

Julie James AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/03366/19

Mick Antoniw
Chair
Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee

10 December 2019

Dear Mick,

I will shortly be laying a Statutory Instrument, *The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020* before the Assembly introducing new Regulations which will govern the annual electoral canvass from 2020 onwards. This Statutory Instrument will follow the affirmative procedure.

The new Regulations represent the culmination of a joint programme of work with the Scottish and UK Governments to modernise and reform the annual canvass. The Regulations will retain the robust elements of the current canvass but will allow more flexibility for Electoral Registration Officers to tailor the canvass to the households in their area.

As responsibility for electoral matters relating to local government elections in Wales and Assembly elections has now been devolved, in order to reform the canvass it has been necessary to introduce legislation in each of the three administrations. The UK Government has already done this through the introduction of *The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) Regulations 2019* which were made on the 4th November 2019.

You will recall the Committee recently reported on a draft *Order in Council: The Government of Wales Act 2006 (Amendment) Order 2019* and that the Order in Council was necessary in order that the reform of the canvass Regulations can be made in Wales. The Order in Council has been approved by the Assembly and by the House of Commons and was due to be made in Privy Council on the 13th November. However, the Order could not be made as planned due to the General Election and I am assured the intention is the Order will be made at the first meeting of the Privy Council following the general election.

There is some urgency to the laying of *The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020* so that important testing of new digital systems can take place in early February. In order to meet this challenging timetable, *The Representation of the People (Annual Canvass) (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2020* will be laid at a point in time when some of the provisions within it will be outside of the competence of the Assembly. However, the debate on the Statutory Instrument will only be scheduled once the Order in Council has been approved by the Privy Council.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I understand that this is not an ideal approach but the purpose of laying the instrument now is to allow the Assembly sufficient time for scrutiny. I hope you will appreciate the need to ensure that Electoral Registration Officers in Wales can participate in the necessary testing of new systems along with England and Scotland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

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