

Elin Jones AM, Llywydd  
National Assembly for Wales

10 December 2019

Annwyl Lywydd,

### **Committee on Assembly Electoral Reform**

Thank you for attending the Committee's meeting on 2 December to discuss the capacity and diversity of the Assembly. Further to the meeting, the Committee would be grateful if you could provide following information.

#### ***Capacity of the Assembly***

The size of the Assembly will remain unchanged until 2026 at the earliest, and the Committee is therefore exploring potential interim measures to address the capacity issues which face Members in a 60 Member Assembly. To this end, we would welcome further information on whether there are any examples of devolved legislatures which have arrangements for working collaboratively with councillors, council leaders or Members of Parliament as part of their formal parliamentary business, and whether such arrangements might be appropriate for Wales.

During the session, you offered to provide further information on the length of Plenary sitting times as the Assembly's responsibilities have developed. In addition to this information, we would also welcome information on the number of sitting weeks, any consideration given by Business Committee to addressing capacity through increasing the Assembly's sitting times or weeks, and your assessment of any implications such increases would have on the exercise of Members' other roles and responsibilities.

The Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform included in its report an initial assessment of the costs to the Assembly Commission associated with an increase in the number of



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Assembly Members. It recommended that these costs should be kept to an absolute minimum. During the session, you agreed to provide updated estimates of the costs that fall within the remit of the Assembly Commission's budget. The Committee would be grateful if you could ensure that these estimates include consideration of:

- any transitional costs, including any capital expenditure; and
- ongoing annual costs for a typical non-election year and a typical election year.

Please break down the figures into Assembly Commission staff costs, other Assembly Commission costs, Members' salaries, and other costs associated with the Remuneration Board's Determination.

Alongside the costs, please outline any underlying assumptions made when calculating those estimates, whether the costs are discretionary or fixed, who will be responsible for taking the relevant decisions, and how any estimates might be affected by decisions to be taken by a future Commission or Business Committee in respect of the organisation of Assembly business or support services.

**We would be grateful for a response on these matters by Monday 27 January 2020.**

In addition, you have agreed to attend Committee again in the summer term in respect of the Committee's work on electoral systems and boundaries, and to reflect on the evidence received by the Committee during our work on the capacity and diversity of the Assembly. In advance of this session, Members would welcome further details about measures the Assembly Commission and Business Committee might consider for the Fifth and Sixth Assemblies in order to increase the Assembly's capacity.

### ***Diversity of the Assembly***

You indicated that it is not clear as to whether legislative measures to encourage the election of a more diverse Assembly would be within the Assembly's legislative competence. The Committee would welcome further information about how measures to encourage diversity—such as anonymised candidate diversity data requirements or legislative candidate quotas—might be framed so as to fall within the Assembly's competence, the reservations which might be relevant, and the arguments which could be advanced for such measures being within competence.

Recommendation 22 of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee [report on Diversity in Local Government](#) called on the Welsh Government to:

*...assess the effectiveness of the provisions in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 in relation to data collection, and in relation to other candidate data that could be collected within the current devolution framework.*



The Committee would welcome your views on the extent to which the current devolution framework enables the collection of Assembly election candidate data, and any actions the Assembly Commission or others could take in this respect without the need for further legislation.

**We would be grateful for a response on these matters by Friday 17 January 2020.**

If you would like to discuss any of the above, please contact the Committee clerk, Helen Finlayson, at [seneddreform@assembly.wales](mailto:seneddreform@assembly.wales) or on 0300 200 6341.

Yn gywir,



**Dawn Bowden AC**

**Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor ar Ddiwygio Etholiadol y Cynulliad**

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

