



**Y Gwir Anrhydeddus Elin Jones AS**

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To: Business Committee

3 November 2022

Dear Business Committee,

### **Number of Deputy Presiding Officers under Senedd Reform**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Special Purpose Committee on Senedd Reform's recommendations in relation to the number of Deputy Presiding Officers for the Seventh Senedd.

We would encourage the Welsh Government to afford the Senedd as much flexibility as possible when considering the number of Deputy Presiding Officers in Senedd Reform legislation.

The Senedd has undergone significant change since its creation in 1999. More law-making powers, powers over taxation and a significant change in the powers model means that business is more complex to navigate. As the Senedd's status has matured, the demands on the Llywydd's time as Chair of the Commission and Business Committee, as well as representing the Senedd at internal and external visits and events, have increased in parallel with plenary chairing duties.

To date, Commissioners have been called upon to chair plenary meetings on occasions when the Llywydd and Deputy Presiding Officer are unavailable, illustrating the need for flexibility in the provisions for supporting Senedd business. This situation is also underlined by the Senedd's recent agreement to elect an Acting Plenary Chair who has full powers over maintaining order and voting but who is not able to carry out any of the other Presiding Officer functions.

A larger Senedd may meet more often and/or for longer plenary sessions and so it is anticipated that there will be an even greater demand on the Llywydd and Deputy Presiding Officer's time.

In considering the need for additional office holders the Expert Panel was concerned that the *"potential benefits for the quality and quantity of scrutiny are realised"* and we are conscious of the need not to increase the number of office holders beyond what is necessary.

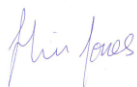
The Special Purpose Committee recommended that: *"...consideration is given to the question of whether the Senedd should have flexibility through its Standing Orders to elect more Deputy Presiding Officers should it so wish."* They also recommended that an: *"argument could be made that the Senedd should have flexibility through its Standing Orders to elect more Deputy Presiding Officers should it so wish (and any criteria relating to the party to which they may come from)."*

As a minimum we would therefore encourage the Welsh Government to amend existing legislation in order to remove the restriction which permits only one Deputy Presiding Officer. In order to uphold the principle of flexibility we would suggest that the revised legislation allows for "at least one" Deputy Presiding Officer. Sections 25(7-9) of GoWA 2006 would need to be revised to ensure that the Presiding Officer and all Deputies should not belong to the same political group, nor should they all belong to the Executive or non-executive.

In addition to the issue of the number of Deputy Presiding Officers, the Welsh Government may wish to consider whether an alternative title to Presiding Officer should be specified in GoWA. Our preference would be 'Speaker' and 'Deputy Speaker'. Similarly, we would like you to consider the Welsh titles 'Llywydd' and 'Dirprwy Lywydd' appearing on the face of the bill, with all references in GoWA becoming references to "the Llywydd" rather than "Presiding Officer" or Speaker by an amendment to s.25(1)(a).

We hope you find these observations helpful and look forward to engaging further with the Committee and the Government as the Senedd Reform programme progresses.

Yours sincerely,



**Rt Hon Elin Jones MS**

Llywydd



**David Rees MS**

Deputy Presiding Officer