

David Rees MS, Chair of the Member Accountability Bill Committee
By email

23 January 2026

Dear David,

The Standards of Conduct Committee met on 19 January and noted your letter relating to the Member Accountability Bill Committee and the recommendations relevant to the Committee. The Committee welcomed the work of your Committee on the Bill and noted the report and the recommendations as a whole.

The Committee previously recommended the introduction of lay members for the Standards of Conduct Committee as part of its inquiry on deliberate deception. We therefore believe it is important to be clear that these provisions have been included in the legislation as a result of our report and recommendations, even though we are not responsible for the legislation as a whole.

However, having now seen how the recommendation has been incorporated into the draft Bill, the Committee has further considered the wider benefits of the role of lay members within the broader standards landscape and are clear that the introduction of lay members is also relevant to our current work on strengthening the standards framework in relation to dignity and respect matters. Indeed, one of the key suggestions the Committee is considering is the use of sub-Committees and lay members to handle complaints from Members' support staff or to provide independent expertise.

We note that your committee is supportive of the majority of the policy provisions, subject to some improvements which you put forward, however we also note the concern expressed in Conclusion 8 of the report, that limitations on the Senedd's ability to design its own procedures must be kept to a minimum.

Whilst this is something the Standards committee can empathise with the rationale on, we are concerned about an aspect of Recommendation 8 (which is based on Conclusion 8) that removes two parameters we would ordinarily expect to find on the face of primary legislation - namely the maximum length of appointment and the restriction on the number of terms a lay member may serve. We recognise that there will be a need for additional Standing Orders provisions to be agreed in the Seventh Senedd, but we are concerned that your recommendation would result in the removal of these two valuable parameters from the appointment process and potentially risk its implementation.

The Committee is of the view these parameters are more typically found in legislation rather than in Standing Orders, in order to provide clarity during the process of such appointments. The Committee would therefore welcome, rather than the removal of these parameters, the legislation sets out that:

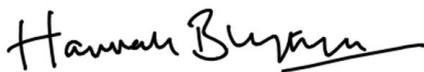
- Lay members should be appointed for a maximum term of five years, and
- an appointment should be renewable only once .

Retaining the provisions outlined above would still allow the Senedd discretion where necessary in relation to the length of appointment as an appointment could be less than 5 years if necessary. It would also provide discretion in establishing how lay members would operate while providing a clear structure consistent with other such legislation making provision for appointments by the Senedd (the National Assembly for Wales Commissioner for Standards Measure 2010).

Enabling the Senedd to appoint lay members through this legislation is important to maintaining public confidence in the Senedd's commitment to a robust and credible standards framework for the Seventh Senedd. Importantly, including a clear legislative framework will also support the next Senedd in progressing it at the earliest opportunity.

I have copied this letter to the Counsel General, Llywydd and Chair of Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee given its relevance to them.

Yours sincerely,



Hannah Blythyn MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.