

To: All Senedd Committee Chairs
Via email

15 March 2021

Dear Chair,

Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Bill 2021 – impact on Senedd Committees

Following the passing of the Welsh Elections (Coronavirus) Bill 2021, I am writing to draw to your attention the impact on committee business prior to the dissolution of the Senedd.

The Bill shortens the dissolution period to begin one week before the day of the election, scheduled for 6 May 2021. Dissolution will commence on 29 April and Members will continue as Members of the Senedd until that date.

The rationale for a shortened dissolution period (one week rather than four), as set out in the Explanatory Memorandum to the Bill, is:

- To enable any new powers (provided for in the Bill) to postpone the election (which cannot be exercised during a dissolution period) to be exercised up to one week before the election; and
- To provide a mechanism to enable the current Senedd to respond, if required to do so, to the unfolding public health issues in the period leading up to the election.

Business Committee has agreed that, as far as possible, during the election period there should be a level playing field for all candidates, to ensure a fair election and equality of opportunity for all. This principle has been reflected in decisions taken by the Senedd Commission in considering the availability of Senedd resources to Members and Senedd committees during the period. You will recall that this approach was also discussed and endorsed by the Chairs' Forum at its meeting on 11 February.

In line with this principle, the Business Committee has agreed that:

- The Senedd will be in recess from 7 April until 28 April, to be called the 'pre-dissolution period'. The pre-dissolution period will follow the Easter recess (29 March -6 April). This is consistent with previous election years, where Easter recess has led directly into dissolution;
- In order to provide a 'level playing field' for all candidates as far as possible during the election period, Senedd business during the pre-dissolution period will be limited to that which is related to the specific purposes of the shortened dissolution as outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum of the Bill;



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- As such, Senedd Committees will cease all activity during the pre-dissolution period; and
- However, given its role in scrutinising urgent regulations, the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee may meet if it needs to consider urgent regulations related to Coronavirus, of the type that would require a Senedd recall, or regulations related to a postponement of the 2021 Senedd election, during the pre-dissolution period. To note, made affirmative coronavirus regulations would not routinely require a report from the Committee during this period.

Whilst Chairs and members of committees will remain in place formally, Senedd committees are expected to cease all activity throughout the pre-dissolution period, including (but not limited to):

- Publishing committee reports;
- Making public statements, in any media, including social media; and
- Any reference to the Member's position on the Committee in any public forum.

In the event that the Senedd election is postponed in accordance with section 6 of the Bill, I will convene the Business Committee to consider the Senedd business timetable, including the scheduling of committee business.

Once the Bill has received Royal Assent, I will be writing to all Members about Senedd business during the pre-dissolution period.

Yours sincerely,



Elin Jones MS

Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

