

Parliamentary Bureau – Impacts of Ministerial changes on Portfolio Questions Rota

Introduction

1. Following the Parliament's approval of ministerial appointments and the Government's publication of the new [Cabinet Secretary and Ministerial portfolios](#), the Bureau is invited to consider how to revise the cycle for Portfolio Questions. Should there be any impacts on committee remits, a further paper will be brought to a future meeting.

Bureau consideration

2. Portfolio Questions are currently scheduled on a 3-weekly cycle. The current cycle is the following:

	Portfolio 1 (Weds)	Portfolio 2 (Weds)	Portfolio 3 (Thurs)
20 May	1. Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy	2. Finance, Deputy First Minister Responsibilities and Parliamentary Business	3. Transport
27 May	4. Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands	5. NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care	6. Social Justice
3 June	7. Constitution, External Affairs and Culture	8. Justice and Home Affairs	9. Education and Skills
10 June	1. Wellbeing Economy, Net Zero and Energy	2. Finance, Deputy First Minister Responsibilities and Parliamentary Business	3. Transport
17 June	4. Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands	5. NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care	6. Social Justice
24 June	7. Constitution, External Affairs and Culture8.	8. Justice and Home Affairs	9. Education and Skills

3. Portfolio Questions in the weeks commencing 20 May and 27 May have been scheduled based on the previous Cabinet Secretary portfolios. Business Managers should note that due to the lead-in time for Portfolio Questions (random draw of names and the deadline for lodging questions), the first week from which any new cycle could take place following the Bureau's decision would be the week beginning 3 June.

4. There are now ten Cabinet Secretary roles and the Minister for Parliamentary Business reports directly to the First Minister, rather than the Deputy First Minister.
5. Business Managers are invited to consider whether Parliamentary Business should continue to be grouped with Finance or whether it should now be grouped with another Portfolio. A key factor to take into account in this respect is balanced between the size of different Portfolios. Other options for the grouping include:
 - Adding it to Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic
 - Adding it to one of the other Portfolios such as Constitution, External Affairs and Culture; or Transport.
6. In addition to the Deputy First Minister being Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic, there have been some other changes to Cabinet Secretary responsibilities. Notably, Wellbeing Economy is no longer included with Net Zero and Energy in Ms McAllan’s Cabinet Secretary role, and the former Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance is now the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government.
7. In order to accommodate the additional Cabinet Secretary role in the Portfolio Questions cycle, there are two main options which are set out below for Business Managers to consider.

Option 1 – increasing the number of Portfolio Question Time sessions to ten

8. One option would be for an additional Portfolio Question Time Session to be added to the cycle thereby creating a total of ten sessions, with the new Portfolio being inserted for the first Portfolio Question Time Session the week commencing 10 June. The titles of each Portfolio session would also be changed to reflect each Cabinet Secretary’s title. This addition of a Portfolio session would result in a ten-week cycle and, for each Portfolio, there would be a four-week gap once, and a three-week gap twice (in terms of how frequently each would be taken).
9. Each Portfolio across that cycle would also occur once in the first Wednesday slot, once in the second Wednesday slot and once in the Thursday slot. This would be less predictable for diary planning. The table below provides an illustration of the potential ten-week cycle using the new Cabinet Secretary titles.

	Portfolio 1 (Weds)	Portfolio 2 (Weds)	Portfolio 3 (Thurs)
3 June	1. Constitution, External Affairs and Culture	2. Justice and Home Affairs	3. Education and Skills

10 June	4. Deputy First Minister responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic	5. Net Zero and Energy	6. Finance and Local Government
17 June	7. Transport	8. Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands	9. NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care
24 June	10 Social Justice	1. Constitution, External Affairs and Culture	2. Justice and Home Affairs
2 September	3. Education and Skills	4. Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic	5. Net Zero and Energy
9 September	6. Finance and Local Government	7. Transport	8. Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands
16 September	9. NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care	10. Social Justice	1. Constitution, External Affairs and Culture
23 September	2. Justice and Home Affairs	3. Education and Skills	4. Deputy First Minister Responsibilities, Economy and Gaelic
30 September	5. Net Zero and Energy	6. Finance and Local Government	7. Transport
7 October	8. Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands	9. NHS Recovery, Health and Social Care	10. Social Justice

Option 2 – grouping Portfolios to maintain a three-week cycle

10. A second option would be for Business Managers to consider how two Portfolios could be grouped to maintain a three-week cycle, with one question session covering two Cabinet Secretary's portfolios. In considering any grouping of Portfolios, Business Managers should bear in mind any decision they take on the

combining Parliamentary Business with one of the Portfolios. There are a number of possible ways of grouping two Portfolios together, including:

- Net Zero and Energy and Transport;
- Finance, Local Government and Transport; or
- Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and Transport (NB The Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity reports to both Cabinet Secretaries)

Recommendation

11. Business Managers are invited to discuss and agree how the Portfolio Question Time cycle be revised commencing from the week beginning 3 June.

Parliamentary Business Team
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