

## Agenda – Finance Committee

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Meeting Venue: Hybrid – Committee room 3, Senedd and video conference via Zoom	For further information contact: <b>Owain Roberts</b> Committee Clerk 0300 200 6388 <a href="mailto:SeneddFinance@senedd.wales">SeneddFinance@senedd.wales</a>
Meeting date: 24 April 2024	
Meeting time: 09.30	

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### Private pre-meeting / Registration

(09.00–09.30)

#### 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

#### 2 Paper(s) to note

(09.30)

(Pages 1 – 11)

Minutes of the meetings held on 22 February, 29 February, 6 March and 13 March.

##### 2.1 PTN 1 – Letter from the Minister for Finance and Local Government: Additional information following the evidence session on the second supplementary budget 2023–24 – 18 March 2024

(Pages 12 – 13)

##### 2.2 PTN 2 – Letter from the Minister for Finance and Local Government: Finance: Interministerial Standing Committee Meeting – 19 March 2024

(Pages 14 – 15)

##### 2.3 PTN 3 – Letter from the Senedd Commission: Further information on recommendations made in the Finance Committee's report on the Scrutiny of the Commission's Draft Budget 2024–25 – 19 March 2024

(Pages 16 – 32)

##### 2.4 PTN 4 – Letter from the Senedd Commission: Response to recommendations made in the Committee's report on the Financial Implications of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill – 20 March 2024

(Pages 33 – 35)



- 2.5 PTN 5 – Letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee to the Minister for Climate Change: Welsh Government’s Legislative Consent Memoranda on the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill – 19 Mar 2024**  
(Pages 36 – 37)
- 2.6 PTN 6 – Letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee: Welsh Government’s Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters (Reform) Bill – 19 March 2024**  
(Page 38)
- 2.7 PTN 7 – Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning: Welsh Government’s Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters (Reform) Bill – 8 April 2024**  
(Pages 39 – 40)
- 2.8 PTN 8 – Joint letter from the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, and the Finance Committee: Welsh Tax Acts etc. (Power to Modify Act) 2022: Section 6 (Review of operation and effect of this Act) – 19 March 2024**  
(Page 41)
- 2.9 PTN 9 – Letter from Philip Rycroft: Additional information on Fiscal Intergovernmental Relations – 11 April 2024**  
(Pages 42 – 44)
- 2.10 PTN 10 – Welsh Government response to the Finance Committee's report recommendations on the Financial implications of the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill – 11 April 2024**  
(Pages 45 – 49)
- 2.11 PTN 11 – Response from the Member in Charge to the Finance Committee's report recommendations on the Financial implications of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – 15 April 2024**  
(Pages 50 – 58)
- 3 Fiscal Intergovernmental Relations: Evidence session 2**  
(09.30–10.30) (Pages 59 – 70)  
Gareth Davies, Comptroller and Auditor General, National Audit Office  
Lee Summerfield, Director of Investigations, National Audit Office

**Supporting documents:**

[Investigation into devolved funding](#) (2019) – National Audit Office report  
Senedd Research Brief

**Break**

(10.30–10.45)

**4 Financial implications of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill: Evidence session**

(10.45–11.15)

(Pages 71 – 98)

Jane Hutt MS, Chief Whip & Trefnydd, Welsh Government  
Will Whiteley, Deputy Director, Senedd Reform Division

**Supporting documents:**

[The Senedd Cymru \(Electoral Candidate Lists\) Bill](#)

[Explanatory Memorandum](#)

FIN(6)–09–24 P1 – Letter from the Llywydd to the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee – 15 March 2024

FIN(6)–09–24 P2 – Letter from the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee to the Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd – 22 March 2024

FIN(6)–09–24 P3 – Letter from the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee to the Llywydd – 22 March 2024

FIN(6)–09–24 P4 – Letter from the Llywydd – 16 April 2024

FIN(6)–09–24 P5 – Letter from the Llywydd to the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee – 15 April 2024

Senedd Research Brief

**5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting**

(11.15)

- 6 Financial implications of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill: Consideration of evidence**  
(11.15–11.25)
- 7 Fiscal Intergovernmental Relations: Consideration of evidence**  
(11.25–11.30)
- 8 Wales Audit Office Board Membership**  
(11.30–12.00) (Pages 99 – 114)
- Supporting documents:**
- FIN(6)–09–24 P6 – Cover paper
  - FIN(6)–09–24 P7 – Letter to the First Minister
  - FIN(6)–09–24 P8 – Letter to the Auditor General for Wales
  - FIN(6)–09–24 P9 – Letter to the Chair of the Wales Audit Office
  - FIN(6)–09–24 P10 – Legal Services note
- 9 Motion to instruct the Finance Committee relating to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**  
(12.00–12.15) (Pages 115 – 120)
- Supporting documents:**
- FIN(6)–09–24 P11 – Cover paper
  - FIN(6)–09–24 P12 – Letter from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – 15 April 2024
- 10 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26:**
- Approach to engagement**  
(12.15–12.30) (Pages 121 – 126)
- Supporting documents:**
- FIN(6)–09–24 P13 – Approach to engagement

## Concise Minutes – Finance Committee

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Meeting Venue: **Hybrid – Committee room 4 Ty Hywel and video conference via Zoom**

This meeting can be viewed on [Senedd TV](http://senedd.tv) at:  
<http://senedd.tv/en/13733>

Meeting date: Wednesday, 13 March 2024

Meeting time: 09.30 – 10.58

## Hybrid

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### Attendance

Category	Names
Members of the Senedd:	Peredur Owen Griffiths MS (Chair) Peter Fox MS Mike Hedges MS Rhianon Passmore MS
Witnesses:	Philip Rycroft, Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales
Committee Staff:	Owain Roberts (Clerk) Leanne Hatcher (Second Clerk) Cerian Jones (Second Clerk) Mike Lewis (Deputy Clerk) Christian Tipples (Researcher) Owen Holzinger (Researcher) Martin Jennings (Researcher)



## **Registration**

### **Private Pre-meeting**

#### **1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting of the Finance Committee.

#### **2 Paper(s) to note**

2.1 The papers were noted.

2.1 PTN 1 – Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2024–25: Welsh Government's response to the Finance Committee's report – 1 March 2024

2.2 PTN 2 – Letter from the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution: Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill – 4 March 2024

2.3 PTN 3 – Letter from Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution: Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement – Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee – 5 March 2024

2.4 PTN 4 – Letter from the Minister for Finance and Local Government: Welsh Tax Acts etc. (Power to Modify) Act 2022 – 6 March 2024

#### **3 Fiscal Intergovernmental Relations: Evidence session 1**

3.1 The Committee took evidence on its inquiry into Fiscal Intergovernmental Relations from Philip Rycroft, Member of the Independent Commission on the Constitutional Future of Wales.

#### **4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting**

4.1 The motion was agreed.

## **5 Fiscal Intergovernmental Relations: Consideration of evidence**

5.1 The Committee considered the evidence received.

5.2 The Committee agreed to write to Philip Rycroft with some additional questions regarding fiscal intergovernmental relations.

## **6 Financial implications of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill: Consideration of draft report**

6.1 The Committee considered its draft report on the Financial implications of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill and agreed it with minor changes.

## **7 Financial implications of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) (Wales) Bill**

7.1 The Committee considered the paper on the Financial implications of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) (Wales) Bill.

## **8 Consideration of Forward Work Programme**

8.1 The Committee considered the Forward Work Programme.

## **9 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26: Approach to engagement**

9.1 The Committee considered the paper on the approach to engagement in relation to scrutiny of the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2025–26.

# Concise Minutes – Finance Committee

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Meeting Venue: Hybrid – Committee  
room 3, Senedd and video conference  
via Zoom

Meeting date: Wednesday, 6 March 2024

Meeting time: 09.30 – 10.33

## Hybrid, Private

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### Attendance

Category	Names
Members of the Senedd:	Peredur Owen Griffiths MS (Chair) Peter Fox MS Mike Hedges MS
Witnesses:	Ed Williams, Director of Senedd Resources, Senedd Commission Nicholas Morgan, Senedd Commission Andrew Gibson, Avison Young
Committee Staff:	Owain Roberts (Clerk) Leanne Hatcher (Second Clerk) Mike Lewis (Deputy Clerk) Martin Jennings (Researcher) Owen Holzinger (Researcher) Ben Harris (Legal Adviser)





At its meeting on 29 February 2024, the Committee agreed a motion under Standing Order 17.42(ix) to exclude the public from today's meeting.

## Registration

### **1 Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting of the Finance Committee.

1.2 Apologies were received from Rhianon Passmore MS.

### **2 Cardiff Bay 2032 – Senedd Commission Technical Briefing**

2.1 The Committee received a technical briefing on Cardiff Bay 2032 from the Senedd Commission.

### **3 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Second Supplementary Budget 2023–24: Consideration of draft report**

3.1 The Committee considered its draft report on the Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Second Supplementary Budget 2023–24 and agreed it with minor changes.

### **4 Financial implications of the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill: Consideration of draft report**

4.1 The Committee considered its draft report on the Financial implications of the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill and agreed it with minor changes.

### **5 The Landfill Disposals Tax (Tax Rates) (Amendment) and Tax Collection and Management (Wales) Act 2016 (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2024**

5.1 The Committee considered the Legal Services note in relation to the Landfill Disposals Tax (Tax Rates) (Amendment) and Tax Collection and Management (Wales)

Act 2016 (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2024 and agreed to take no further action.

# Concise Minutes – Finance Committee

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Meeting Venue: Hybrid – Committee room 4 Ty Hywel and video conference via Zoom

This meeting can be viewed on [Senedd TV](http://senedd.tv/en/13701) at: <http://senedd.tv/en/13701>

Meeting date: Thursday, 29 February 2024

Meeting time: 09.30 – 10.55

## Hybrid

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### Attendance

Category	Names
Members of the Senedd:	Peredur Owen Griffiths MS (Chair) Peter Fox MS Mike Hedges MS Rhianon Passmore MS
Witnesses:	Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Cabinet Office (Welsh Minister) Emma Watkins, Welsh Government Sharon Bounds, Welsh Government
Committee Staff:	Owain Roberts (Clerk) Mike Lewis (Deputy Clerk) Martin Jennings (Researcher)



## **Registration**

### **Private pre-meeting**

#### **1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting of the Finance Committee.

#### **2 Paper(s) to note**

2.1 The papers were noted.

2.1 PTN 1 – Letter from the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution: Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill – 21 February 2024

2.2 PTN 2 – Letter from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee: Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters (Reform) Bill – 23 February 2024

2.3 PTN 3 – Letter from Sam Rowlands MS: Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill – 19 February 2024

2.4 PTN 4 – Letter from the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution: Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement: Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee – 26 February 2024

#### **3 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Second Supplementary Budget 2023–24**

3.1 The Committee took evidence on Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Second Supplementary Budget 2023–24 from Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Local Government; Emma Watkins, Deputy Director, Budget and Government Business; and Sharon Bounds, Deputy Director, Financial Controls

3.2 The Minister agreed to provide the following:

- A note on areas of the health and social services MEG that are currently underspending.
- A note on the level of subsidy per passenger in relation to trains in Wales.

#### **4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting and the meeting on 6 March**

4.1 The motion was agreed.

#### **5 Scrutiny of the Welsh Government Second Supplementary Budget 2023–24: Consideration of evidence**

5.1 The Committee considered the evidence received.

# Concise Minutes – Finance Committee

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Meeting Venue: **Hybrid – Committee room 3, Senedd and video conference via Zoom**

Meeting date: Thursday, 22 February 2024

Meeting time: 09.35 – 11.03

This meeting can be viewed on [Senedd TV](#) at:

<http://senedd.tv/en/14004>

## Hybrid

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### Attendance

Category	Names
Members of the Senedd:	Peredur Owen Griffiths MS (Chair) Peter Fox MS Mike Hedges MS Rhianon Passmore MS
Witnesses:	Sam Rowlands MS Dr Dave Harvey, Office of Sam Rowlands MS Michael Dauncey, Research Service Christian Tipples, Research Service
Committee Staff:	Owain Roberts (Clerk) Mike Lewis (Deputy Clerk) Owen Holzinger (Researcher)



## **Registration**

### **Private pre-meeting**

#### **1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting of the Finance Committee.

#### **2 Papers to note**

2.1 The papers were noted.

2.1 **PTN 1 – Letter from the Deputy Minister for Social Services: Additional information regarding pooled budgets – 6 February 2024**

2.2 **PTN 2 – Letter from the Minister for Finance and Local Government – Finance: Interministerial Standing Committee Meeting held on 25 January – 7 February 2024**

2.3 **PTN 3 – Letter from the Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution: Inter-Institutional Relations Agreement: Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee – 16 February 2024**

#### **3 Financial Implications of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill: Evidence session**

3.1 The Committee took evidence on the Financial Implications of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill from Sam Rowlands MS, Member in Charge; Dr Dave Harvey, Member of the Senedd Support Staff; Christian Tipples, Senedd Research Service; and Michael Dauncey, Senedd Research Service.

#### **4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 (ix) to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this meeting**

4.1 The motion was agreed.

## **5 Financial implications of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill: Consideration of evidence**

5.1 The Committee considered the evidence received.

## **6 Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum: Update**

6.1 The Committee considered the paper on the Interparliamentary Finance Committee Forum.





Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Finance Committee  
Senedd  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

18 March 2024

Dear Peredur

During scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Second Supplementary Budget 2023-24 at the Finance Committee on 29 February, I agreed to follow up with further information on a couple of points raised during discussions.

### Health and Social Services MEG

As set out in our second Supplementary Budget and the previous statement on reprioritisation and accompanying addendum to the Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment, we made a number of tough choices this year to reduce expenditure across the Health and Social Services budget to redirect to supporting front line services.

In addition to those choices the budget shows increased income from transfers related to underspends on the UK Health Security Agency Four Nations fund.

### Costs of subsidy per passenger on trains in Wales

The value for subsidy per passenger in Wales will vary by line or route, the operator of the service and whether or not funding for infrastructure is taken into account. We continue to work with Transport for Wales to make savings and to minimise the gap between their income and costs, while also ensuring rail services remain affordable for passengers.

We have invested significantly more funding into rail than under the previous system. The benefits of this approach are the £800m investment in brand new trains across the Wales and Borders area, the £1bn transformation of the Core Valley Lines and additional services such as the recently launched Ebbw Vale to Newport services.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay  
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[Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru](mailto:Gohebiaeth.Rebecca.Evans@llyw.cymru)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

We took the decision to protect essential rail services by providing £125m to Transport for Wales in the supplementary budget. Without this funding Transport for Wales would not have been able to maintain the continued operation of all of their rail services and jobs would have been at risk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**

Y Gweinidog Cyllid a Llywodraeth Leol  
Minister for Finance and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair, Finance Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

19 March 2024

Dear Peredur,

Further to my recent letter advising you of the extraordinary virtual meeting of the Finance: Interministerial Standing Committee (F:ISC) on 14 March, I would like to briefly report on the discussions. A communique will also be published shortly: [Communiqués from the Finance: Interministerial Standing Committee - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/communique/2024/03/14/finance-interministerial-standing-committee)

Joining me in attendance were Rt Hon Laura Trott MBE MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Shona Robison MSP, Deputy First Minister of Scotland and Cabinet Secretary for Finance, and Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA, Minister of Finance for Northern Ireland.

During our discussions on the UK Budget, I raised the implications for Wales, in particular highlighting my concerns over the lack of additional funding for public services. I emphasised the need for early certainty of any additional funding in-year in 2024-25, particularly in relation to public sector pay. We also discussed the importance of clarity on the UK Government's plans for a spending review to support forward planning of our budget.

As with prior meetings of the F:ISC, I reiterated the case for additional budgetary flexibility, pointing to our experience of the latest UK Supplementary Estimates process. I secured a commitment for officials to develop proposals for improving in-year funding processes including consideration of capital to resource switches, to be discussed during a future F:ISC meeting.

Finally, I noted that the Northern Ireland Executive would receive funding through the Shared Prosperity and Levelling Up Funds to administer directly. I reiterated that our position remains that under our devolution settlement, funds for regional investment should be returned to the Welsh Government to deliver.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:  
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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The next meeting will take place in June.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**

Y Gweinidog Cyllid a Llywodraeth Leol

Minister for Finance and Local Government

Peredur Owen Griffiths AS  
Chair of Finance Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Tŷ Hywel  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1SN

19 March 2024

Dear Peredur

I am writing to provide you with the information and updates to the following recommendations as part of the follow up to the Committee's Scrutiny Report of the Commission's Draft Budget 2024-25 as detailed below. These were agreed to be provided to the Committee by the end of this financial year.

- **Recommendation 3** – Report outlining potential impact of 2023-24 savings impact on the financial year 2024-25 (Annex 1)
- **Recommendation 7** – Further information on the Bay 32 project. A technical briefing took place on 6 March for the Committee Members.
- **Recommendation 8** – Schedule of Projects to be funded through the Project Fund in 2024-25 (Annex 2).
- **Recommendation 11** - Report detailing the Engagement Plans for the forthcoming financial year (Annex 3)

**Recommendation 6** – staff survey information including staff wellbeing will be provided once the current open survey has been concluded and reported on. We anticipate at this point that this information will be available following the June Commission meeting to the Committee.

The Commission confirms that the responses to the remaining recommendations will be provided in line with the letter dated 9 November 2023 sent to the Committee.

The Commission continues to be committed to openness and transparency with the Finance Committee. If you need further information or wish to clarify any of the information provided, please let me know.



**Senedd Cymru**  
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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink. The name 'Ken' is written in a cursive style. To its right is a stylized monogram consisting of two overlapping loops, resembling the letters 'KS'.

Ken Skates MS

cc Manon Antoniazzi

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English

# Report of 2023-24 Savings potential impact on 2024-25 Financial Year

## **Purpose of the report**

This report sets out the update to the Finance Committee on the impact that any savings made in 2023-24 will continue to have on services and planned projects in 2024-25 as set out in Recommendation 3 of the Report on Scrutiny of the Draft Commission Budget for 2024-25. The recommendation is set out below.

***“Recommendation 3** The Committee recommends that the Commission provides an update on the impact that any savings made in 2023-24 will continue to have on its services and any planned projects for 2024-25, by the end of the 2023-24 financial year.”*

## **Background**

In 2023-24 the Commission offered £435,000 savings in the first Supplementary Budget Request which formed part of the budget approved in November 2023. In September of 2023, the Commission in response to the Cost of Living request from the TUS undertook further savings programme totalling £794,000 to afford the payment to all eligible staff Grade 6 and below.

In total the savings that were required to be delivered in 2023-24 is £1.229 million in year. These savings were made across a variety of budget lines including the pausing and use of target start dates in recruitment to vacancies.

## **First Supplementary Budget Request**

The First supplementary budget request in June 2023 returned £435,000 to the Welsh Consolidated Fund. The savings were made in the three areas set out below.

- Utilities and facility management costs of £208,000.
- ICT costs of £107,000 and
- General reduction in the Project Fund of £120,000.

## **Cost of Living savings**

In September 2023, the Commission undertook a programme of initial budgetary savings in order to fund the estimated cost of living request of £824,000. This was funded through a broad mix of budgetary reductions on non-staff discretionary spend along with a programme

of recruitment management which included pausing recruitment for some roles and managing recruitment for other roles through targeted start dates.

The final cost of the payment was £794,000 and funds were generated as follows:

- Staff savings through managed recruitment - £588,000
- Non staff savings - £206,000.

Total savings split between staff and non-staff costs that was achieved in 2023-24 is set out in table 1 below.

Table 1

Category of Savings	£
Staff	588,000
Non Staff	641,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,229,000</b>

## 2024-25 Continued Impact

Overall, the continued savings impact of savings made in 2023-24 is £491,500 into 2024-25 split £200,000 staff savings and £291,000 non staff savings. The table below sets out the summary of continued impact of savings into 2024-25.

	1st Supp £	COL Staff £	COL Non Staff £	Total £
Permanent on going reduction with managed impact mitigation	-	200,000	37,250	<b>237,250</b>
Permanent ongoing reduction with no impact	232,000		15,250	<b>247,250</b>
One off in year savings not continued	203,000	388,000	146,500	<b>737,500</b>
Savings identified to continue through service planning			7,000	<b>7,000</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>435,000</b>	<b>588,000</b>	<b>206,000</b>	<b>1,229,000</b>



Non Staff budgetary savings that will continue into 2024-25 is £59,500 across a range of budget lines. Of the original 30 budget lines impacted during 2023-24, 14 have reverted to the original budget level for 2024-25; 12 budget lines have continued to be reduced based on analysis of historical expenditure and long term cost base changes from hybrid working, 2 budget line reductions are as a result of contract renegotiation, while the remaining 2 budget lines have been reduced due to changes in delivery identified through the service planning process for 2024-25.

The continuation of saving plans is due to a variety of reasons:

- Service planning for 2024-25 has informed a reduced budgetary requirement.
- Historical analysis of expenditure data demonstrated a reduced budgetary requirement.
- Hybrid working is delivering long-term change to some budget cost bases.
- Contract renegotiated have delivered permanent reductions to cost.
- Changes in ways of working because of the need to make savings have delivered positive benefits which are being taken forward
- There has also been a continued need to deliver the savings to meet the target savings for 2024-25 at minimum service impact.

### **Permanent ongoing savings reduction with managed impact to service or capacity**

A total of £237,250 budget savings in 2023-24 will continue into 2024-25 which will require the reductions to be managed; staff savings of £200,000 through target recruitment dates and non-staff budget cost savings of £37,250.

Of this, the budgets with continued savings into 2024-25 which may have Member impact are set out below.

- Member training
- Publications and Research
- Committee refreshments
- Expert witnesses and Advisors.

Member training has continued to be reduced in 2024-25 but with a smaller reduction than in 2023-24 following the completion of service planning for 24-25 delivery and historical expenditure analysis which has informed an overall reduction of £30,000 for next year (annual budget of £115,000 remaining). Analysis demonstrated that there should be limited impact in the reduction, and Commissioners have agreed a set of principles to guide the day to day

prioritisation of L&D provision for Members and their staff, as the basis of the planned programme of training and for consideration of all L&D requests received. The previous budget has been continuously underspent each year by this amount over an extended period analysed (7 years) and this, along with the improved value for money that is achievable through hybrid delivery and application of the principles enables a reduction in the budget to be continued. Reduction in 2023-24 was £55,000.

There will also be a continued reduction in the Library budget of £5,000 (annual budget of £112,000 remaining). Reduction in 2023-24 was £10,000. As with Member training, the reduction has been informed by historical expenditure analysis. The budget will be closely managed by continuing to reduce acquisitions of new print materials and prioritising certain resources over others. Member demand for print materials and digital resources is difficult to forecast and each request will be carefully assessed.

Refreshments for Committee meetings is also continuing with a reduction in budget for 2024-25 by £2,250. Again, this is based on historical analysis of expenditure in this area which is demonstrating that the budget is not required at the current level. Hybrid meetings, remote participation of experts and those providing evidence is also delivering less expenditure in this area.

Expert witness and advisors budget will also have a reduction of £5,000 in 2024/5 based on historical expenditure. The savings have been primarily achieved as more experts and witnesses are appearing remotely, improving efficiency of use of time and reducing expenditure on travel and subsistence.

These budgets are demand led, and this has again been considered as part of the analysis work and the setting of an appropriate budget for 2024-25 with sufficient capacity.

Potential staff savings of £200,000 have been identified for 2024-25 as part of the review of the impact of the establishment of recruitment management through targeted start dates which was introduced in September 2023. Hiring managers and the recruitment team both cited improved workload management, better recruitment process and the ability to prepare for the new employee on boarding as all positive benefits derived from the need to deliver staff costs savings.

Analysis of length of time taken to recruit external and internal positions over a two year period has indicated that the average time period is seven months and ten weeks, respectively. Modelling of average recruitment targets of six and three months respectively identified additional savings that will materialise as a result of recruitment management and a further positive benefit. As a result, target recruitment is being taken forward into 2024-25 as part of the workforce planning process.

## **Permanent budget savings with no impact to service or capacity**

A total of £247,250 of savings will continue into 2024-25 which will deliver savings to the budget without impact to service or capacity. Set out below are some of the key budgets contributing to those savings which have been in the main delivered through either contract renegotiation or changes to ways of working.

ICT contract savings of £107,000 delivered in 2023-24 as a result of successful renegotiations and improved contract management are also being rolled forward into a longer term reduction in the ICT cost base. Savings are set out below and do not impact service or capacity of the organisation.

- Reduction in budget following tender for broadcast services £22,000
- Reduction in software licencing through strong contract management and efficient use of licences £35,000
- Efficient use of Cloud and infrastructure management £35,000
- Successful renegotiation of Microsoft licence contracts £15,000

Estate facility management savings of £208,000 are on target to be delivered during 2023-24 through a mix of the following;

- No uplift on rates in 2023-24 (£29,000)
- Savings on electricity and gas usage (£127,700)
- Postage and carriage (£15,000)
- Fuel for wood chip boiler (£5,000)
- Photocopying through reduced contract costs and usage (£45,000)
- Water through reduced usage (£10,000)

Some of these savings were used to offset against estate facility cost increases. Approximately £125,000 of these savings will continue in 2024-25 such as postage, generator fuel, photocopying, water reduction, and to a lesser extent gas and electricity savings. Approximately £83,000 are one off savings which will not be repeated in 2024-25.

## **Savings identified to continue through service planning for 2024-25**

A total of £7,000 was identified through service planning of existing 2023-24 savings which will continue in 2024-25 due to changes in delivery for the year reducing cost compared to the previous year.

## **One-off budget savings not carried forward into 2024-25**

Total one off savings in 2023-24 that will not be carried forward into 2024-25 is £737,500 made up of staff savings of £388,000 and non-staff savings of £349,500 across 14 budgetary lines including Member International Engagement, Events, and Engagement and Outreach. All these budgetary lines have reverted to the previous level of budget.

The Project Fund reduction of £120,000 at the start of the financial year impacted the amount of funds available to allocate to projects later in the year. The result of this is that projects such as flagpoles, CCTV replacement, maintenance and sustainability projects were delayed or reduced. To note, the Executive Board has already taken the decision to allocate any remaining funds available to maintenance projects in quarter 4 of the 2023-24 financial year and to protect the 2024-25 Project Fund budget of £1.5 million in full from any reductions due to the level of key projects required to be delivered in next year.

Particular consideration has also been given to ringfencing maintenance funds for 2024-25 to ensure that the estate continues to be maintained to the necessary standards.

## Senedd Commission Project Fund Schedule 2024-25

The table below sets out the Commission's project Portfolio for 2024-25.

To manage the risk of underspend the Portfolio is over-programmed, i.e. not all projects in the table below are expected to be delivered in 2024-25. Over-programming allows us to manage a portfolio of projects at varying stages development and delivery. Pre-approved projects are able to take the place of projects which may have to pause or stop during the year and or absorb another project's underspend due to efficient delivery.

All the projects have been prioritised and ranked by the Portfolio Management Group (PMG) who recommended the Portfolio to Executive Board for approval. Scoring is based on priorities, which in 2024-25 has been set by Executive Board as delivering digital and estate lifecycle maintenance and replacement activity, along with improving Member experience and service delivery.

The PMG also controls the Portfolio in-year, making further recommendations to Executive Board to ensure the portfolio achieves optimum value for money and benefit delivery, and, that significant projects receive as much resourcing confidence as possible.

The Project Portfolio forecast cost is circa £1.8m. The Commission forecasts £1.3m of resourcing will be initially available for investment with a further £200,000 released later in the year.

Project	Status	Project Type
Bay 2032 project	In-flight	Ways of Working project
Siambur 26 project	In-flight	Senedd Reform related
Ty Hywel 25 project	In-flight	Senedd Reform related
CCTV Lifecycle Replacement and Maintenance Phases 2 and 3	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
External Senedd Website Accessibility Audit	To be started	Compliance
Senedd Archiving project	In-flight	Compliance
Payroll and Pensions system replacement project Phase 1 completion	In-flight	Lifecycle Maintenance

Library Management System renewal	In-flight	Lifecycle Maintenance
Insourcing Commission services scoping project	In-flight	Ways of Working project
Senedd business document management system renewal	In-flight	Lifecycle Maintenance
ICT Infrastructure - Perimeter & Cloud Firewall	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
ICT Infrastructure - User Awareness Training	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Commission Broadcasting Investment Programme Phase 1	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
ICT Infrastructure - Backup System	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Ty Hywel Air Handling Units (AHUs) & Chillers replacement feasibility study	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Estates: Senedd Building Management System (BMS) Feasibility Study Stage 2	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Commission rolling ICT& workstation kit programme 24 to 25	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
ICT Infrastructure - Wireless Network Management platform	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Pierhead Repairs	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Car Park Barrier Upgrade (Barrier Arm) Critical Spares	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
Members Claim System	To be started	Enhancement & Change
LED Replacement - Phase 6	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
AI development project (Microsoft Co-Pilot) Phase 1	To be started	Enhancement & Change
Specialist ICT professional advice & security service Yr 2	To be started	Enhancement & Change
Customer Relationship Management System Project	To be started	Enhancement & Change
Citizen Online Engagement Tool for Commission committees	To be started	Enhancement & Change

Senedd Onsite Counselling service pilot	To be started	Enhancement & Change
Welsh Parliament Building Voice Alarm and Ty Hywel Public Address System	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
ICT Laptop Repair (post Warranty expiration)	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
ICT Infrastructure - MS Windows Autopilot	To be started	Enhancement & Change
Pierhead Hall AV System replacement	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance
AI development project (Microsoft Co-Pilot) Phase 1	To be started	Enhancement & Change
Members Mobile Phone maintenance	To be started	Lifecycle Maintenance

# Engagement Programme 2024-25

February 2024

## **Purpose and summary**

This paper is to note the external Engagement Programme for 2024-25 in line with the objectives of the Commission's Communications and Engagement Strategy for the Sixth Senedd.

## **Background**

Following a restructure in 2022-23 Engagement Services was re-purposed to deliver its objectives under the three pillars of engagement:

- Visitor Experience and Customer Services
- Events
- Engagement Programmes

Our strategy seeks to build trust with our audience and reaffirm the Senedd as the heart of democracy in Wales.

We want the public to be more informed about the role of the Senedd and its place in Welsh democracy. We want them to know where to find information and, where relevant, how to get involved.

Our strategy puts people's lived experiences at its core. It aims to build greater understanding of the work of the Senedd and its impact on people's lives, providing more opportunities for people of all walks of life to get involved with its work and to build greater trust in the Senedd as an inclusive and accessible Parliament for all.



We will achieve this by:

- Increasing awareness of the role the Senedd performs
- Improving understanding of the work of the Senedd
- Increasing participation and involving people in our work

In 2023 teams within Engagement Services achieved the following results:

### Visitor Experience and Customer Services

- We welcomed over **150,000** visitors to the Senedd and Pierhead and delivered **535** between tours in person and online sessions. They were attended by **12,800** participants.
- Over **75%** of those we engaged with told us their level of awareness and understating had increased following the activity. About **70%** of them had never engaged with the Senedd before.
- We handled a total of **14,000** queries between phone calls and emails.

### Events

#### *Venue Bookings, Member Sponsored Events and Major events*

- We answered **14,413** queries. This included **8,272** room booking queries and **5,098** event booking queries.
- We booked approx. **2,580 rooms** on the estate and held **214 Member Sponsored events**
- **764** people attended one of **10 Senedd led events** held on the estate.
- We had conversations with **6159** people at the Urdd Eisteddfod, the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod

### Engagement Programmes (Citizen Engagement Team & Education and Welsh Youth Parliament teams)

#### *Citizen Engagement Team*

- We engaged with **3,140** people and supported **46** Committee inquiries.

- We facilitated a total of **232** focus groups, interviews, advisory groups, and questionnaires and re-purposed engagement data to avoid consultation fatigue (i.e. cost of living crisis).

#### *Education and Welsh Youth Parliament*

- Over **23,000** young people engaged in **577** of our education sessions and **98%** young people reported levels of understanding increasing having participated in an education session.
- We dealt with **760** external enquires for Welsh Youth Parliament (WYP) member involvement in 2023, including participation in numerous media interviews and events. We also supported the completion of two WYP consultations, report launches and Ministerial debates and we delivered the last WYP residential of 2<sup>nd</sup> term.

### **Engagement Activity and Projects**

Across the three pillars of engagement our regular 'business as usual' (BAU) activity includes:

- Welcoming visitors to our estate and providing a customer service (front of house in person, phonenumber and email enquiries)
- Tours (in person and online)
- Exhibitions (member sponsored and Senedd-led)
- Stocking the shop and having products to generate income
- Member Sponsored events
- Room bookings on the estate
- Major events and productions
- Gathering lived experiences for various committee enquiries
- School visits inbound & outbound
- Running Welsh Youth Parliament

In addition to our BAU engagement activity we are also working on a number of internal projects:

- Continuing to deliver against the Communications and Engagement Strategy for the Sixth Senedd – half way review completed
- Customer Relationship Management system, roll out 12 month pilot based on the current ‘proof of concept’ – pending financial approval
- New Online Engagement Tools - pending financial approval
- Roll out approved recommendations from the Review of the Estate
- Finalise the review into School Travel Subsidy
- Review schools engagement (approach to visits and resources)
- Ongoing improvements to data collection and evaluation methods
- Developing and delivering a partnership strategy, working with the Communications Service

We are also involved in work across the two major Senedd programmes:

- Senedd Reform (including preparations for transition to 7<sup>th</sup> Senedd and the Senedd election campaign)
- Ways of Working

## Engagement programme for 2024-25

In addition to the above, the below table provides an outline of our engagement programme for 2024-25.

This is not a final timetable of activity and is subject to change depending on competing priorities and budgetary need. Some of our activity is also dependent on the Commission agreeing a set of principles and approach to marking significant days.

Month	Engagement Activity
April	Welsh Youth Parliament exhibition – sponsored by Llywydd Oriol Feb-May
	Peredur Tapestry – sponsored by Paul Davies MS Curation Corner (Neuadd) March-May

<b>Month</b>	<b>Engagement Activity</b>
	What a Scenery - sponsored by Heledd Fychan MS & Darren Millar MS Pierhead Futures Gallery April - May
<b>May</b>	Urdd Eisteddfod – launch Welsh Youth Parliament election campaign (Your Voice – Community Engagement Summer Show Programme)
	25 year campaign launch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tour scripts updated</li> <li>• new products launched in the shop</li> <li>• Exhibition 1: 25 Years of Devolution - In partnership with the National Library Political archive, Neuadd</li> <li>• Llywydd Panel Event – Senedd @ 25 - event held in partnership with the Wales Governance Centre.</li> </ul>
	Llywydd launching 'Marketplaces' (an outcome from the Review of the Estate)
<b>June</b>	Senedd Reform - Llywydd Lecture Event
	Land and Sea exhibition with Mike Perry (June-September - Oriel & Pierhead Futures Gallery)
	Bookings open for Inbound Education Sessions for the next school year
<b>July</b>	Royal Welsh Show (Your Voice – Community Engagement Summer Show Programme)
<b>August</b>	National Eisteddfod (Your Voice – Community Engagement Summer Show Programme)
<b>September</b>	Exhibition 2: 'Your Voice' - Case study exhibition, Oriel (will run until Nov – part of 25 year campaign)
	Owain Glyndwr portraits Exhibition Sponsored by Russell George MS Senedd Curation Corner (Neuadd)
	Witnessing Wales Exhibition Sponsored by Paul Davies MS Pierhead Futures Gallery September - October
<b>October</b>	Black History Month (activity TBC)
<b>November</b>	Welsh Youth Parliament election
	Remembrance Day (activity TBC)
<b>December</b>	Welsh Youth Parliament members announced

<b>Month</b>	<b>Engagement Activity</b>
	International Day of Persons with Disability (activity TBC)
	Christmas (carols event – details TBC)
<b>January</b>	Holocaust Memorial Day (activity TBC)
<b>February</b>	Welsh Youth Parliament Residential, and selection of priority issues
	LGBT History Month (activity TBC)
<b>March</b>	St David’s Day (activity TBC)
	International Women’s Day (activity TBC)

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair of the Finance Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

20 March 2024

Dear Peredur,

## **Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill**

I am writing in response to the third, seventh, and eleventh recommendations made by the Finance Committee in its report *Financial implications of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill*.

The responses to each recommendation are attached as an annex.

Kind regards,



Elin Jones MS  
Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



## Senedd Commission response to Recommendations 3, 7, and 11

**Recommendation 3:** The Committee recommends that the Senedd Commission continues to present costs relating to Senedd reform as ring-fenced within its annual budget documentation to ensure clarity and transparency.

### **Senedd Commission response:**

I can confirm that the Senedd Commission intends to continue presenting costs relating to Senedd reform as ring-fenced within its annual budget documentation to ensure clarity and transparency.

**Recommendation 7:** The Committee recommends that the Minister, in consultation with the Senedd Commission, undertakes a review of the current configuration of Members' offices in Tŷ Hywel, to include:

- an assessment and cost-benefit analysis on the use of open-plan working; and
- an assessment of the energy use

### **Senedd Commission response:**

The Senedd Commission will be reviewing the current configuration and styles of Members' offices in consultation with Members and their staff to develop requirements and the preferred option to create the additional Members' offices required for the 7th Senedd, if the Senedd (Member and Elections) Bill is agreed.

The current office configuration includes individual Member offices for Members and their support staff as well as one area of office provision which includes shared open plan space for support staff and smaller individual Senedd Member offices.

The Commission will be assessing a wide range of factors including energy use, space efficiency and user workspace needs to develop the preferred option. The Commission has agreed a number of planning assumptions for this project which include that the designs are to be consistent with the existing office designs within Ty Hywel to maintain consistency and to ensure best value for the public purse. The Senedd Commission is also working closely with Welsh Government Estates and Facilities teams to ensure that our respective areas of work are effectively planned and coordinated for this project.



**Recommendation 11:** The Committee recommends that the Minister, in consultation with the Senedd Commission, provides further clarity on the schedule of work that will be undertaken on the Senedd and Tŷ Hywel estates, should the Bill not be agreed.

**Senedd Commission response:**

The Senedd Commission has agreed that no physical adaptation works to the Senedd and Ty Hywel estates in response to Senedd Reform will be carried out in advance of the Bill receiving Royal Assent.





—  
**Legislation, Justice and  
Constitution Committee**

—  
**Welsh Parliament**

Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, CF99 1SN

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Julie James MS

Minister for Climate Change

19 March 2024

Dear Julie

Welsh Government's Legislative Consent Memoranda on the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill

We laid our report 14 March covering the Welsh Government's Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill (the Memorandum) and the Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum (Memorandum No. 2) on the Bill (Memorandum No. 2).

In the Memorandum, on financial implications you state:

*79. This Bill makes significant provision in relation to the devolved Leasehold Valuation Tribunal, which will have an impact on its powers and case load. Work is ongoing to assess the potential impact on the tribunal and to understand what the financial implications of that impact will be.*

*80. The UK Government have prepared an Impact Assessment for the Bill which covers the wider implications of the Bill as a whole, including the impacts on Wales. I understand that this is due to be published shortly.*

In Memorandum No. 2, you repeat paragraph 79 of the Memorandum at paragraph 55 and, in paragraph 56, you provide an update to what is set out in paragraph 80 of the Memorandum by providing a link to the UK Government's impact assessment, which covers the impacts on Wales.

You laid a Supplementary Legislative Consent Memorandum (Memorandum No. 3) on the Bill (Memorandum No. 3) on 4 March 2024. In Memorandum No. 3, at paragraph 56, you repeat that "Work is ongoing to assess the potential impact on the tribunal and to understand what the financial implications of that impact will be."

Please could you let us know:

- i. when you intend to publish your assessment of the potential impact of the Bill on the devolved Leasehold Valuation Tribunal, including the financial implications;
- ii. who assessed the Bill's impacts on Wales in order to provide information for inclusion in the UK Government's impact assessment and (if applicable) if you were consulted;
- iii. how the work being undertaken by the Welsh Government differs from the work undertaken on information for inclusion in the UK Government's impact assessment;
- iv. why the Welsh Government's assessment was not undertaken in time to be included in the UK Government's impact assessment, such that it is not currently available for scrutiny in the legislature where the Bill will be considered and subject to amendment.

I would be grateful to receive a response by 17 April 2024.

I am copying this letter to the Chairs of the Finance Committee and Local Government and Housing Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Huw Irranca-Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Huw Irranca-Davies  
Chair

—  
**Legislation, Justice and  
Constitution Committee**

**Welsh Parliament**  
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0300 200 6565

John Griffiths MS  
Chair of the Local Government and Housing Committee

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair of the Finance Committee

19 March 2024

Dear John and Peredur

**Welsh Government's Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters (Reform) Bill**

As you will be aware, the Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, gave evidence to my Committee on 11 March 2024 in relation to the Welsh Government's Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters (Reform) Bill.

During the course of the session, the Minister provided evidence which relates to matters that are likely to be of interest to your respective Committees, and I am therefore drawing this session to your attention.

Yours sincerely,

*Huw Irranca-Davies*

Huw Irranca-Davies  
Chair

**Julie James AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol, Tai a Chynllunio  
Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair, Finance Committee  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN  
[SeneddFinance@senedd.cymru](mailto:SeneddFinance@senedd.cymru)

8 April 2024

Dear Peredur,

## **Welsh Government's Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters (Reform) Bill**

Thank you for your letter of 7 March, following correspondence from the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee in relation to the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Renters Reform Bill, and potential financial implications.

Any consequential amendments to the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 or Renting Homes (Fees etc) (Wales) Act 2019 that are proposed in the Renters Reform Bill are administrative and are necessary to allow the enforcement provisions in Wales to apply in such circumstances where a landlord or agent is found to be discriminating on the grounds set out in the Renters Reform Act.

The financial costs of enforcement were considered as part of the introduction of those original acts, and consequently we remain of the view that the amendments now proposed to be made to Senedd legislation are not such that a full assessment of the final implications are necessary.

Yours sincerely

**Julie James AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol, Tai a Chynllunio  
Cabinet Secretary for Housing, Local Government and Planning

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Pwyllgor Cyllid / Finance  
Committee  
FIN(6)-09-24 PTN 2

CF99 1SN

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

Rebecca Evans MS  
Minister for Finance and Local Government

19 March 2024

Dear Rebecca

Welsh Tax Acts etc. (Power to Modify Act) 2022: Section 6 (Review of operation and effect of this Act)

Thank you for your letter of 6 March 2024, which was considered at the meeting of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee on 11 March and the Finance Committee on 13 March.

We are grateful to you for offering us the opportunity to receive a presentation from your officials about a review of the operation and effectiveness of the above Act.

Before considering the matter further, we would be grateful to receive details of the terms of reference and timeframes for the review, a copy of any consultation document issued and, if not included in that document (or not available), any information about options for alternative legislative mechanisms under consideration by the Welsh Government.

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Irranca-Davies  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee



Peredur Owen Griffiths  
Chair  
Finance Committee

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair, Finance Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
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11 April 2024  
By email

Dear Chair

## **Finance Committee's Inquiry into Intergovernmental Relations**

Thank you for your letter of 19 March, and for taking my evidence before the Committee on 13 March.

Your letter asked me to respond to three additional questions. I do so below.

### **Question 1:**

Do you feel the dispute resolution mechanism would be more equitable if it incorporated an independent adjudicator for dealing with fiscal issues including those arising from the fiscal framework?

As the committee is aware, the dispute resolution procedure now in place following the review of intergovernmental relations provides for the possibility of both an independent chairperson for stages of the process and for the provision of third-party advice and mediation. If utilised, these provisions should at least ensure that the facts of a dispute are set out clearly and fairly.

However, the outcome of these processes would not be binding on the participants to the dispute; the agreed procedures are clear that the independent chairperson would have no decision-making role. Incorporating an independent adjudicator would not add much to that mix, unless they were to have the power to impose binding decisions on the parties to the dispute. That is unlikely to be acceptable to the UK government at least, if not also to the devolved governments, as an outsourcing of decision-making which takes it beyond the immediate control of democratically elected governments.

While independent adjudication might be superficially attractive as a means to redress the balance of power between the UK and the devolved governments, in my view it would signify an important constitutional innovation which is unlikely to be politically acceptable.

### **Question 2:**

The Commission's final report recommended the Westminster Parliament should legislate for intergovernmental mechanisms to secure a duty of co-operation and parity of esteem between the governments of the UK. How you would envisage this working and how would this ensure parity between all governments?

The Commission made this recommendation but did not develop it in detail. What follows are my views, rather than those of the Commission as a whole.

Part of the problem with the practice of intergovernmental relations since devolution has been ensuring sufficient and sustained attention in Whitehall. Putting intergovernmental mechanisms on a statutory footing would heighten their salience and importance; Whitehall is more likely to pay attention to something that is underpinned by a statutory duty.

To achieve that goal, the form the statute takes does not need to be complex. It could frame a duty of co-operation and an aspiration to parity of esteem, though, in my view, it would be difficult to so define either as to make them justiciable. It could make provision for an independent secretariat with adequate resources. It could establish a broad structure for the various levels of intergovernmental interaction and, critically, impose minimum requirements for frequency of meetings. That could ensure, for example, that the Prime Minister and Heads of Devolved Government Council should meet at a minimum once a year.

This might seem like a modest step forward, but given the recent history of intergovernmental relations, it would represent a big improvement. Statute could ensure that at least the structures were functional.

But structures alone are not enough. By enjoining a duty of cooperation, statute would also serve to remind all governments within the UK that it is in the interests of the people they serve to devote sufficient time and effort to working together to improve the policy outcomes which engage their collective responsibilities.

**Question 3:**

The Commission said a principle should be established that funding changes confirmed after an autumn fiscal event can be managed across financial years. How concerning is the unpredictability in funding for Welsh Government and how effective do you think this principle could be for financial management?

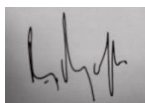
Managing government budgets is complex enough without having to accommodate late changes within year. Without the flexibility to manage the impact of such changes across financial years, there is a real risk of hasty expenditure which does not deliver good value for money. Allowing that flexibility would be straightforward and low risk; it is a simple matter of common sense. It will not of course address concerns about the quantum of funding that the Welsh government receives via the block grant, but it would at least make the job of managing budgets in the interests of the people of Wales somewhat simpler.

I hope these replies are helpful to you.

Yours sincerely



Pwyllgor Cyllid / Finance Committee  
FIN(6)-09-24 PTN 9

A small, square, grayscale image of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Philip Rycroft'.

Philip Rycroft

Rebecca Evans AS/MS  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid, y Cyfansoddiad  
a Swyddfa'r Cabinet  
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Cabinet Office

Agenda Item 2.10



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref  
Ein cyf/Our ref

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair – Finance Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

11 April 2024

Dear Peredur,

### **Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill**

I thank the Finance Committee for considering the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill and the corresponding report of 15 March 2024.

Please find attached below the Government's responses to the report's conclusion and recommendations. I am pleased to have been able to accept all of the recommendations.

I have also attached, for information, copies of the letters I have sent to the chairs of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Local Government and Housing Committee. I am sending a copy of this letter to the chairs of both of those Committees also.

I look forward to continuing to work with Members as the Bill progresses through the Senedd process.

Yours sincerely,

**Rebecca Evans AS/MS**  
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyllid, y Cyfansoddiad a Swyddfa'r Cabinet  
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution & Cabinet Office

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

## Annex

### Responses to the Finance Committee Conclusion and Recommendations in relation to the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill

**Conclusion 1:** The Committee is broadly content with the financial implications of the Bill as set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment, subject to the comments and recommendations in this report.

**NOTED.** I am grateful to the Committee for its considered stage 1 scrutiny, and for concluding that you are broadly content with the financial implications of the Bill.

**Recommendation 1:** The Committee recommends that the Minister commits to providing as much transparency as possible in relation to the costs of the Bill by publishing full and robust Regulatory Impact Assessments to accompany subordinate legislation made under this Bill.

**ACCEPT.** We recognise that further impact assessments will be required as subordinate legislation is developed. The costs and benefits estimated for subordinate legislation will be set out in the accompanying Regulatory Impact Assessments in the usual way.

In line with requirements under Standing Order 27 and the policy set out in the Welsh Ministers' Regulatory Impact Assessment Code for Subordinate Legislation, we are fully committed to undertaking Regulatory Impact Assessments and using the best available evidence within the Explanatory Memorandum when making future regulations.

**Recommendation 2:** The Committee recommends that the Minister explains how the Welsh Government is complying with its own Legislation Handbook in relation to costing subordinate legislation to Bills.

**ACCEPT.** The powers proposed in the Bill to make subordinate legislation in a number of areas will reduce the Welsh Government's reliance on UK Government Bills to deliver changes for Wales and allow changes to be made in a timely manner. Parts of the Bill are therefore about creating structures that will allow the Government to bring forward subordinate legislation in the future.

I explained during my evidence to the Committee the challenges of costing subordinate legislation where the scope and detail is to be confirmed. As I said then, any future regulations will be subject to consultation and a Regulatory Impact Assessment in accordance with the requirements of the legislation handbook.

**Recommendation 3:** In relation to alternative systems of local taxation, the Committee recommends that the Minister:

- continues to explore all avenues for change to ensure the correct decision is reached about the most appropriate system of local taxation; and
- provides a copy of the road map for a land value tax, with an outline of any associated costs, to the Committee as soon as possible.

**ACCEPT.** The Welsh Government has been considering alternative systems of local taxation since 2016 and has carried out extensive research. A [Summary of Findings](#)

published in February 2021 concluded that moving away from the existing local tax system entirely was not achievable in the short to medium-term, however, the Welsh Government remains committed to further exploring alternative options for consideration over the longer-term.

With respect to a local land value tax, we have recently secured additional academic capacity via a national UK Research Council Fellowship scheme to assist the Welsh Government in further exploring a number of key issues and to strengthen our evidence base. Findings from this research will be used as a basis for additional consideration.

Also, by way of correction to the Committee: the Welsh Government has set out a commitment to produce a road map by the end of *this Senedd term* and not *the summer term* as noted in paragraph 29 of the report.

**Recommendation 4:** The Committee recommends that the Minister reviews the points raised around inconsistencies in the Regulatory Impact Assessment noted in this section, with a view to clarifying the information identified in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**ACCEPT.** We thank the Committee for bringing these to our attention. We will review and ensure the figures are consistent. A revised Regulatory Impact Assessment will be provided ahead of stage 3.

**Recommendation 5:** The Committee recommends that the Minister provides information on the risks and cost implications for Wales in diverging from England in terms of the timing of its non-domestic rates revaluations, and for this information to be included in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**ACCEPT.** The Regulatory Impact Assessment explains that, at the present time, it is not possible to fully quantify the costs and risks which would arise from divergence. It is, however, possible to provide further information on the resourcing implications for the Valuation Office Agency and high-level risks. Additional details will be included in the revised Regulatory Impact Assessment ahead of stage 3.

**Recommendation 6:** The Committee request further information on the total cost to ratepayers of the new duty to supply up-to-date information to the Valuation Office Agency, in particular, whether the £35 and £20 cost per ratepayer is in addition to the costs currently estimated for relevant activity, and for this information to be included in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**ACCEPT.** The figures represent an average estimate of the additional costs of compliance. Actual costs will depend on individual circumstances. For some ratepayers, the costs of complying with the new duty will not represent new or additional costs compared to those incurred on the current system. Further information and explanation will be included in the revised Regulatory Impact Assessment ahead of stage 3.

**Recommendation 7:** The Committee recommends that the Minister provides further information on the potential costs and risks associated with the Valuation Office Agency's new online system. This should include when it will be implemented and the risks of any potential delays in implementation to ratepayers complying with the new requirements to

provide information, and for this information to be included in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**ACCEPT.** The completion of a revaluation in 2026 is not dependent on the launch of the online system, as the Valuation Office Agency is already preparing to undertake that exercise under current arrangements. The system is intended to ensure the sustainability of more frequent revaluations over the longer-term. There is no risk to ratepayers associated with the timing of launch, because the duties will only be brought into force when the Welsh Government and the Valuation Office Agency are satisfied that ratepayers can reasonably be expected to comply. This information will be included, alongside the estimated costs already provided, in the revised Regulatory Impact Assessment ahead of stage 3.

**Recommendation 8:** The Committee recommends that the Minister provides an update once a decision has been taken on the approach to council tax reform. This should include a cost analysis of any potential options that might be considered following the Fairer Council Tax: Phase 2 consultation and any implications for the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill.

**ACCEPT.** I will write to the Committee in due course, outlining the details of any further decisions taken and any implications for the Local Government Finance (Wales) Bill.

**Recommendation 9:** The Committee recommends that the Minister provides further information on the working group responsible for considering the current council tax exemptions and any work being undertaken to simplify discounts and disregards.

**ACCEPT.** We are continuing to review of the range of discounts, disregards, exemptions and premiums to ensure the arrangements remain relevant to the Welsh Government's policy ambitions. There are 53 categories to review. To date, we have confirmed the 25% one-adult discount will continue and our intention to remove the empty property discount except in certain circumstances. Following a recent [consultation](#), we are analysing the responses to proposals for the Class F exemption for unoccupied properties where probate or letters of administration have not yet been granted, and the exemption and disregard for people with a severe mental impairment.

We will consult on further proposals later this year and implementation of changes may be phased over time, with some changes implemented in the 2026-27 financial year. Any regulations we develop will be accompanied by a Regulatory Impact Assessment which will identify the costs, benefits and risks of any proposed changes to the existing regime.

**Recommendation 10:** The Committee recommends that the Minister provides information on the transitional arrangements that will be put in place to limit the impact of council tax revaluations on households and local authorities.

**ACCEPT.** We are continuing to consider the details of transitional arrangements as part council tax reform. I will write to the Committee outlining the details once the way forward following the Phase 2 consultation is known. Details of transitional arrangements including costs, benefits and impacts will also be outlined in a separate Regulatory Impact Assessment accompanying the relevant legislation needed to give effect to the arrangements.

**Recommendation 11:** The Committee recommends that any post implementation review assesses the overall costs and benefits of the Bill, including any subordinate legislation made and whether these meet the expectations set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**ACCEPT.** There are a number of established monitoring and evaluation processes already in place for measuring the policy impacts and financial implications of legislation.

The Welsh Government will continue to work closely with our stakeholders and local authorities to ensure continuous assessments of how the legislation has taken effect and the resulting impacts.

Subordinate legislation created under the Bill will be supported by its own Regulatory Impact Assessments, outlining monitoring and evaluation plans, including financial implications specific to the relevant impacts.

Aelod Senedd dros  
Gogledd Cymru

Peredur Griffiths MS,  
Chair of Finance Committee

15 April 2024

Dear Peredur,

**Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill: response to the Finance Committee's  
Stage 1 report**

I would like to thank the Finance Committee for their scrutiny of the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill ("the Bill") during Stage 1 and for the report which was published on 21 March 2024. I have set out my response to the Committee's conclusions and recommendations at Annex A.

I note that the Committee was broadly content with the financial implications of the Bill as set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment. I also very much welcome, and appreciate, the Committee's Conclusion 3 regarding the level of detail provided on the cost estimates. In developing the RIA, a significant amount of work was undertaken, including with providers of residential outdoor education, and I truly believe that the costs set out in the RIA are as robust and as complete as I could have possibly made them.

With that in mind, it has not been possible for me to accept all of the Committee's recommendations, as noted in Annex A. However, I would like to make the general point that should the Bill progress through the legislative process, I will continue to develop the RIA and will, of course, publish a revised RIA as appropriate.

Lastly, I wanted to make you aware that I will also be writing to the Chairs of the Children, Young People and Education Committee and the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee with respect to their Stage 1 Reports, and will copy the letters to all three Committee Chairs.

Yours sincerely



Sam Rowlands MS  
**Member of the Welsh Parliament for North Wales**

## Annex A

### Response from Sam Rowlands, MS to the Finance Committee's Report on the Residential Outdoor Education (Wales) Bill

**Conclusion 1.** The Committee is broadly content with the financial implications of the Bill as set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment, subject to the comments and recommendations in this report. Should there be significant changes to the Regulatory Impact Assessment as a result of the recommendations made in this report, the Committee may consider those changes in more detail.

**Conclusion 2** The Committee notes the budgetary pressure that is currently being experienced by the Welsh Government and also notes the significant level of funding required for this Bill.

**Conclusion 3** The Committee was impressed with the level of detail provided on the cost estimates included in the Regulatory Impact Assessment, and believes this approach represents a good example for the Welsh Government and others to follow in terms of the level of detail that should be included in relation to the costs of legislation.

**Conclusion 4** The Committee notes that the five-year appraisal period for this Bill is appropriate and is in line with the timescales applied by the Welsh Government in assessing the impact of the Bills it introduces. We expect all Bills to be treated and scrutinised on an equal basis and to the same standard.

#### **Response: Noted**

I am happy that the Committee was broadly content with the financial implications of the Bill as set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment. I also very much welcome, and appreciate, the Committee's Conclusion 3 regarding the level of detail provided on the cost estimates.

In developing the RIA, a significant amount of work was undertaken, including with providers of residential outdoor education, and I truly believe that the costs set out in the RIA are as robust and as complete as I could have possibly made them.



**Recommendation 1.** Although the Committee is content with the approach adopted in removing inflation when costing the Bill, the Committee recommends that the Member in Charge undertakes further analysis on its potential impact given the current level of inflation and the significant cost of the Bill.

**Response: Accept**

If the General Principles of the Bill are agreed, further analysis regarding the impact of inflation will be undertaken and included in a revised RIA.

**Recommendation 2.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge undertakes further work on the potential increase in demand for residential stays at outdoor activity centres as a result of the Bill being passed.

**Response: Accept**

In developing the Bill and the RIA, a substantial amount of work was undertaken to establish current levels of participation in residential outdoor education. This included examining the EVOLVE data and working with the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) who undertook a survey with schools. Details on the findings are included in Chapter 3 of the EM – 'Purpose and intended effect of the Bill'.

The aim of the Bill is to make an offer of residential outdoor education compulsory under the curriculum, and costs are therefore based on the assumption of 100% take up of the offer. A reasonable assumption of the increase in demand can therefore be made by comparing the data we established on current take up to the assumption of 100% take up.

Moving forward, the potential increase in demand could be analysed further once the Bill has completed the legislative process, and has been passed. There are elements of the Bill as introduced that will be for the Welsh Ministers to deliver, and which could have an impact on demand. All of this will be taken into account as the Bill continues through the legislative process.

I note that part of the Committee's concern is that an increase in demand could potentially lead to increases in costs for those areas. I do not envisage this to be the case. However, if costs were to increase as a result, it would be impossible to predict what those costs would be and where any increase might occur.

**Recommendation 3.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge undertakes further work analysing and estimating the benefits of the Bill, and for this information to be included in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**Response: Reject**

In developing the Bill, the Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment, a substantial amount of work has been undertaken to analyse and capture the potential benefits of residential outdoor education. Significant detail on the potential benefits of the Bill is included throughout the Explanatory Memorandum, not just within the RIA.

The information on the benefits contained in the EM has been drawn together following lengthy and detailed discussion with a wide range of individuals and organisations. This includes discussion with providers of outdoor education across the UK and elsewhere, as well as drawing on evidence from experts such as the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel, and the Institute for Outdoor Learning.

I refer the Committee in particular to:

- Chapter 3 – paragraph 18; paragraphs 23 to 25; paragraphs 60 to 69; paragraphs 79 to 101.
- RIA – paragraphs 212 to 224.

While I reject the Committee's recommendation, I note and agree with the Committee's view that "The Committee expects RIAs to contain the best estimate possible for benefits as well as costs to enable it to fully scrutinise the overall financial implications of a Bill". I am satisfied that the RIA I have prepared does contain the best estimate possible.

If the Bill is passed, and enacted, I would fully support any 'post-legislative' work to analyse whether the Bill has had the impact and the benefits that are expected.

**Recommendation 4.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge updates the Regulatory Impact Assessment to include an analysis and costs of items other than specialist equipment that pupils may need when attending a residential outdoor education experience, such as suitable clothing and footwear.

**Response: Reject**

This is an issue to which I gave a great deal of consideration while developing the Bill and the Explanatory Memorandum, and on balance, I did not believe that the cost of non-essential clothing and footwear should form part of the costings for the Bill.

As the Committee will be aware, the purpose of the Bill is to enable all pupils in maintained schools to experience residential outdoor education. To achieve that,

the Welsh Ministers will have a duty to take all reasonable steps to ensure a course of residential outdoor education is provided once to all pupils in maintained schools, free of charge.

I fully understand that when attending a course of residential outdoor education, pupils would be expected to take suitable clothing, such as coats and footwear. However, these can be seen as non-essential for the specific activities they may undertake as part of the experience and are therefore not unique to the purposes of the Bill.

When organising residential visits away, schools provide pupils with a list of things they would need to take with them. In my discussions with providers, it was often the case that what schools were telling pupils they 'needed' was over and above what the centres themselves actually required pupils to bring.

In paying for any non-essential items of clothing, there is also the challenge of distinguishing between what pupils might 'need' and what they might 'want'. Social pressures will inevitably lead to certain demands from pupils. The clothing that some (if not most) pupils choose to wear may be branded goods that would not offer value for money if the cost is being met through the Bill.

It is also a reasonable assumption that most pupils would already require those non-essential items of clothing for purposes out with the Bill. As such the cost is not included as it is not something directly attributable to the Bill. It would be impossible to know with any sense of certainty what would need to be paid for in this regard. It was therefore decided that the costs to be included as part of the Bill should be those costs that would need to be met by ALL pupils attending a course of residential outdoor education.

Where there are items of clothing that pupils may not have, and which might prevent a child attending, the School Essentials Grant could be used to help meet those costs. I am aware that the Committee has heard evidence in this regard during its evidence gathering.

**Recommendation 5.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge provides further information about how guidance around the Bill will ensure that value for money is a key consideration when schools make choices about residential outdoor education.

**Response: Accept**

Ensuring value for money depends on a range of factors. It is essentially a balance between what is on offer and the aims of the school. There needs to be a clear picture in place of what a school requires from a visit, and what the provider will deliver.



The most important thing in assessing value for money is whether the aims of the visit have been met. This could be achieved through an evaluation of the visit by the teacher leading it. Such an evaluation would also enable staff to identify strengths and weaknesses, potential improvements and plan for future residential. The evaluation can be used to demonstrate effective use of the funding.

To achieve this there is a need for accompanying school staff to recognise what value for money might look like. One way to help this is through training around what the LOtC Quality Badge involves, as it incorporates aspects of provision that encourage the conditions leading to successful outcomes.

The Bill already requires the Welsh Ministers to issue guidance in respect of Residential Outdoor Education, and that the guidance "(g) must make provision in respect of the costs that it would be reasonable to incur in connection with residential outdoor education, including, but not limited to, the cost of board and lodging and transport". This should provide some safeguard that the costs of visits must be reasonable. However I would be happy to explore if the guidance provisions in the Bill could be strengthened to further promote the need to ensure value for money.

**Recommendation 6.** Given the varied needs and requirements of pupils, the Committee recommends that the Member in Charge provides further analysis on the estimated costs for pupils with complex needs and Additional Learning Needs, and for this information to be included in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**Response: Reject**

The RIA already contains what I consider to be an accurate estimate of the costs for pupils with complex needs to attend a residential outdoor education experience.

In developing the estimate, I have worked directly with the Exmoor Calvert Trust and the Bendrigg Trust, two of the leading providers in the UK of activity breaks for people with disabilities and special needs.

The costs provided directly from those centres equated to approximately double the average cost provided by centres responding to the survey sent out to support data collection related to the Bill. These costs are set out in the RIA.

**Recommendation 7.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge provides further analysis on supply teaching costs, and for this information to be included in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**Response: Reject**

In rejecting this recommendation, I acknowledge that there are often challenges in finding suitable supply teacher cover – as outlined in evidence to the Committee.

However, in developing the costs for the Bill in this respect, I have based the estimate on the assumption that supply cover would be available whenever needed, and as such this should provide for the maximum costs associated with this aspect of the Bill.

I note the Committee has based the recommendation on its concerns over the availability of supply teacher cover. However, the availability of cover should not change the actual costs of providing that cover based on the assumption already outlined. Therefore, I do not believe there to be any underestimation as I have based the estimate on that cover being available.

**Recommendation 8.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge undertakes further work on cost implications in relation to potential changes for the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document as a result of the Bill being passed.

**Response: Reject**

It would not be appropriate for me, as an individual Member of the Senedd to undertake work to consider possible changes to the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

If, as a result of the Bill being passed, a change to that document is required, it would be for Welsh Ministers to work with teachers, and unions, to establish the extent to which any changes are required.

**Recommendation 9.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge provides further information on the costs associated with the tracking and monitoring of pupils' attendance at a residential outdoor education experience in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment.

**Response: Reject**

The RIA already contains the best estimate for the costs of tracking pupils – based on discussions with stakeholders on the likely way on which that tracking could work in practice.

These discussions noted that tracking could be integrated into each pupil record entered into the appropriate information management system, which would require an additional field to be inputted into the pupil record database.

These costs are currently unknown as local authorities would need to approach the software developers to obtain a cost. However, as local authorities already utilise information management systems it is believed the transition costs to implement an additional field would be negligible.

**Recommendation 10.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge provides clarification on any potential inspection requirements associated with the Bill, including any role for Estyn, and further detail on how effective monitoring of the Bill will be achieved.

**Response: Accept**

The Bill will require that public money is to be used to fund a course of residential outdoor education as part of education, and I acknowledge there may arguably be a need for some form of quality control and assessment that it is meeting desired educational outcomes.

As it will be the school itself that sets the aims of the visit, it should also follow that the school has responsibility for assessing whether these aims have been met.

Estyn itself confirmed in evidence that if the Bill progresses and outdoor education residential become a statutory requirement, that would be taken into account when Estyn inspects a school's teaching and learning. However, through its routine inspections, Estyn wouldn't look at the actual visits schools undertake and form a judgement on these. If this was desired, the Welsh Government would need to remit Estyn to carry out a thematic review, which it could do as part of its annual remit letter. There will therefore not be any additional role for Estyn as a matter of course.

Current, voluntary quality frameworks that providers of outdoor education can access include assessments of teaching and learning processes, as well as a range

of other 'components of provision', including safety, admin, etc. Statutory and non-statutory inspection systems exist already and are carried out at the expense of the provider.

**Recommendation 11.** The Committee recommends that the Member in Charge includes a post-implementation review in a revised Regulatory Impact Assessment, which should include information as to how the overall costs and benefits of the Bill will be monitored.

**Response: Accept**

As outlined in my response to Recommendation 3, if the Bill is passed, and enacted, there would be a substantial piece of work needed to analyse whether the Bill has the impact, and the benefits, that are expected.

If the Bill progresses to Stage 2, I will explore the possibility of including a post-implementation review, which may be better placed set out on the face of the Bill rather than in the RIA.



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**Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS**

Llywydd, Senedd Cymru

**Right Honourable Elin Jones MS**

Llywydd, Welsh Parliament

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Davis Rees MS

Chair of the Reform Bill Committee

Senedd Cymru

Cardiff Bay

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CF99 1SN

15 March 2024

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 1 March 2024.

As you noted in your letter, this timetable includes a period of nine sitting weeks for Stage 1 scrutiny, which is a departure from the usual twelve sitting weeks. Attached is a letter dated 7 March 2024 from the Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd in response to a request from the Business Committee for further information about the reasons for proposing an expedited timetable.

At its meeting on 12 March 2024 the Business Committee considered the letters and, by majority decision, agreed the Welsh Government's proposed timetable for Senedd consideration of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill. Two Members, including myself, did not agree to the expedited timetable.

I am writing to place on record my reservations, as Llywydd, about the expedited scrutiny timetable for this Bill. I have stated that, in my view, the provisions of this Bill are not within the legislative competence of the Senedd; the Member in charge of the Bill has stated that, in her view, the provisions are within competence. This is the first time that a Bill has been introduced where there are differing views as to its competence.

Scrutiny of the general principles of a Bill at Stage 1 enables committees to interrogate a range of issues, including legislative competence. It is regrettable that your Committee will have less time than is typically the case to consider this novel and complex issue.

In agreeing the timetable the Business Committee noted that should the responsible Committee, in the course of their scrutiny, deem that additional time is essential to their considerations of the general principles of the Bill, then additional time may be sought.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee and the Chair of the Finance Committee, given their committees will also undertake Stage 1 scrutiny of Bill.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elin Jones'.

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



Elin Jones MS  
Chair of the Business Committee

[seneddbusiness@senedd.wales](mailto:seneddbusiness@senedd.wales)

7<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Dear Elin,

Further to the discussion at the Business Committee meeting on 5 March, I am writing to share additional information regarding the proposed scrutiny timetable for the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill.

The introduction of the Bill delivers on the recommendations of the Senedd's Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform that the Welsh Government brings forward legislation in this area and that Senedd reform is implemented in time for the election in 2026. The Special Purpose Committee's recommendations were endorsed by a majority of Senedd Members.

The timetable proposed by the Welsh Government is fundamental to maintaining a pathway to implementing the measures in time for the 2026 Senedd election. We are working to ensure the measures are in place ahead of that election as this is part of the package of Senedd reform along with the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill. A delay of even a month to the passage of the Bill would have implications for that implementation work.

Electoral administrators and political parties will require time to prepare for the implementation of changes, following the making of relevant legislation. The Gould Convention provides that all relevant legislation to an election, including secondary legislation, should be made at least six months prior to the notice of that election, to ensure there is sufficient time for changes to electoral law to be implemented appropriately. In delivering the electoral reforms proposed for the 2026 Senedd election, the Welsh Government is committed to abiding by the Gould Convention.

The provisions of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill would need to be implemented through secondary legislation. The National Assembly for Wales (Representation of the People) Order 2007, more commonly referred to as “the Conduct Order”, sets out the detailed rules for conducting elections to the Senedd.

Subject to the Senedd approving both Bills, the Government intends to consolidate and restate the law as part of a new Conduct Order. This will be the first time the Conduct Order is revised in full since 2007. Further, the Conduct Order will be made in English and in Welsh for the first time. This is a major undertaking and requires a significant amount of work. In addition, the Government intends to undertake a public consultation on the Conduct Order.

The proposed timetable provides the best opportunity for making the primary and secondary legislation necessary to allow the successful implementation of the Bill’s provisions in time for the 2026 Senedd election in accordance with the recommendations of the Special Purpose Committee.

In his letter, the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee highlighted the anticipated nomination and appointment of a new First Minister shortly after the Bill’s introduction, which may give rise to uncertainty over the Member in charge of the Bill. While that may be the case, I note the Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip will be appearing before the Reform Bill Committee on Wednesday, 13 March, as part of its Stage 1 scrutiny, which will enable the Committee to make an immediate start to its scrutiny of the Bill.

I would be grateful if the Business Committee would agree the proposed timetable.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

**Lesley Griffiths AS/MS**  
**Y Gweinidog Materion Gwledig a Gogledd Cymru, a'r Trefnydd**  
**Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales, and Trefnydd**

Dr Elizabeth Haywood  
Chair, Independent Remuneration Board of the  
Senedd

22 March 2024

Dear Elizabeth

**Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill: written evidence**

The Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill ('the SC(ECL) Bill') has been referred to the Reform Bill Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny of its general principles. We are writing to seek written evidence from the Independent Remuneration Board to inform our work. In particular, we would welcome further information in relation to the questions set out below.

In asking these questions, we recognise that there are interdependencies between the design and cost of the SC(ECL) Bill and the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill as a package of reforms. However, our role is to scrutinise each Bill and associated Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment on their own merits, especially as the commencement provisions in the SC(ECL) Bill do not specify at which Senedd general election the Bill's provisions will come in to force.

1. We note that the Welsh Government's Regulatory Impact Assessment accompanying the SC(ECL) Bill identifies no additional costs to the Senedd Commission (including in respect of Members' pay and allowances). What involvement has the Independent Remuneration Board had in the development of the Regulatory Impact Assessment? Can you confirm that there are no anticipated quantifiable or unquantifiable costs or savings in respect of Members' pay and allowances associated with the SC(ECL) Bill?
2. When you appeared before the Committee on 30 November 2023, you indicated that the Board would shortly be discussing its thematic review of Members' pay and personal support. Given the increase in the number and proportion of women elected to the Senedd the SC(ECL) Bill aims to achieve, what assessment has the Board made of the level and effectiveness of the current financial allowance and support package for Members with childcare or caring responsibilities?

3. What consideration has been given to the way in which any levers within the remit of the Board might be used to address barriers arising from the Senedd's ways of working that might otherwise inhibit women and under-represented groups from standing for election or constrain the length of their tenure?
4. How does the Board intend to engage with Members and stakeholders on potential changes to the Determination for the Seventh Senedd aimed at supporting women and under-represented groups?

It would be helpful if you could respond by 12 April 2024. This letter is being copied to the Finance Committee and the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, and the First Minister.

Yours sincerely



David Rees MS  
Chair, Reform Bill Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

Y Llywydd

22 March 2024

Dear Llywydd

### Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill: written evidence

As you will be aware, the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill ('the SC(ECL) Bill') has been referred to the Reform Bill Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny of its general principles. We are writing to seek written evidence from you in your capacity as Chair of the Senedd Commission and Chair of the Business Committee. In particular, we would welcome further information in relation to the questions set out below.

In asking these questions, we recognise that there are interdependencies between the design and cost of the SC(ECL) Bill and the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill as a package of reforms. However, our role is to scrutinise each Bill and associated Explanatory Memorandum and Regulatory Impact Assessment on their own merits, especially as the commencement provisions in the SC(ECL) Bill do not specify at which Senedd general election the Bill's provisions will come in to force.

1. We note that the Welsh Government's Regulatory Impact Assessment for the SC(ECL) Bill identifies no costs or savings to the Senedd Commission. What involvement has the Senedd Commission had in the development of the Regulatory Impact Assessment? Can you confirm that there are no anticipated quantifiable or unquantifiable costs or savings to the Senedd Commission associated with the SC(ECL) Bill?
2. What preparations is the Senedd Commission making to raise public awareness of the SC(ECL) Bill? What is the estimated cost of this activity?
3. In light of the likely increase in the number of Members of the Senedd with caring responsibilities for children and infants, has any consideration been given to making adaptations to the Senedd estate, such as the provision of an on-site crèche facility, or

increasing the provision of accessible parking, family rooms, and facilities for breastfeeding and expressing milk?

4. Has any consideration been given to the Senedd's future ways of working to address barriers that might otherwise inhibit women and under-represented groups from standing for election, such as the timetabling of Senedd business, flexible working practices and technological innovations?

It would be helpful if you could respond by 12 April 2024. This letter is being copied to the Finance Committee and the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee, and the First Minister.

Yours sincerely



David Rees MS  
Chair, Reform Bill Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.





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Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair of Finance Committee

16 April 2024

Dear Peredur,

**Financial implications of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill**

Thank you for your letter of 18 March 2024, in which you asked me to confirm whether the Senedd Commission has engaged with the Welsh Government on potential costs arising from the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill.

I understand that Welsh Government indicated that, given the scope of the Bill and the information provided for the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill, it did not require the Senedd Commission to provide any additional information relating to the potential costs arising from this Bill, to inform its Regulatory Impact Assessment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elin Jones".

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS  
Llywydd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



**Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS**

Llywydd, Senedd Cymru

**Right Honourable Elin Jones MS**

Llywydd, Welsh Parliament

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David Rees MS

Chair of the Reform Bill Committee

15 April 2024

Dear David,

### **Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidates Lists) Bill**

Thank you for your letter of 22 March 2024, and for the opportunity to assist the Committee in its scrutiny of the Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill ("SC(ECL) Bill"). Please find enclosed my response to the questions raised in your letter.

As you will know, as Llywydd, I laid my statement on legislative competence in relation to the SC(ECL) Bill (as required under Standing Order 26.4) on 11 March 2024. As requested, I write to you now in my capacity as both Chair of the Senedd Commission, and Chair of the Senedd's Business Committee. The information enclosed is, therefore, provided independently of my statement on legislative competence. Equally, my enclosed response should bear no influence on the interpretation of my statement on legislative competence.

If I can be of any further assistance to the Committee in its deliberations please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt. Hon. Elin Jones MS/AS

Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission

## Response to questions contained within the letter from the Chair of the Reform Bill Committee: 22 March 2024

**Question 1:** We note that the Welsh Government's Regulatory Impact Assessment for the SC(ECL) Bill identifies no costs or savings to the Senedd Commission. What involvement has the Senedd Commission had in the development of the Regulatory Impact Assessment? Can you confirm that there are no anticipated quantifiable or unquantifiable costs or savings to the Senedd Commission associated with the SC(ECL) Bill?

**Response:** I can confirm that the Senedd Commission has had no involvement in the development of the SC(ECL) Bill's Regulatory Impact Assessment. The Commission provided costings for the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill. I understand that, given the scope of the SC(ME) Bill and information provided, the Welsh Government did not require the Senedd Commission to provide any additional information to inform the Regulatory Impact Assessment for the SC(ECL) Bill.

**Question 2:** What preparations is the Senedd Commission making to raise public awareness of the SC(ECL) Bill? What is the estimated cost of this activity?

**Response:** A high-level communications plan has been developed in anticipation of the passing of the reform legislation.

The Senedd Commission's communications campaign for Senedd Reform will set out to:

- Raise awareness of the changes to the Senedd;
- Increase understanding of the role of the Senedd and its Members; and
- Encourage participation in the Senedd election.

This will largely complement the objectives of the Senedd Commission's Communications and Engagement Strategy for the Sixth Senedd, which is in its third year and aims to reach audiences who have not previously engaged with the Senedd. This will remain the Senedd Commission's priority audience, but due to the scale of the changes, the Communications and Engagement Strategy will also incorporate techniques to reach those who are more likely to have engaged with the Senedd and establish itself as a trusted source of information.

Considering the scale of the changes and their importance, work has already begun to explore opportunities to work with partners, such as Welsh Government and Electoral Commission, to align the Senedd Commission's communications plans and ensure each institution is working together wherever possible and to avoid the duplication of efforts, confusing messaging and to provide best use of public money.

The Senedd Commission's Senedd Reform Campaign Plan is split into phases that extend from the passing of the Bill to the introduction of a new, reformed Senedd in 2026.

### **Phase One – Information Sharing (Summer 2024 – Spring 2025)**

This phase of the campaign will concentrate efforts on ensuring people engaging with the Senedd are able to easily access clear and understandable information on the changes and how it will affect them.

This includes updates to the Senedd's website, updated information on site for visitors to the Senedd, updated education sessions and information at the Senedd Commission's summer shows.

This phase of the campaign will also be used to mark the 25th anniversary of the Senedd to highlight what is next in its journey, including exploring media opportunities and events at the Senedd hosted by the Llywydd.

### **Phase Two – Inspiring Participation (Spring 2025 – May 2026)**

During this phase efforts will be stepped up to reach audiences who do not typically engage with the Senedd, as well as maintaining connections with those who have done so before.

This includes focusing most of the Senedd Commission's face-to-face engagement activities on Senedd Reform – including summer shows, community outreach, events and education sessions, using audience insight to align the activities with the needs of those target audiences.

The peak of this phase will come towards its end, when the Senedd Commission launches its election information campaign, early ideas for which include working with social media content creators, a digital advertising campaign, community outreach – with a focus on communities that have been less likely to engage with the Senedd previously, and a step-up of education sessions with a focus on those over 16.

The Senedd Commission will further explore partnership working with key organisations – such as the Electoral Commission - during this phase to ensure efforts are not duplicated and to maximise reach. This could include collaborating on education resources and events, and sharing information on marketing campaigns.

### **Phase Three – Introduction of a Reformed Senedd (May 2026 – Autumn 2026)**

This phase will focus on raising awareness of the Senedd and what it can do to support people and their communities.

With the biggest change likely to be around Members and their constituencies, a key focus of this phase will be on supporting people to find their Members and what their Members can do to support them. This will be a focused effort across all channels, including digital advertising, local media, community engagement, and visits and tours.

### **Costings**

The Regulatory Impact Assessment for the SC(ME) Bill includes the costs of raising public awareness in relation to Senedd reform legislation. No further costings have been identified for the SC(ECL) Bill.

**Question 3:** In light of the likely increase in the number of Members of the Senedd with caring responsibilities for children and infants, has any consideration been given to making adaptations to the Senedd estate, such as the provision of an on-site crèche facility, or increasing the provision of accessible parking, family rooms, and facilities for breastfeeding and expressing milk?

**Response:** In response to Senedd Reform proposals, the Ty Hywel 26 Project has been established within the Senedd Commission's Ways of Working programme. The scope of this project, noting the challenging timescales involved for delivery by early 2026, is to provide additional office space for the potential increase in Members and their support staff, whilst also accommodating Senedd Commission staff and providing sufficient space for an increased number of Welsh Government Ministers and officials. Consultation with Members on their needs are being sought through a number of ways including Cwrt drop ins, Members reference groups and workshops for both the Ty Hywel and Siambwr projects. The Tŷ Hywel project will consider necessary adaptations should Members make representations to that end.

Within the Ways of Working programme, the Senedd Commission has also established the Cardiff Bay 2032 project. This work will identify and deliver the Senedd's long-term estate and accommodation needs, including consideration of a wide range of facilities needed to support the Senedd and its Members, within the funding parameters that are agreed by the Senedd. At the appropriate point in the development of the project, the Senedd Commission will undertake detailed engagement with party groups to ensure that Members' needs are fully reflected within the designs for any proposed future accommodation option.

**Question 4:** Has any consideration been given to the Senedd's future ways of working to address barriers that might otherwise inhibit women and under-represented groups from standing for election, such as the timetabling of Senedd business, flexible working practices and technological innovations?

**Response:** In relation to any barriers which may be presented by the Senedd's procedures, the Business Committee considered a paper on procedural preparedness for Senedd reform in November 2023 and agreed in principle to commence consideration of areas of procedural reform in autumn 2024.

In its current form, the reform legislation contains a number of provisions which, if passed, will necessitate changes to Senedd procedures, including amendments to Standing Orders and associated guidance.

Although the parameters of this review are currently being developed, Business Committee will need to, as a minimum:

- review Standing Orders and associated guidance in light of the Senedd Reform legislation, once passed, and
- propose changes to Standing Orders to the Senedd to ensure that there are no procedural impediments to the operation of the Seventh Senedd.

As part of the work it undertakes to scope this review, the Business Committee will consider, among other things, whether to include matters such as organising business differently and/or considering the effect of any existing or potential procedural changes on the ability of the Senedd to attract as wide and diverse a range of Members as possible.

Additionally, in May 2022 the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform made a recommendation to the Business Committee that it should consider “the practical and procedural issues associated with...two Members job sharing a particular role (such as that of a Committee Chair)”, citing its potentially positive impact on the diversity of candidates standing for election as a reason to explore this area further. The matter has been added to the Business Committee’s procedural forward work programme and is scheduled for consideration in 2024.

Since then, provision relating to a review of possible job sharing (and temporary holding) of offices relating to the Senedd has been proposed in the SC(ME) Bill. In January 2024, the Reform Bill Committee recommended that the SC(ME) Bill be amended to remove the mechanism for reviewing possible job-sharing of offices relating to the Senedd, and that the Business Committee should consider proposing the establishment of a new committee in this Senedd to explore issues relating to job sharing and temporary holding of an office, or asking an existing Senedd Committee with a relevant remit to undertake the work. The Business Committee accepted this recommendation noting that it would consider the request made once there was certainty around the legislative changes (anticipated to be summer term 2024).

In the meantime, as committee chairs are non-statutory roles and therefore do not require legislative changes to enable job sharing, the Business Committee has undertaken initial consideration of proposals for committee chairs job sharing. This early work included consideration of information presented to Senedd committees and elsewhere relating to the impact of job-sharing on the accessibility and flexibility of roles, and the diversity of those who take them on. The Business Committee will return to this work in more detail during the summer term 2024.

It should be noted that the organisation of Senedd business and the timetable are normally matters for the Business Committee and Senedd to decide at the start of its term. In July 2022 the Senedd agreed a number of changes to Standing Orders that had been proposed by the Business Committee following a review of temporary Standing Order 34 and remote participation of Members in Senedd proceedings, both of which had been introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Having consulted with Members, party groups and others, the Business Committee proposed that the ability for Members to participate remotely in Plenary and committee meetings should be maintained. Following the Senedd’s agreement of changes to Standing Orders, guidance covering virtual and hybrid proceedings was

issued under Standing Order 6.17. The Business Committee has noted that this will be kept under review in light of experience during the Sixth Senedd.

In terms of technological innovations, the Senedd Commission employs a range of technologies that help to remove the barriers to participation in Senedd business, that otherwise might inhibit individuals or groups from standing for election.

Robust cybersecurity measures have allowed the Senedd Commission to deliver ICT tools that enable safe, seamless communication and collaboration from any Internet connected location. Video conferencing, instant messaging, and virtual collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom facilitate real-time interactions, allowing Members to work from different locations. This extends to formal parliamentary proceedings such as Plenary and committee meetings, allowing Members to fully participate remotely, including voting.

In response to the Senedd Reform proposals, the Siambwr 2026 Project has been established within the Ways of Working Programme. This project will deliver an expanded chamber capable of accommodating 96 Members. Central to this project are improvements to the technologies that underpin Plenary meetings, and the need to ensure that any change takes account of the needs of all those who may wish to stand for election to the Senedd. Full equality impact assessments will be completed for both projects as they progress.

Like many organisations, the Senedd Commission is seeking to harness the benefits of generative AI. It is anticipated that Senedd Members will be able to harness the automation and efficiency improvements these technologies can deliver, eliminating many routine tasks and freeing up Members' time.

All of these technologies will benefit from future improvements and will continue to adapt to allow Members to undertake their role in a way that suits their specific needs and the needs of their constituents.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) ix of Standing Order 17.42

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# Ombwdsmon Ombudsman

Cymru • Wales

Your ref:

Ask for: Michelle Morris

Our ref: MAM/mm



Date: 15 April 2024



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Peredur Owen Griffiths  
Chair, Finance Committee

**By email only**  
seneddfinance@senedd.wales

Dear Peredur

I am writing to brief the Finance Committee following recent events regarding the social media posts made by a team leader at the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

There can be no doubt that these events have damaged the reputation of the organisation and, unfairly, cast doubt on the independence, impartiality and integrity of all of those who work for PSOW. The situation the organisation finds itself in has come as a shock to staff and continues to cause huge concern.

This letter is intended to provide information on the recent events and the action being taken to begin the process of rebuilding trust in our work. Events started when I received a letter detailing allegations that a team leader had posted political comments on social media. These posts called into question her impartiality. The team leader was subsequently suspended and, the following week, she resigned and is no longer employed by PSOW. In line with our contract of employment she will receive pay in lieu of the contractual notice period. No severance payment above contractual payments will be made.

The team leader managed the Councillor Code of Conduct team from February 2019 until August 2023, when a rotation of team leaders took place and she moved out of the team. From April 2021 onwards this team was responsible for assessing complaints against councillors and making decisions on which complaints should not be investigated. Prior to this date these assessments were made in a different team that was not managed by the team leader in question.

In view of the damage done to the organisation's reputation, I am conscious that an independent external review is required to provide assurance that there has been no bias in decision making and that we continue to deliver an independent, fair and impartial service.

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1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ  
Rydym yn hapus i dderbyn ac ymateb i ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg.

ombudsman.wales  
ask@ombudsman.wales  
0300 790 0203  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, CF 35 5LJ  
We are happy to accept and respond to correspondence in Welsh.

The review will consider our processes for handling code of conduct complaints and those cases brought into question by recent events. In particular it will consider decisions not to investigate, made by the team leader and the Code of Conduct Team. Decisions made at that stage follow the application of a two-stage test: firstly, whether the evidence suggests that a breach of the Code of Conduct has occurred and, secondly, whether an investigation is required in the public interest.

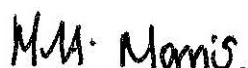
My role, as Ombudsman, is to investigate and to decide whether, or not, to refer the case to the relevant Standards Committee or the APW, for consideration. I have no role reaching a finding as to whether the Councillors' Code of Conduct has been breached, nor in deciding any sanction. Any complaints referred to Standards Committees or the APW are subject to an independent hearing, in which the investigation is challenged and scrutinised and witnesses can be called. These hearings then reach their decision independently and the councillor had the right to appeal against those decisions. For these reasons these cases cannot be reopened and will not be included in the review.

While there is no evidence that the team leader expressed her personal views or influenced others in the office we recognise that any review also needs to provide assurance on this point.

I recognise that it is essential that this review has the confidence of the Senedd and stakeholders across local government. Whilst I remain confident that James Goudie KC would have carried out the review with integrity, impartiality and professionalism, it is evident that concerns have been expressed by several people and would lead to a lack of confidence in the review and its findings. I have listened to these views and reconsidered this appointment and will now be seeking another person to lead this work instead.

I do not underestimate the damage done by these social media posts and the subsequent events. I remain committed to working with my staff and our stakeholders across local government to rebuild trust in our work. I recognise it is now more important than ever that the role of Ombudsman, and of my office, is held to account by the Senedd through the work of the Finance Committee and I will make myself available to the Committee to provide updates and to attend Committee to provide any further information or explanation that the Committee may seek, including the final report of the independent review.

Yours sincerely



**Michelle Morris**  
Public Services Ombudsman



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