



Liaison Committee

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Leader of the House

By email

20 July 2023

Dear Penny,

Thank you for your letter of 28 June about scrutiny of institutions in England with devolved powers. I understand that the Procedure Committee have also written in response to your letter, and I agree with their overall assessment: ultimately it is principally for local institutions to scrutinise any bodies which exercise locally devolved powers. House of Commons Committees have sufficient existing powers to scrutinise the work of local mayors and other devolved bodies where they wish to do so, and they have used these powers to good effect in recent years.

I also endorse the points made by the Procedure Committee about the use of informal sessions and the possibility of establishing regional grand committees. Formal scrutiny, whether locally or within Parliament, provides proper accountability for the institutions being scrutinised as well as ensuring transparency for members of the public who wish to engage with scrutiny proceedings. I am not persuaded that informal scrutiny sessions offer a sufficiently robust approach. In relation to Grand Committees, the Procedure Committee rightly highlights that the use of existing Grand Committees has fallen into abeyance. Local and regional issues are regularly debated in Westminster Hall and I am sure that the Backbench Business Committee would look positively on applications for debates on locally devolved institutions. This may be a more appropriate and more flexible route by which the House could conduct scrutiny of trailblazer deals.

As the Government's thinking in this area develops I would be very happy to consider how Committees might best engage with any future proposals.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Procedure and Levelling Up, Communities and Local Government Committees.

Yours ever


Sir Bernard Jenkin MP
Chair of the Committee