

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

11 February 2026

Dear David,

Please accept my apologies for not being able to attend the Member Accountability Bill Committee on Thursday 12 February 2026. Lesley Griffiths has agreed to speak to the amendments tabled in my name.

Had I been able to attend the Committee in person, it was my intention to raise the following points on other amendments. These are reflections from my experience as Chair of the Standards of Conduct Committee, and are meant in the spirit of ensuring the legislation passed works well for future Seneddau.

Requirement for Lay Member Sub Committees

Two amendments (5 and 32) would require the Standards of Conduct Committee to establish sub-committees made up solely of Lay Members.

The principle of lay member only sub-committees is supported by the Committee, which itself proposed this approach in its October 2025 consultation on increasing independence in the complaints process, particularly for complaints raised by support staff.

However, the amendments as drafted would require the creation of two separate sub-committees, composed of different sets of Lay Members with no overlap.

The Lay Members serving on a sub-committee dealing with allegations of dishonesty (amendment 5) could not also serve on the *Senedd Standards Panel* proposed in amendment 32, as the Panel could be required to review decisions made by the sub-committee on dishonesty.

In practical terms, this could require the appointment of at least six Lay Members to ensure both:

- two separate Lay Member only subcommittees, and
- a quorum of three for any sub-committee, as required by Standing Orders.

If amendment 32 intends for the *Senedd Standards Panel* to consist of a single individual, further consideration is needed regarding the implications of vesting such significant decision-making authority in one lay person. If there are to be appeals, they would have to be narrowly focussed on procedural issues, so a single legally qualified person sub-committee could work, but would require

significant consideration. A more constructive approach may be to propose that at least one lay member has to be a person who would be qualified to sit as a legal member of a devolved tribunal.

These amendments would also make it difficult to ensure equal numbers of Members and Lay Members on the main Committee, as anyone serving on the Senedd Standards Panel would be unable to participate in the Committee's substantive decisions.

These amendments are areas that would benefit from consideration by a future Standards of Conduct Committee and being set out in Standing Orders rather than on the face of the legislation.

Deadline for Appointing Lay Members

Amendment 50 sets a deadline of 7 May 2027 for Lay Member appointments. While the Standards of Conduct Committee supports prompt appointment early in the next Senedd, this deadline introduces risks:

- A new Commissioner for Standards must also be appointed by April 2027.
- If Lay Members and the Commissioner are all newly appointed at the same time, there would be a high level of inexperience across the Standards system.

Although the deadline itself is potentially achievable, it is important to understand the operational risks when considering this amendment. I refer the Committee to the evidence it heard at Stage One that it would likely take up to 18 months for this provision to be put in place, and suggest this may be a more prudent deadline.

Welsh Language Requirement for the Commissioner

Amendment 9 would require that any new Commissioner for Standards has "sufficient knowledge and proficiency in the Welsh language" to fulfil the functions of the office.

The Standards of Conduct Committee supports the principle of ensuring Members can engage with the Commissioner in their language of choice, as noted in the Committee's Ninth Report to the Sixth Senedd, but this requirement may present challenges:

- The Commissioner role requires a highly specific skillset.
- Previous recruitments have attracted a limited number of suitably qualified candidates and this would potentially limit the number further.

The current Commissioner already ensures that Members' language preferences are recorded and respected, without a statutory requirement.

I hope these are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Hannah Blythyn

Hannah Blythyn MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

