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Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai
Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

David Rees
Chair
Reform Bill Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

7 April 2025

Dear David,

I would like to thank the Reform Bill Committee for their consideration of the Draft Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order 2025 and for the report which was published on 27 February.

I am grateful to the Committee for your interest in the draft Order, and I would also like to acknowledge your efforts to consider it within the confines of the consultation period. I trust the Committee found the sessions to be informative.

I have set out responses to the Committee's recommendations at Annex 1.

I hope these responses are helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jayne Bryant".

Jayne Bryant AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai
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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.

Annex 1: Response to Reform Bill Committee’s recommendations on the Draft Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order 2025

Committee Recommendation	WG Response
<p>Recommendation 1: We recommend that the Welsh Government identifies and engages relevant organisations on the design of the ballot to ensure it is fully accessible to people who may experience barriers to exercising their franchise, as a consequence of the changes to the electoral arrangements for Senedd elections</p>	<p>Accept. The Government is committed to removing barriers people may experience in exercising their fundamental democratic right to vote.</p> <p>The design of the new ballot paper is based on the current ballot paper for regional elections, and was consulted upon as part of the wider consultation on the draft Order. It is worth noting that the ballot paper provided with the draft order is a sample ballot paper.</p> <p>We are considering the consultation feedback relating to design of the ballot paper, for example, regarding the potential length of the ballot paper. We propose to make amendments to the directions for printing so that the names in a party list can fall across more than one column. This will also ensure that the ballot paper remains consistent with the existing tactile voting device.</p> <p>We will continue to engage closely with the Senedd Commission in terms of communicating the changes brought about by the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act 2024.</p> <p>We will provide the Committee with a link to the draft report on the recent accessible voting trials undertaken in partnership with the RNIB and local authorities, when available.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that any ‘grace period’ provided in the Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order 2025, for prospective Members to take up a seat once a vacancy occurs, is suitably informed by robust consultation including, in particular, the views of electoral administrators</p>	<p>Accept. As well as the public consultation on the draft Conduct Order, additional and comprehensive comments were provided by the AEA and the Electoral Commission and further discussions held with my officials to inform the final draft of the Order.</p> <p>Though the length of the grace period was not identified as problematic as part of the formal consultation, it has been raised subsequently.</p> <p>The length of the grace period will need to strike a careful balance between providing sufficient time for a prospective Member to arrange their affairs and the length of time a seat might remain</p>

	<p>vacant, especially if the process needed to be repeated to fill the vacancy.</p> <p>Work is ongoing with stakeholders in this area as we finalise the Order and the conclusions of that review will be reflected in the final drafting.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: We recommend that the Welsh Government ensures that appropriate measures are in place to eliminate, or significantly reduce, the risk that a prospective Member is disqualified from being a Member of the Senedd as a result of them providing written confirmation of their intention to take up a vacant Senedd seat before they have re-registered in the register of local government electors</p>	<p>Accept in principle. The guidance produced by the Electoral Commission for candidates and Returning Officers, as well as for those on ‘reserve lists’, are vital parts of the overall electoral system. It is this guidance that is best placed to provide the risk-reduction the Committee has proposed. The Welsh Government will respond positively to any input the Electoral Commission requests, whilst respecting the importance of its independence in these matters.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: We recommend that the Welsh Government updates the Senedd of any planned changes to the election timetable, and provides the Senedd with an opportunity to comment on any such changes at an appropriate stage in their development.</p>	<p>Accept. The Welsh Government has not committed to make changes to the electoral timetable ahead of the 2026 Senedd elections. Any future changes to the timetable for Senedd and Local Government elections would need to be made via an affirmative procedure SI, and consulted upon in the usual way.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: We recommend that the Welsh Government provide the Senedd with the opportunity to comment on any proposed campaign expenditure limits prior to the Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order 2025 being laid in the Senedd.</p>	<p>Accept in principle. The individual candidate expenses limit must be set on the basis of a recommendation from the Electoral Commission. In order to help inform that recommendation, the principle of aligning the limit to the expenses limits for registered political parties was consulted on as part of the wider Conduct Order consultation.</p> <p>As there remained an open question as to whether the registered party limits would take account of the number of candidates on a party list, and therefore the number of seats contested, or not, alongside the number of constituencies the party stood in, the consultation asked about the following scenarios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the party limits did incorporate a per-candidate element, that the individual candidate limit should be set at the same level as a party list of one candidate would have.

- If the party limits did not take into account the number of candidates on a party list, that the individual candidate limit should be set at the flat rate constituency level, and therefore also the level of a party list of one candidate.

The responses to the consultation demonstrated there was broad support for that approach.

We are closely engaged with the Electoral Commission in order to secure their recommendation, on which the Conduct Order will then be based. Once we have received the Commission's recommendation, I will inform the Senedd of the details. The draft Conduct Order is due to be laid in early May for scrutiny by the Senedd.