I write regarding the above and to register my thoughts on the proposed changes to parliamentary procedures which are as follows:

1. Chamber Business: I suggest one week of plenary sessions in the chamber, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday mornings, with First Ministers Questions at the normal time and an extended Scottish Parliamentary Question Time.

2. Committee Business: the week following Chamber business would then be dedicated to committee business all through Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning with First Ministers Questions at the normal time and an extended Scottish Parliamentary Question time.

This would afford committees:
   a) The time to undertake inquiries
   b) To have thorough examination of legislation at Stages 1 and 2
   c) More time to undertake and make post-legislative scrutiny a priority. At present committees struggle to find time to scrutinise both policy and legislation and to take evidence from witnesses within the allotted timescale.

3. The Conveners’ Group: In previous sessions this has been a good forum for political discussion as it was recognised as being representative of the various parliamentary parties and in the last session it proved to be an excellent vehicle to facilitate a productive meeting with the UK Secretary of State.

However, with the advent of a majority government, which no one anticipated, the composition of the Conveners’ Group has changed. The vast majority of conveners (9 out of 14) are from the SNP with only 4 Labour and 1 Conservative and no representation from the Scottish Liberal Democrats on the Conveners’ Group. Consequently the Conveners’ Group is not as representative as it was and therefore, I consider there must some recognition of this fact and an attempt to redress the balance of representation if the Conveners’ Group is to be used as intended

I hope the above suggestions are helpful.
Margaret Mitchell MSP
9 August 2011