

Hannah Blythyn MS
Chair
Standards of Conduct Committee

9 June 2025

Dear Hannah,

Gender-sensitive parliament audit of the Senedd

I am pleased to update you on the progress of the gender sensitive audit of the Senedd. As you may know, this review was recommended in the Reform Bill Committee's **Stage 1 Report** of the *Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill*. The Committee recommended that the Commission should conduct a gender-sensitive parliament audit of the Senedd's culture, ways of working, and facilities, in sufficient time to inform Seventh Senedd decisions and the Cardiff Bay 2032 project

As Senedd Commissioner with the portfolio for Equalities, I will be leading this work. The Senedd Commission have agreed the terms of reference for the audit, which I have annexed to this letter for information.

The overall aim of the audit is to ensure the Senedd actively supports inclusive representation and participation across all areas of parliamentary work. Specifically, it will:

- Take stock of the Senedd's progress to becoming a gender-sensitive and inclusive parliament over the past 26 years;
- Identify where further progress is needed to improve gender sensitivity and inclusion across all aspects of parliamentary work, particularly in parliamentary decision making;
- Ensure that the lived experiences and insights of Members shape decisions about future ways of working;
- Take an intersectional approach, recognising how gender intersects with other characteristics to shape access, participation, and power, and



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- Provide timely and actionable recommendations to the Seventh Senedd Commission and Business Committee.

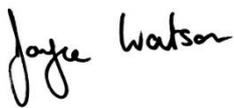
To oversee this work, I intend to establish an audit board. I will be writing to the three political groups and the Liberal Democrat Member to request nominations for Members to stand on the Audit Board.

To inform decisions about Seventh Senedd's ways of working and the Cardiff Bay 2032 project, the intention is to report by the end of 2025. This will be dependent on agreeing the membership of the Board, recruitment of an external academic to undertake interviews and collect data and the availability of Members up to and during the summer recess.

You may be approached by those conducting the background research as they gather information on how your work intersects with the audit remit. I trust that this is acceptable, and I will assume that you are responding on behalf of your Committee. If you feel that there are areas of work which the audit team should pursue further, please let me know, I am keen to ensure the review is comprehensive.

I will update the Senedd Commission and your Committee at appropriate intervals, however, I welcome your input at any time and I look forward to working with you.

Kind regards



Joyce Watson AS



Annex: Terms of reference for the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit

The Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Board has a remit to consider and report to the Senedd Commission by the end of 2025 on:

- the extent to which the Senedd, particularly in its parliamentary decision making, currently:
 - i. values and prioritises gender equality as a social, economic and political objective;
 - ii. actively supports inclusive representation and participation, recognising how gender intersects with other characteristics to shape access, participation and power, and
 - iii. reorients and transforms its institutional culture, processes and practices and outputs towards these objectives;
- identifies where further progress is needed to improve gender sensitivity and inclusion across all aspects of parliamentary work, particularly in parliamentary decision making, providing timely and actionable recommendations to the Seventh Senedd Commission and Business Committee.

In conducting its work, the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Board will utilise an academic fellow to undertake data collection using rigorous and ethical mixed methods, including quantitative and qualitative methods.

The Chair of the Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit Board (Joyce Watson MS) will provide updates on the Board's progress to the Senedd Commission at appropriate intervals.

The audit will also consider the reviews and recommendations that have been made regarding representation in the Senedd. These include (among others): an **academic review of barriers and incentives to standing for election** commissioned by the Remuneration Board in 2018; the **Expert Panel on Electoral Reform's recommendations** about diverse representation in 2017, and the **Future Senedd Committee's** recent work on solutions to barriers to representation.

