Thank you for your letter of 15 September regarding your Committee’s inquiry into the reform of parliamentary business. I am replying in my capacity as Chair of the SPCB.

As you know, the Corporate Body is responsible for providing the property, staff and services required for the Parliament’s purposes. It therefore welcomes the opportunity to comment on the potential resource implications of supporting a different sitting pattern.

This response addresses specifically the option that the Chamber meets on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons with committees in the morning. It is assumed that the overall sitting times would not increase significantly but later sittings to accommodate Stage 3 bill proceedings would be scheduled as was the case towards the end of session 3.

Having analysed all of our parliamentary business support services which range from clerks, researchers, broadcasting and the Official Report to security, media office and BIT, we can confirm that any change within the scope proposed could be supported from within existing staff resources. The overall effect should be cost neutral, though we would monitor the impact in practice over time.

Please let me know if the SPCB could be of further assistance. We would be particularly interested in providing additional input if your committee proposed any significant change to the length of sitting times.

TRICIA MARWICK MSP
PRESIDING OFFICER
15 OCTOBER 2011