

To: All Members

Cc: All support staff

19 March 2021

Dear Member,

The Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd met on 4 March 2021. The following is a summary of its discussions and decisions.

Covid-19 update

The Board reviewed the continuing impact of Covid-19 on Members and their offices. The support package put in place to support Members has been in existence for nearly a year now. The Board has previously confirmed that elements of this package will remain in place until the end of this Senedd term. While the roll out of the vaccination programme and steps towards cautious and gradual lifting of restrictions are being taken, the message from Welsh Government continues to be to work from home, where possible.

At the time of the Board's meeting there was no indication of when guidance on social distancing and home working may be eased. Given these considerations, the Board has decided that the current support in place will continue at the start of the Sixth Senedd. To confirm, this means that:

- the Home Working Allowance provided to support staff will continue during Covid-19 restrictions. This allowance is put in place to assist with the additional costs of home working for support staff. This allowance may only be claimed in respect of days worked at home;
- the Covid-19 Return to Offices Fund will also remain in place for the forthcoming period. As you will recall this has been set up to fund reasonable health and safety measures that are required to safeguard against the spread of the virus in constituency/regional offices. Should Members wish to make a claim against this fund, they will be required to provide evidence of their requirements in the form of a risk assessment. If a Member submits claims for costs in excess of £500 in total, these claims may be subject to further scrutiny and verification if required, before they are accepted.

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- [online DSE assessments](#) will remain in place until July 2021. This will allow for any new staff employed following the election, who may be required to work from home, to undertake an assessment.

The maintenance of these allowances are intended to ensure there is a continuity of support over the coming period. This decision will be periodically reviewed following the election. Should you have any matters that require consideration, please either [contact the Board](#) through the secretariat or raise it directly with Members' Business Support.

Consultation on the annual review of the Determination for the Sixth Senedd

As you will be aware, the Board has undertaken a [consultation](#) on changes to the Determination for the Sixth Senedd. As a new Board, there were several outstanding issues we needed to consider to finalise the Determination for the next Senedd term in light of the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic. The proposals consulted on intended to provide greater clarity to Members and their staff in these times of uncertainty.

The Board took several decisions on the Determination for the Sixth Senedd. The new Determination and full report explaining our decisions were published on 18 March 2021 and are available [here](#).

Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Bill

Following the [decisions](#) taken by the Board in January in response to the publication of the Bill, further consideration was given to the impact of the Bill. This included whether any restrictions or temporary changes to the Determination were needed ahead of the election period. The Board's decisions related to this can be found in the correspondence sent you on 16 March 2021.

Support staff contract

The Board considered feedback provided to the consultation on the draft contract for support staff. The decisions taken by the Board are currently being implemented into the new contract and this will be put in place in time for the start of the next Senedd term. Further information will be provided by Members' Business Support on behalf of the Board in due course.

The updated contract incorporates all that the employer and employee need to be contracted by and has removed other explanatory elements which will now be housed in a

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comprehensive non-contractual staff handbook. To protect the entitlements afforded to staff, which are more favourable than that protected by statute, these entitlements will be incorporated into the new staff contract as an annex. The Handbook itself will house the policies which are mandated by the Board.

Other policies will be included in the Handbook which will give each office the framework to manage such things as attendance, family friendly rights, communications, health and safety and data protection amongst a host of other policies. These policies will be tailored in small measure to ensure that they are bespoke for the needs of the individual offices.

All new support staff who start their employment following the election will be automatically placed on the new contract. The Board would urge current Members and support staff to engage with the new contract going forward.

Appointment of new Member nominated trustee to Members' Pension Scheme Board

The Board noted that Ieuan Wyn Jones has confirmed that he will stand down as a trustee of the Members' Pension Scheme following the forthcoming election. Following a nomination process to identify a successor trustee, the Board approved the nomination of Nick Ramsay MS as a Member nominated trustee for the Scheme.

New website

The Board considered draft web pages for a new website. Since the Board's establishment it has had a presence on the Senedd's website. This has provided a platform for publishing documents arising from the Board's activities (agendas, minutes, update letters, consultations). In 2018, the Board created its own separate [website](#) in order to further emphasise its independence from the Senedd Commission, however the previous web presence was also maintained for the reasons outlined above.

Following the publication of the Senedd Commission's new website in December, the Board has agreed to relocate its own website onto the Commission's site. It is hoped that the new site will be more accessible to stakeholders to find information on the Board's work. The site will be launched in the coming weeks.

As ever, if you would like to discuss anything with me, please contact the Board's secretariat on remuneration@senedd.wales to make arrangements.

Best wishes and stay safe,

BWRDD **TALIADAU**
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Dr Elizabeth Haywood

Chair, Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.