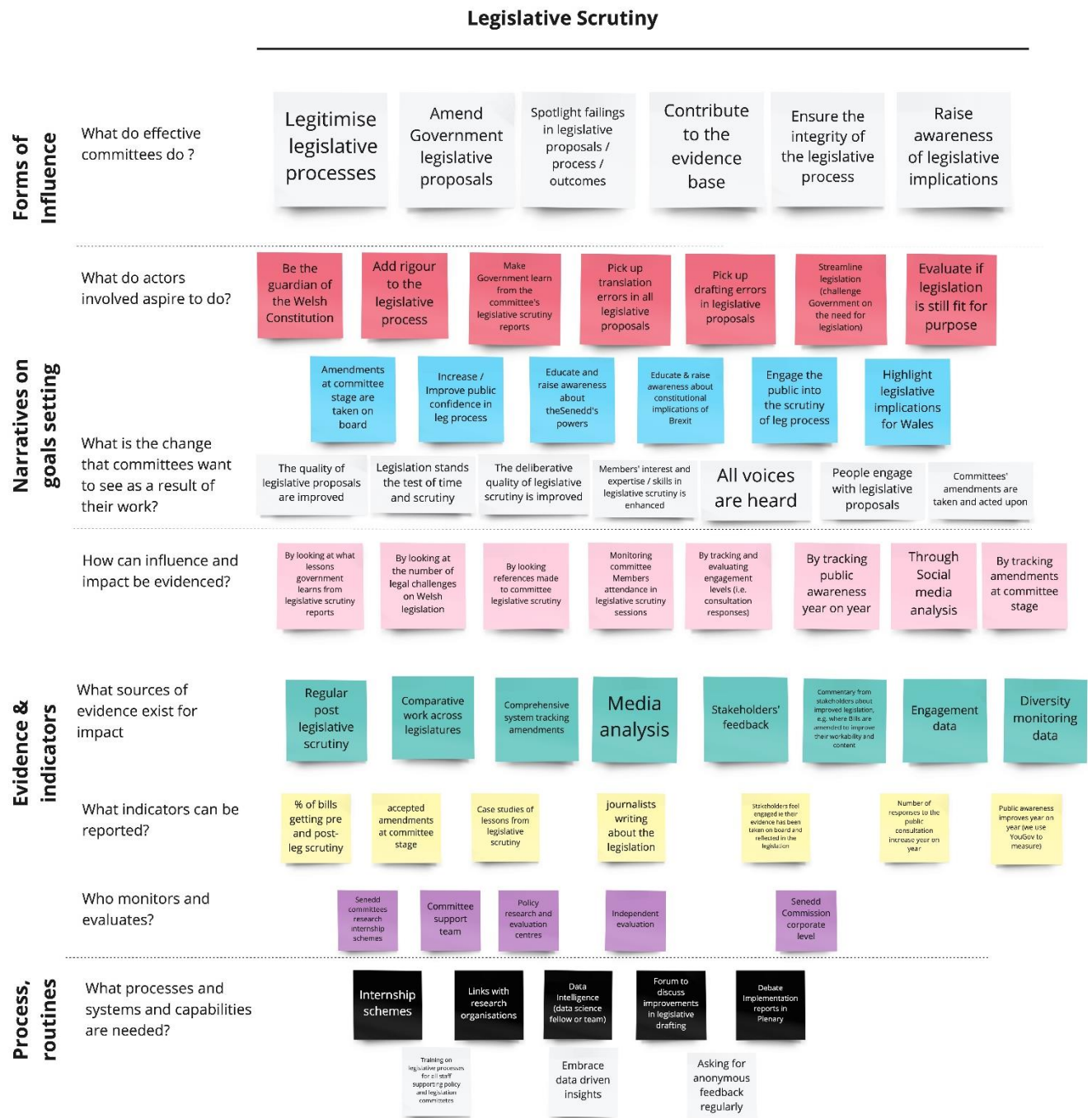
What processes and systems and capabilities are needed?

Protocol with Government
Internship schemes
Links with research organisations
Data Intelligence (data science fellow or team)
Venue to hold ministers to account on the regular reporting
Debate implementation reports in Plenary

Allow time for regular self-reflection
Annual strategy sessions
Asking for anonymous feedback regularly
Embrace data driven insights

Annex 3. Effectiveness of legislative scrutiny

[A plain text version is provided in Annex 3.1]



Annex 3.1. Plain text version of Annex 3. Effectiveness of legislative scrutiny

Legislative scrutiny

Forms of Influence

What do effective committees do?

Legitimise legislative processes

Amend Government legislative proposals

Spotlight failings in legislative proposals / process / outcomes

Contribute to the evidence base

Ensure the integrity of the legislative process

Raise awareness of legislative implications

Narratives on goals setting

What do actors involved aspire to do?

Be the guardian of the Welsh constitution

Add rigour to the legislative process

Make Government learn from the committees' legislative scrutiny reports

Pick up translation errors in all legislative proposals

Pick up drafting errors in legislative proposals

Streamline legislation (challenge Government on the need for legislation)

Evaluate if legislation is still fit for purpose

Amendments at committee stage are taken on board

Increase / improve public confidence in legislative process

Educate and raise awareness about the Senedd's powers

Educate & raise awareness about constitutional implications of Brexit

Engage the public into the scrutiny of legislative process

Highlight legislative implications for Wales

What is the change that committees want to see as a result of their work?

The quality of legislative proposals are improved

Legislation stands the test of time and scrutiny

The deliberative quality of legislative scrutiny is improved

Members' interest and expertise / skills in legislative scrutiny is enhanced

All voices are heard

People engage with legislative proposals

Committees' amendments are taken and acted upon

Evidence and indicators

How can influence and impact be evidenced?

By looking at what lessons government learns from legislative scrutiny reports

By looking at the number of legal challenges on Welsh legislation

By looking references made to committee legislative scrutiny

Monitoring committee Members' attendance in legislative scrutiny sessions

By tracking and evaluating engagement levels (i.e. consultation responses)

By tracking public awareness year on year

Through social media analysis

By tracking amendments at committee stage

What sources of evidence exist for impact

Regular post legislative scrutiny

Comparative work across legislatures

Comprehensive system tracking amendments

Media analysis

Stakeholders' feedback

Commentary from stakeholders about improved legislation, e.g. where Bills are amended to improve their workability and content

Engagement data

Diversity monitoring data

What indicators can be reported?

Percentage of bills getting pre and post-leg scrutiny

Accepted amendments at committee stage

Case studies of lessons from legislative scrutiny

Journalists writing about the legislation

Stakeholders feel engaged ie their evidence has been taken on board and reflected in the legislation

Number of responses to the public consultation increase year on year

Public awareness improves year on year (we use YouGov to measure)

Who monitors and evaluates?

Senedd committees research internship schemes

Committee support team

Policy research and evaluation centres

Independent evaluation

Senedd Commission corporate level

Process and routines

What processes and systems and capabilities are needed?

Internship schemes

Links with research organisations

Data Intelligence (data science fellow or team)

Forum to discuss improvements in legislative drafting

Debate implementation reports in Plenary

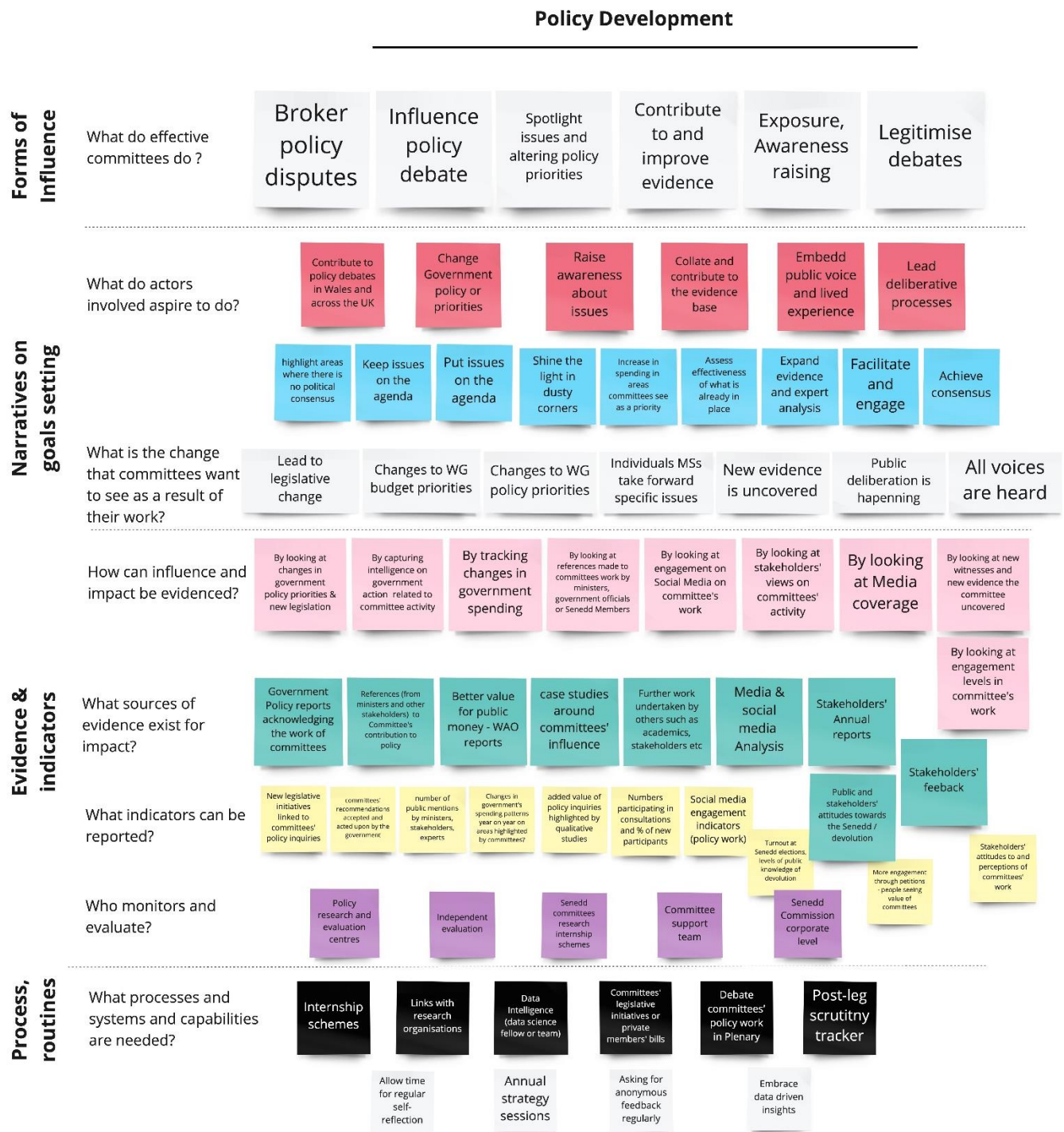
Training on legislative processes for all staff supporting policy and legislation committees

Embrace data driven insights

Asking for anonymous feedback regularly

Annex 4. Effectiveness of policy development

[A plain text version is provided in Annex 4.1.]



Annex 4.1. Plain text version of Annex 4. Effectiveness of policy development

Policy Development

Forms of Influence

What do effective committees do?

Broker policy disputes
Influence policy debate
Spotlight issues and altering policy priorities
Contribute to and improve evidence
Exposure, awareness raising
Legitimise debates

Narratives on goals setting

What do actors involved aspire to do?

Contribute to policy debates in Wales and across the UK
Change Government policy or priorities
Raise awareness about issues
Collate and contribute to the evidence base
Embed public voice and lived experience
Lead deliberative processes

Highlight areas where there is no political consensus
Keep issues on the agenda
Put issues on the agenda
Shine the light in dusty corners
Increase in spending in areas committees see as a priority
Assess effectiveness of what is already in place
Expand evidence and expert analysis
Facilitate and engage
Achieve consensus

What is the change that committees want to see as a result of their work?

Lead to legislative change
Changes to Welsh Government budget priorities
Changes to Welsh Government policy priorities
Individuals Members of the Senedd take forward specific issues
New evidence is uncovered

Public deliberation is happening
All voices are heard

Evidence & indicators

How can influence and impact be evidenced?

By looking at changes in Government policy priorities & new legislation
By capturing intelligence on Government action related to committee activity
By tracking changes in Government spending
By looking at references made to committees work by ministers, Government officials or Senedd Members
By looking at engagement on social media on committee's work
By looking at stakeholders' views on committees' activity
By looking at media coverage
By looking at new witnesses and new evidence the committee uncovered
By looking at engagement levels in committee's work

What sources of evidence exist for impact?

Government Policy reports acknowledging the work of committees
References (from ministers and other stakeholders) to Committee's contribution to policy
Better value for public money – WAO reports
Case studies around committees' influence
Further work undertaken by others such as academics, stakeholders etc
Media & social media analysis
Stakeholders' annual reports
Public and stakeholders' attitudes towards the Senedd / devolution
Stakeholders' feedback

What indicators can be reported?

New legislative initiatives linked to committees' policy inquiries
Committees' recommendations accepted and acted upon by the government
Number of public mentions by ministers, stakeholders, experts
Changes in government's spending patterns year on year on areas highlighted by committees?
Added value of policy inquiries highlighted by qualitative studies
Numbers participating in consultations and percentage of new participants
Social media engagement indicators (policy work)
Turnout at Senedd elections, levels of public knowledge of devolution
More engagement through petitions - people seeing value of committees
Stakeholders' attitudes to and perceptions of committees' work

Who monitors and evaluate?

Policy research and evaluation centres

Independent evaluation

Senedd committees research internship schemes

Committee support team

Senedd Commission corporate level

Process and routines

What processes and systems and capabilities are needed?

Internship schemes

Links with research organisations

Data Intelligence (data science fellow or team)

Committees' legislative initiatives or private members' bills

Debate committees' policy work in Plenary

Post- leg scrutiny tracker

Allow time for regular self-reflection

Annual strategy sessions

Asking for anonymous feedback regularly

Embrace data driven insights

Annex 5. Plain text version of Figure 1: Journey mapping Evaluation Practice in Senedd Committees

Stage: Goal setting

Contributing parts of this stage

Legacy Reports (actors involved in the process are research, clerks, chair, committee members)

Stakeholder consultation (actors involved in the process are chair, clerks, integrated services)

Chairs' approach (actors involved in the process are chair, clerks, research)

Strategy session (external) (actors involved in the process are committee members)

Member's Involvement (actors involved in the process are committee members, chair)

Existing good practice (labelled as gain points)

Consideration of legacy reports

Briefing work from Clerks and researchers

Early input from stakeholders

Opportunity to think strategically about how to maximise committees' impact on a range of stakeholders and audiences

External and independent facilitation

Opportunity areas for improvement (labelled as pain points)

Balancing forward work programming with strategic planning

Strategy sessions not in depth enough to articulate a joint vision of what success might look like

Limited considerations of how to evidence effectiveness

Stage: Monitoring progress

Contributing parts of this stage

End of a committee session (micro level) (actors involved in the process are committee members, chair)

End of an Inquiry (actors involved in the process are chair, committee members, clerks)

End of a yearly session (actors involved in the process are chair, committee members, integrated services, external)

Existing good practice (labelled as gain points)

Time is allocated for wash-up sessions

Integrated teams – regular reflections and good practice sharing

Opportunities to revisit strategic objectives and reflect on ways of working and effectiveness

Opportunity areas for improvement (labelled as pain points)

Moving on to the next thing

Not enough time for Members to reflect

Limited focus on lesson learning

Focus on goals and objectives is sometimes lost

Frequent changes in committee membership

Poor data infrastructure

Stage: Evaluation

Contributing parts of this stage

Legacy Report (actors involved in the process are chair, committee members, clerks, integrated services)

External Evaluation (actors involved in the process are external, chair, integrated services)

Existing good practice (labelled as a gain point)

Case studies

Opportunity areas for improvement (labelled as pain points)

Lack of metrics

Alignment between corporate KPIs and committees work

Limited stakeholder Input

Data fragmentation across services

Limited use of external evaluation

Annex 6. Plain text version of Figure 2: Theory of Change Model (general)

Context

What is the desired social result of your work?
What is the context of the problem identified?
Are you upstream or downstream?

Audience

Voice of the user / beneficiary
What gaps do they have?
What assets do they have?
What does the ecosystem look like?
Who or what else has an influence/ is playing a role?

Stage: Inputs

Contributing parts of this stage:

- Time
- Human Resources
- Financial Resources
- Information
- Relationships

Activities (Preconditions)

What type of activities need to happen to meet the social goal?
How will you voice the user / beneficiary?
Who is upstream or downstream from you?
Do you need to engage them?
What should the outputs be from this work?
What do you need for these activities to be effective?

Stage: Outputs - Short term | Medium term Outcomes

Contributing parts of this stage:

What change do you expect to see as a result of these outputs?
For who? (i.e. Primary beneficiaries, family, community, society, organisations, systems)
How could the change unfold? (i.e. Unpack the layers of change)
Widen the lens – what else could change?

Do you need a feedback loop into activities – how can you mitigate negative unintended consequences?

Good measurements:

Relevant - linked to outcomes

Helpful - internally and externally

Simple - measurement and presentation

Natural - links to the flow of activity to outcome

Certain - design

Understood and accepted

Transparent and well- explained

Founded on evidence

Longer term outcomes (goal setting) - Impact level changes

Contributing parts of this stage:

What impact do you expect to see?

Are you shifting the needle? Are you changing patterns of behaviour?

What social impact can we expect to see as a result of these outcomes?

Whys is this important?

Who benefits?

Who contributed?