

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee

22 July 2025

Dear Jenny,

### **Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review**

As you may know, the Reform Bill Committee's **Stage 1 Report** of the *Senedd Cymru (Electoral Candidate Lists) Bill* 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 decisions of the Seventh Senedd decisions.

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

This work is being overseen by a board, comprising:

Peter Fox MS, Welsh Conservatives



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Siân Gwenllïan MS, Plaid Cymru

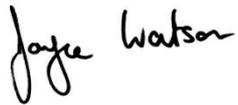
Mike Hedges MS, Welsh Labour

Jane Dodds MS, Welsh Liberal Democrats

The Board held its first meeting on 1 July 2025 and agreed to call this work the 'Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament Review' to give a clearer indication that the purpose of the project is to promote inclusivity. The intention is to report by the end of 2025. The recruitment of an external academic to undertake interviews and collect data is currently underway.

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 MS**



## **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.

