

6 February 2025

Future Senedd Committee – Forward Work Programme

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2024 which provided background on the remit, timescales and approach to the work programme for your Committee over the next few months.

Whilst the Committee and the Board have distinct remits, as you note, there will be some areas of shared interest between the work of the Board and the Committee when considering approaches and proposals for the future Senedd. I therefore thought it would be helpful to refer to current and recent Board consultations which will be of interest to or relevant to the Committee's work and outline the Board's approach to planned work over the coming months.

The Board is undertaking a full review of the Determination ahead of the Seventh Senedd; we are planning to publish in the Summer of 2025, with the intention to be able to provide Members and those standing for election with the clarity they need on the remuneration and support they will be provided and to inform the Senedd Commission budget setting process in a timely way.

In reviewing the Determination the Board has to reflect on several core objectives and principles, to ensure that Members are remunerated fairly and provided with sufficient resources to support them with their constituency and parliamentary duties, whilst ensuring that decisions represent value for money for the taxpayer and are appropriate within the context of Welsh earnings and the wider financial circumstances of Wales.

The Board has recently concluded its consultation on [Part One of the review of the Determination for the Seventh Senedd](https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s154677/Consultation%20Part%20One.pdf)¹, which included proposals relating to overnight accommodation, constituency office and engagement and support for Senedd Groups. The Board will be considering consultation responses and any further evidence to inform its final decisions ahead of publication of the Determination in the Summer.

¹ <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s154677/Consultation%20Part%20One.pdf>

The Board is also currently consulting on its [annual review of the Determination for 2025/26](#) and will confirm its decisions and publish the Determination for 2025/26 by the end of March.

The Board's work has been informed through engagement with Members and staffing and union representatives, and has been underpinned by analysis of data and evidence and international comparative research. The Board holds Representative Group meetings with Members, staff and trade union representatives and these meetings help ensure political groups and staff are able to highlight any issues or share information and for the Board to test developing ideas. The Board also holds regular drop-ins with Members before Board meetings and these provide a valuable perspective on issues that Members face on a day-to-day basis and support provided through the Determination.

The Board is conscious that in developing, consulting and publishing its proposals for a Determination for the Seventh Senedd by this Summer, it will clearly need to undertake a review early in the new Senedd term to assess the impact of constituency changes, any changes to Senedd business and new and returning Members' ways of working which might have implications for any provisions in the Determination.

As you will be aware, the Senedd Commission is also continuing to plan its support for Members for the Seventh Senedd and this is important context for the Board's review. Resources to support Members' work are provided by both the Board and the Senedd Commission and we are in dialogue to facilitate a shared understanding of how Members will be supported in the Seventh Senedd.

In response to the specific matters being considered by the Committee, I provide the following information:

- 1. The organisation of business in the Seventh Senedd, with the objective of identifying options that increase the effectiveness of its scrutiny activity, the efficiency of its day-to-day delivery of business, and the accessibility of parliamentary business to Members;**

The Board's recent consultation on Part One of the Determination for the Seventh Senedd included proposals for Overnight Accommodation, Constituency Office and Engagement and Support for Senedd Groups. As noted above, several of these provisions may need to be reviewed by the Board early in the new term, pending the experience and needs of new and returning Members in response to the organisation of business in the Senedd (for example, the sufficiency of provision of overnight accommodation may be affected by the number of sitting days) and their ways of working, both within the new multi-member constituencies and the approach to hybrid and remote working arrangements and timetabling for future Senedd business.

The Board also consulted on proposals for changes to the 'Support for Political Parties Allowance', including renaming it Senedd Group Support. The consultation document summarises the important role that group support provides in terms of facilitating and supporting scrutiny, including policy development and legislative scrutiny and the Board's proposals seek to reflect this important group function.

The Board will be issuing its Part Two consultation on the Determination for the Seventh Senedd by the end of March, including proposals relating to the staffing support provided to Members through

the Determination. This will include a new 'Job Families' framework which will seek to update the core staff roles and responsibilities in support of Members constituency and parliamentary duties, including support for policy development and scrutiny, as well as the overall staffing budget for the start of the Seventh Senedd term.

2. **Solutions to barriers (real and perceived) which may, or have the potential to, impede the Senedd's ability to represent people of all backgrounds, life experiences, preferences and beliefs, including consideration of the draft and final diversity and inclusion guidance for political parties;**

The Board is committed to promoting and supporting diversity and equality and is seeking to reduce barriers for Members, potential candidates and Members' support staff being able to fulfil their duties.

In terms of its approach to Members' pay, the Board's functions are set out by the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 which states that the Board should set a level of remuneration of Members of the Senedd which '...does not, on financial grounds, deter persons with the necessary commitment and ability from seeking election to the Senedd'.

The Board is currently consulting on proposals for Members' pay for 2025/26 in its [annual review of the Determination](#)² and will further consult on proposals for Members' pay for the Seventh Senedd in its Part Two consultation at the end of March.

The current consultation for 2025/26 covers the final year of this Senedd and also includes proposals to introduce 'winding up payments' for outgoing Members. These proposals were informed through engagement with Members, including former Members following the last election, and wider research; the Board has heard from a range of Members that resettlement payments and support for outgoing Members as they transition to their next chapter are a key consideration and a concern for many individuals when considering whether to stand for election. The Board also heard that some Members are concerned about future employment prospects for Members once they cease to be in their elected role, given their public profile or because they have been unable to maintain the professional experience, qualifications or skills of their former careers.

The Board has therefore proposed the introduction of a 'winding-up payment' to remunerate former Members for the period they work in winding up their affairs, which will also provide some financial protection and readjustment for those who stand down from office. Those who stand and are not re-elected will also receive the existing resettlement grant, alongside the proposed new winding-up payment.

The Determination includes several provisions to support Members' additional needs. These provisions were, in the main, informed through engagement with Members and independent research for the Board in July 2018 ([Unpacking Diversity](#)³). The Determination currently includes a specific Chapter (3A) on Additional Support for Members, which sets out support relating to

²<https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s156668/Annual%20Review%20of%20the%20Determination%20Proposals%20for%202025-26.pdf>

³ <https://business.senedd.wales/documents/s77244/Unpacking%20Diversity.pdf>

disabilities, support for Members with childcare and other caring responsibilities and support for Members on parental leave. Other support is provided to Members with caring responsibilities, for example, additional overnight accommodation costs for Members with caring responsibilities for dependents (paragraph 4.4.3 (h)) and travel costs for Members' partners or their children's travel (paragraph 5.18).

These provisions are currently being reviewed and the Board will consult on any proposed changes in its Part Two consultation from the end of March. The Board would therefore welcome any findings from the Committee which may inform the Board's review of these provisions so that the Board can consider them when reviewing the consultation feedback in due course.

3. The thresholds currently set in Standing Orders for the number of Members required for various purposes, including (but not restricted to) the formation of political groups, removal of office holders, and quorum.

As the Committee will be aware, the Board's recent Part One consultation included proposals to change eligibility for political group support for the Seventh Senedd.

Political groups are currently defined in the Determination as:

- (i) a group of Members who belong to the same political party registered with the Electoral Commission, or
- (ii) a group recognised as a group under Standing Order 1.3 (ii), Standing Orders of the Welsh Parliament, or
- (iii) an individual Member who has notified the Members' Business Support Team that they are a member of a registered political party

The Board's consultation however proposed that Senedd Group Support in the Seventh Senedd will be provided only to those Groups defined as political groups in Senedd Standing Order 1.3.

The Determination currently makes provision for additional support to individual Members who are not part of a group (under (iii) above). However, the Board's proposed change is based on the evidence gathered about the specific functions and needs of a group of Members.

The Board is also of the view that provision of Senedd Group Support only to those groups as defined in Standing Orders would more closely align with the intentions of group support as set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006 (section 24 (5)).

This proposal was supported by the Senedd political groups in response to the consultation, although one response noted that further research may be required on the impacts on individual Members. It is important to note that individual Members will continue to be provided with resources and support through their office and constituency liaison and staffing budgets, via the Determination.

The Board's consultation on Senedd Group Support commenced before the Future Senedd Committee was established. The Board's consultation document however noted that 'the assumption has been made that the threshold for a Group under Standing Orders remains at three Members, though the Board recognised in its consultation that the Senedd may decide to review Standing

Orders for the Seventh Senedd and the definition and size of a Group could change'. The Board will therefore consider the implications of the Committee's conclusions and the Senedd's decision on any review of Standing Orders in due course.

The Committee may also be interested in the Board's summary of the core purpose and functions of group support (paragraphs 112-122 of the Part One consultation document) which were informed by evidence gathering and engagement (see paragraphs 163-169) and the Board's research into political group support internationally⁴.

The Board's consultation proposed the following purpose of Senedd Group Support in the Seventh Senedd:

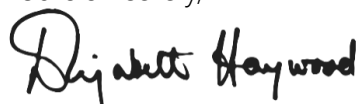
Senedd Group Support provides Groups with resources to provide central administration and coordination, research and policy formulation related to Members' duties, communications support, pastoral and wellbeing support, equipment and services. This includes costs related to staffing as well as operating a group office.

The summary of core functions of groups and the proposed revised purpose of Senedd Group Support were endorsed and broadly supported by the Senedd political groups in response to the consultation.

The Committee may also wish to note that, although there have been representations made that the Board should provide funding to political parties in Wales (in particular relating to policy development), the Board does not have the power to provide funding to political parties, but rather to individual Members or political groups of the Senedd. The Reform Bill Committee's report of 7 June 2024 provided helpful clarification on this matter.

I trust the above information is of interest to the Committee's ongoing work and I look forward to seeing the Committee's report in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Elizabeth Haywood,

Chair, Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd

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

⁴ <https://remunerationboard.wales/media/ofcnonp1/support-for-parliamentary-groups-uk-and-intl-comparison.pdf>