

Decision on the proposal to extend the staff pay and grading review implementation deadline

21 January 2026

Background

Members who intend to stand for election for the Seventh Senedd, are required to review their employees' roles and salaries in accordance with the new Job Classification Framework by the end of the Sixth Senedd to ensure that all employees commence on the new framework from the start of the Seventh Senedd (as set out in the Annex to the **Determination**).

Following representations regarding the challenges of implementing the new support staff pay and grading framework before the start of the Seventh Senedd term, the Board consulted between 22 December 2025 and 16 January 2026 on the proposal to extend the implementation to 30 June 2026.

Decision

The Board met on 21 January 2026 to consider the consultation responses.

The Board decided to extend the implementation deadline to 30 June 2026¹.

¹ The Board's decision on 21 January 2026 is an 'exceptional determination' as the Board had previously made a determination relating to staffing support for 2026-27 on 10 July 2025. Section 14 of the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 states that where the Board has made a determination that relates to the reimbursement of costs incurred by Members in employing staff, the Board cannot modify that determination in relation to any period before the end of the financial year in which that determination first takes effect, unless the Board is of the opinion that there are exceptional circumstances which make it just and reasonable to do so. The Board must publish a written statement setting out its reasons for an exceptional determination.

As set out in the consultation letter to Members, the Board also confirmed:

- the provision of £1,275 per Member for external expert support, as set out in the Determination for 2025-26 will however not be extended beyond 31 March 2026.
- Salary changes for support staff can only begin once an agreement is reached between the employing Member and their staff, and this must happen before the 30 June deadline. The earliest date that new salaries can be paid is 7 May, which is when the new framework comes into effect at the start of the Seventh Senedd.
- If returning Members have not completed this process with their staff by 30 June, they will not be able to claim staff salaries under the old framework after that date; Members will therefore be personally liable for payment of any salaries should this deadline not be met.
- All new staff recruited in the Seventh Senedd must be recruited in line with the Job Classification Framework and the new pay and grading framework.

Next Steps

All Members who are standing for re-election are advised to engage with the Senedd Commission as soon as possible to better understand the process and begin preparations.

Where Members or their staff have had specific concerns about implementation or the potential outcome of the framework, it is understood that those who have engaged proactively have been given advice and reassurance and many have recognised the benefits of the new approach.

The Board would not wish to delay or undo any progress or work done to date by those Members who have been working to the original deadline; Members are therefore encouraged to continue to progress and complete this work in readiness for implementation from the start of the Seventh Senedd, where possible.

The Board welcomes the progress in agreeing staffing arrangements made by many Members. The early completion of this process ahead of the start of the Seventh Senedd will enable staff employed by returning Members to be remunerated on the new framework from the beginning of the new Senedd term.

Summary of Consultation Responses

The Board received 8 responses to the consultation and 7 were supportive of the extension to the deadline (1 did not comment on the proposal specifically).

Responses were received from the Welsh Labour Group, Plaid Cymru Group, Senedd Commission, Unite union, PCS Plaid Cymru branch, Paul Davies MS, Russell George MS and Mike Hedges MS.

Proposed extended deadline

The Plaid Cymru Group welcomed the proposed extension and noted '...the considerable work undertaken to update the staffing pay and grading framework...[and]...the new framework provides the required flexibility to Members as employers to determine the roles and the salaries of those roles in their offices, whilst also providing a framework that sets out clearer expectations, and ensures better consistency and fairness to employees with regard to their roles and responsibilities.'

The Welsh Labour Group response welcomed the proposed extension but suggested that the Board should consider individual extensions in specific circumstances, for example, where individuals are on sick leave or compassionate leave. The Board acknowledged these concerns, and noted that individual requests for an extension in exceptional circumstances could be considered through the 'exceptional costs' provision in the Determination.

The Senedd Commission supported the proposed extension. It also highlighted the risks to Members if they did not proceed with implementation in a timely manner, given some support staff undertaking similar roles may be paid on different bands and, should the deadline not be met, the Member would be personally liable to pay salaries for a period. The Commission suggested that the Board may consider extending the deadline into July or August 2026 to provide greater flexibility. The Board gave careful consideration to the benefits of extending it into the summer recess. On reflection the Board's view was that the 30 June proposal provided sufficient time for what should be a straightforward exercise for most Members and a definitive deadline within which to conclude the work, recognising that there may be some exceptional cases as noted above.

The proposed extension was supported by PCS Plaid Cymru Branch, Unite Union, Paul Davies MS and Russell George MS.

Other Matters raised in consultation responses

The Plaid Cymru Group, Welsh Labour Group, PCS Plaid Cymru Branch, Unite union, and Mike Hedges MS raised concerns about the risk of **'fire and rehire'** as a result of the pay and grading review.

The Board believes that this pay and grading review process should be constructive and Members are encouraged to involve their staff throughout the process. It is envisaged that, depending on employing Members' decisions, the new framework will see a positive outcome for most employees. It is therefore anticipated that the process should be straightforward for most Members and employees.

The Board does not support 'dismissal and re-engagement' or 'fire and rehire' and recognises it is not recommended as good employment practice. However, the approach and options taken by Members, including whether to rule out or consider 'fire and rehire', is a matter for individual employers.

The Board has welcomed the Plaid Cymru Group's agreement with the PCS Plaid Cymru branch that Members will proceed with the implementation and have committed as a group to not using fire and rehire in the process on a point of principle.

Although the implementation of the Job Classification Framework is not a restructuring exercise, the Board recognises that some Members may wish to restructure their staffing complement after the election. If Members were to implement the framework for the start of the Seventh Senedd, Members can still restructure at any point. The Determination provides for redundancy payments to be made (payable via a Member's staffing budget) should a role/roles no longer be required.

The Welsh Labour Group and the Unite union highlighted the specific concerns about the risk of fire and rehire for those **Senior Advisors who were caseworkers or office managers**, as the Senior Advisor band in new framework applies only to the Communications and Policy and Research Job Families. The Board has however been advised that Members' current Senior Advisor roles already align with the Senior Advisor job descriptions. The Board understands that Members have small teams and some staff undertake a range of duties. The Job Classification Framework therefore provides Members with flexibility to designate 'hybrid' roles, those roles that cover more than one job family, and therefore staff who undertake some casework or office administration duties could be placed on a Senior Advisor band if their substantive duties include senior communications, policy or research work.

A number of responses reiterated previous **concerns about the potential impact on Band 3 staff**, given the maximum pay-point (3) on the new framework is lower than the current maximum pay-point (5).

The Board and the new framework recognise the important role that Band 3 staff perform, across all job families. Salaries in the new framework have been independently benchmarked against the Welsh jobs market which confirmed that the maximum Band 3 salary was above the comparable market rate for similar roles. Band 3 in the new framework sets out accelerated pay-progression, higher pay-increments and higher pay-point salaries compared to current Band 3 pay-points 1-4.

The Board recognises the impact that this will have on those who are at the top end of the Band. It has sought to mitigate the potential impact on affected staff setting out pay-protection of up to two years for staff currently employed on pay-point 5 and who remain on Band 3 following the review.

Paul Davies MS raised concerns about **Members being 'forced' to implement an inflexible framework** and the Board has heard similar concerns informally and that Members as individual employers should have greater discretion. As noted above, the new framework provides a significant degree of flexibility to recognise hybrid roles within Members' offices.

The Board's objectives are to set an employment framework which governs how public funds can be used with probity and promote value for money, while seeking an appropriate balance between flexibility for Members, ensuring that support staff salaries fairly reflect their level of responsibility and encourage consistency of pay and reward by Members, and avoiding unfair pay disparities for the same job level.

The new framework, introducing job families is an approach that has been in use in the UK and Scottish Parliaments for some time. The Board is also seeking to provide further flexibility for Members as employers, as set out in the current consultation proposals on the Draft Determination for the Seventh Senedd.

The Board regularly seeks the views of Members as employers informally through drop-ins, Member Representative group meetings and through testing of proposals, for example, the new job classification framework was piloted with several Member and staff representatives. The Board also seeks Members' views as employers formally through consultations.

The Board was also supportive of the Standard of Conduct Committee's recent proposals to establish an employers' forum for Members and their staff which, if implemented, could consider and promote good employment practice and standards and provide a forum for staff concerns relating to implementation issues to be collectively considered.

