



Liaison Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 5675 Email: liaisoncommittee@parliament.uk

Website: <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/103/liaison-committee-commons>

From Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair

Clive Betts MP

Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons

London SW1A 0AA

22 January 2021

Dear Clive,

I am writing to all Committees with an interest in Common Frameworks to seek your views on the operation of the Government's scrutiny arrangements. Many Committees will only now be embarking on scrutiny of their allocated frameworks, but given the short timetable for scrutiny and implementation I am keen to seek views from colleagues on the process as it unfolds and provide an avenue for raising concerns.

A number of Committees wrote jointly to the Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution in the autumn seeking improvements, particularly on the quality of information provided in summary frameworks. The House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee has also written to Government along similar lines. In its most recent response to that Committee, the Government has committed to improving the quality of information provided in summary frameworks. It has also suggested that additional time for scrutiny of specific frameworks beyond the 21 sitting days set out in the process could be negotiated with the lead Government Department.

In light of these commitments I would be grateful for views from each Committee on the quality of recent summary frameworks; whether Committees have been able to negotiate a more appropriate timetable with Departments and whether there are any further improvements to the process that we might collectively recommend.

The term "common frameworks" is usually taken to refer to what needs to be resolved as a consequence of leaving the EU. We should perhaps consider widening our scope to consider how matters of common interest between the UK Government and Parliament, and the devolved Governments and Parliaments should continue to be discussed and scrutinised. This raises questions about the nature of the Joint Ministerial Committee and how an interparliamentary forum of the UK should scrutinise its work. The government could perhaps learn from what they have agreed in the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. It establishes the Partnership Council and its committees, and provides for the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, which is far more institutional underpinning than we have for our intergovernmental and interparliamentary relations within the UK.

Following responses from Chairs I will ask the Working Group to consider how we might best take action to seek improvements to the scrutiny process on behalf of all Committees involved in Commons Framework scrutiny.



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From Sir Bernard Jenkin MP, Chair

William Wragg is also appearing on behalf of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee at the Lords Common Frameworks Committee in February to give evidence on this issue and I understand that he would be willing to raise concerns from Commons colleagues. This provides a further opportunity to highlight challenges faced by Committees in scrutinising frameworks.

I would be grateful for a response by Thursday 3 February. I am copying this letter to Baroness Andrews, Chair of the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee.

Yours ever

Sir Bernard Jenkin MP

Chair of the Committee

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Sir Bernard Jenkin MP
Chair, Liaison Committee
House of Commons
London
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28 January 2021

Dear Sir Bernard,

Common Frameworks

Thank you for your letter of 22 January seeking views on the operation of the scrutiny arrangements for common frameworks. We completed the scrutiny of the one common framework to be submitted to us in December. This proved to be uncontentious and the timeframe for scrutiny was adequate in the circumstances.

We noted one concern in our response to the Government about the lack of planned external scrutiny during any review of the procedure for common frameworks. We recommended that the government commit to seeking evidence from stakeholders, including non-industry stakeholders, during the review process and that the report from the review be published and laid before the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures.

Thank you for the chance to comment. I am copying this letter to Baroness Andrews, Chair of the House of Lords Common Frameworks Scrutiny Committee.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts'.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee