

David Rees MS
Chair, Llywydd's Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

September 2022

Dear Chair,

I am pleased to enclose the Estimate Memorandum which includes the Commission's Main Estimate for the 2023/24 financial year. This is underpinned by our five year Corporate Plan for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 [[English](#) and [Welsh](#)] which was provided to you last year.

As you would expect, the estimate and accompanying information sets out how we plan to manage our work effectively in Wales during 2023/24. The Corporate Plan sets out five strategic objectives for the period. These seek to maintain the high standards and public trust in the electoral system, as well as to address pressures and areas for development to further enhance the strength of democracy in Wales and the wider UK.

Before turning to the background to next year's estimate, we should like to give early indication that we will likely need to make a supplementary estimate to you in November 2022. While we are not yet certain of the exact amount to be requested, we think this is likely to be c£0.140m due to salary awards and legal advice received that means expected funding from the Welsh Government in relation to the statutory evaluation we were required to conduct on the electoral pilots earlier this year is no longer receivable.

Background to our strategic objectives

Our five strategic objectives for the period April 2022 to March 2027 are:

- accessible registration and voting
- transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance
- resilient local electoral services
- fair and effective electoral law
- a modern and sustainable electoral system

Three key factors underpin this work and make a difference to how we achieve these strategic objectives:

- we demonstrate independence and integrity
- we are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued
- we are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used effectively

Work undertaken in the 2022/23 financial year focussed on supporting the successful delivery of local government elections in Wales. We provided advice and guidance to, and monitored the performance of, Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers and supported electoral administrators and the regulated community. We also ran a programme of public awareness and education activity to support voters to register and understand how to cast their vote. In addition to this work, we carried out an evaluation of the Welsh Government's Advanced Voting Pilots and published our [evaluation report](#) on these in August. We also published our [post-poll report](#) on the May 2022 Local Government Elections in Wales earlier this month, and this outlined recommendations for future elections in Wales.

Our programme of work for 2023-24

As there are no scheduled elections in the 2023/24 financial year, the Commission's work in Wales will instead focus on three key areas.

Firstly, we will support the Welsh Government and the Senedd on the programme of electoral reform relating to devolved elections in Wales and reforming the Senedd. We anticipate this work to focus on reforms to modernise electoral administration in Wales, such as improving registration and the way people can cast their vote, as well as plans to increase the size of the Senedd and change the voting system. Our priorities will include ensuring administrators are adequately resourced and have sufficient time to prepare for new legislation, and that voters and candidates understand how the legislation affects them. We will also focus on implementing the recommendations outlined in our 2022 post-poll report.

Secondly, we will develop our education programme to ensure that voters – especially those that are newly enfranchised – are aware of their democratic rights. This work will evolve over the next year, and we will be engaging further with young people and educators across Wales to progress several new initiatives. For educators, we will develop new lesson plans linked to the new Curriculum for Wales and provide accompanying teacher training. We will work closely with the Welsh Government to ensure these resources can effectively support the delivery of democratic education in schools.

We will continue to work with our youth voice partner, the Democracy Box, to gain feedback from young people on our education work. The project's young co-creators are supporting us to identify further topics our resources for young people can cover, and establishing a youth voice panel for Wales. They will also support us in planning events and activities for our annual Welcome to Your Vote Week which will take place in January 2023.

Finally, we will continue to provide ongoing support to the regulated community in line with our regulatory support strategy. We aim to provide further one to one support via

surgeries and meetings with parties, to help them better understand the guidance in order to comply with the law, and we will further develop our guidance materials, ensuring they meet the demands of both the regulated community and the changing electoral environment.

We will continue to use our established networks, including the Wales Advisory Board, the Wales Electoral Coordination Board and Senedd Parties Panel, to understand how we can best support our wider stakeholders and the challenges they face. We will also work closely with electoral administrators through the Wales Electoral Practitioners Working Group and Association of Electoral Administrators, Wales to ensure their views are reflected in our work. We will also look to develop our relationship further with Members of the Senedd so that they can fully understand our work in Wales and how they can engage further with the Commission.

Delivering value for money

Proposed budgets for the Commission that were set out in the Corporate Plan have been updated to reflect inflationary pressures affecting the UK, this is in-line with our financial strategy so our core spend is no higher than GDP deflator. The same agreed funding formula has been applied as that in the previous year.

We are pleased to be able to confirm that the Senedd's planned contribution will be lower than for the period 2022/23. As in the previous year, the Welsh Government can request advice and assistance from the Commission on specific electoral related matters. This would be in addition to the funding provided by the Senedd.

Measuring performance

Throughout our Corporate Plan we identify improvements we will deliver. These aim to benefit the public, parties and campaigners, electoral administrators and parliaments. We will measure how well we realise these improvements over the course of the Plan using a range of indicators. By default, performance data will also be collected at the level of the four parts of the UK: Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland – in support of the accountability for our work. We will use a mix of quantitative and qualitative measures, to drive continuous improvements in our procedures and skills.

Our corporate performance indicators sit alongside a group which show the health of the electoral systems as a whole. These enable a 'health check' to help guide actions by ourselves and others – including elected members, government, campaigners and parties, through to electoral administrators and the police. This is a new initiative that we trust is welcomed. Working with others we make key contributions that enable a sound democratic system. Please refer to the Annex for details.

I hope you agree that our business plans for the forthcoming year are appropriate to address the size and nature of the challenges at hand and will ultimately result in greater public confidence in our electoral system. We will measure the impact of our planned activities throughout the period of this plan to ensure they address the challenges outlined above.

We commend the estimate to the Llywydd's Committee, and look forward to discussing these with you when appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Dame Elan Closs Stephens in black ink.

Dame Elan Closs Stephens CBE
Electoral Commissioner - Wales

Handwritten signature of Shaun McNally in black ink.

Shaun McNally CBE
Chief Executive and Accounting Officer,
Electoral Commission

Annex: Measuring our performance

Our corporate performance indicators

Ref	Definition	Corporate performance target
Strategic objective 1: Accessible registration and voting		
1	Public awareness campaign influence on voter registration: Additions to electoral registers during our voter registration campaigns meet or exceed our targets	Wales: 40,800 (701,754 - UK)
2	Engagement with local authorities and partners who disseminate voter information to specific target groups, including those newly enfranchised groups	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
3	Engagement with partners and young people to develop democratic education resources for young people in-line with our Learning Strategy	To be developed in 2022/23
Strategic objective 2: Transparent political campaigning and compliant political finance		
4	Timely publication of donation and loan reports received by statutory deadline	100%
5	Timely publication of statements of accounts	100%
6	Timely progression and conclusion of investigations	90%
7	Timely notification / issuance of decisions on sanctions (final notices) following representations period	90%
8	Timely notification of outcome of party and non-party campaigner registration applications (for new and change of details)	90%
9	Timely responses to requests for regulatory advice on financial reporting	90%
10	Effective regulatory guidance products / resources delivered to support compliance with the law	Already collecting data, to be baselined in 2021/22
11	Guidance product related queries that help identify existing and/or new areas of the guidance that provide additional clarity with the law	Already collecting data, to be baselined in 2021/22

Strategic objective 3: Resilient local electoral services

12	Accurate and timely advice to Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and candidates & agents (Great Britain)	100%
13	Publication of accurate and timely guidance products for electoral administrators	100%

Strategic objective 4: Fair and effective electoral law

14	Timely publication of election / referendum reports	100%
15	Timely publication of pilots evaluation report	100%
16	Timely responses to policy proposals and legislative consultations	100%
17	Timely responses to elected stakeholder (MS and local government) correspondence	100%

Strategic objective 5: A modern and sustainable electoral system

18	Engagement with our website by the public, campaigners and parties, electoral administrators and the media	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
19	Frequency of engagement with other regulatory bodies	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
20	Meeting requirements of existing and emerging or new environmental legislation	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)

Strategic objective 6: We demonstrate independence and integrity

21	Timely responses to both English and Welsh language social media enquiries	100% within one working day
22	Timely responses to both English and Welsh language public enquiries via calls, letters and emails	100%
23	Timely responses to both English and Welsh language valid Subject Access Requests	100%
24	Timely responses to both English and Welsh language valid Freedom of Information requests	90%

Strategic objective 7: We are a skilled organisation where diversity is valued

25	Maintained staff wellbeing score in staff survey	77%
26	Maintained staff engagement score in staff survey	67%
27	Maintained completeness of workforce diversity information	85%
28	Maintained compliance with the Welsh Language Standards set by the Welsh Language Commissioner	100%

Strategic objective 8: We are a learning organisation where improvement is continuous and resources are used effectively

29	Public value framework: Cost of delivering our services per tax payer per year stays within an agreed baseline	80 pence
30	Timely implementation of internal audit recommendations agreed by the Risk and Audit Committee	90% from 2022/23
31	Qualification of our financial statements in the Annual Report and Accounts	Unqualified audit opinion
32	Quality management: percentage of processes documented and reviewed for continuous improvement	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
33	Timely implementation of external audit recommendations agreed by the Executive Team	100%
34	Prompt payment of undisputed and valid invoices	100%
35	Reduced environmental impact of energy consumption	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)

Indicators for the health of the electoral systems

Ref	Definition	System target
S1	Confidence in voting	95%
S2	Confidence in registering to vote	95%
S3	Votes rejected and not included in the count for elections	As close to 0% as possible
S4	Satisfaction with the process of voting	85%
S5	Satisfaction with the system of registering to vote	85%
S6	Perception that process of voting is easy	95%
S7	Reduced barriers to voting by groups that are traditionally under-registered including newly enfranchised groups	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
S8	Reduced barriers to registration by groups that are traditionally under-registered including newly enfranchised groups	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
S9	Perception that appropriate action will be taken by the authorities if a political party or a campaigner is caught breaking the law on campaign funding	75%

Ref	Definition	System target
S10	Agreement or perception that the spending and funding of political parties, candidates and other campaigning organisations is open and transparent	75%
S11	Number of cases of alleged electoral fraud relating to political finance offences, reported to UK police forces each calendar year (including number of cases that result in conviction or caution)	To be developed in 2022/23 (years 1)
S12	Level of compliance by individuals and entities we regulate with deadlines set by legislation	100%
S13	Confidence in the trustworthiness of campaigning	To be developed in 2022/23 (year 1)
S14	Confidence that elections are well run	80%
S15	Perception that voting in general is safe from fraud and abuse	90%
S16	Levels of accuracy of the electoral registers	95%
S17	Levels of completeness of the electoral registers	95%
S18	Number of formal Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer performance assessments determining standards have not been met	0
S19	Number of pieces of electoral legislation not in place six months before required to be implemented	0
S20	Prompt responses by relevant governments to our election, referendum and other policy recommendation reports, including pilot evaluations.	100%