

John Griffiths AM
Chair
Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

18 September 2019

Dear John,

Voting rights for prisoners

Thank you for your letter dated 26 July 2019, seeking clarity on how the issues around prisoner voting and the Assembly franchise will be dealt with, and who will be responsible for this issue.

I note that the Minister for Housing and Local Government has recently written to you on this matter, committing the Welsh Government to the principle of prisoner voting for all devolved Welsh elections, including seeking an appropriate legislative vehicle to enable prisoners and young people in custody from Wales to vote in Assembly elections.

As noted in the Commission's response to the Committee's report, the Commission agreed in its July meeting that it would not be appropriate to insert provisions on prisoner voting into the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill as amendments. The Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee noted in its report on the general principles of this Bill that this would not allow for sufficient scrutiny of legislative provisions on an important constitutional matter.

The Assembly Commission has also considered whether it would be appropriate for it to address this issue through a future piece of Assembly Commission legislation. The Assembly has of course given the Commission a mandate to bring forward legislation to reduce the voting age for Assembly elections. However, the Welsh Government retains policy responsibility for all devolved elections in Wales. This is also a far more complex policy area than enfranchising 16 and 17 year olds. For these reasons, we believe that



developing any legislative proposals in respect of prisoner voting rights for Assembly elections, and responsibility for responding to the majority of the Committee's recommendations, are a matter for Welsh Ministers.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elin Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Elin Jones

Chair, Assembly Commission

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

