
Report on the Consultation of Part Two of the Determination for the Seventh Senedd

29 JULY 2025

Background

1. The Review of the Determination for the Seventh Senedd: Consultation Part Two was published on 25 March and closed on 4 June 2025. The consultation included policy proposals on Members' pay, additional support for Members, travel costs, office and constituent engagement and staffing support in the Seventh Senedd.
2. The Board is grateful to those organisations, groups and individuals who took the time to respond. A list of those who responded is at Annex 1.
3. Following consideration of the consultation feedback, the Board has decided to proceed with the majority of its proposals and has amended some to reflect feedback. The Board has also noted that the outcome of the Senedd's Business Committee's ongoing work programme may need to be considered in due course.
4. This report summarises the consultation feedback and the Board's considerations in response on each of the proposals.

Members' pay

Proposal One:

The salary level for Members at the start of the Seventh Senedd will remain at the same level as in 2025/26 and therefore will be £76,380 plus an increase equal to the rate of the ASHE Wales index published in November 2025.

Proposal Two:

The ASHE Wales index will be used to determine the annual changes to Members' salaries

Background

5. The consultation document set out the current salary for Senedd Members, which is £76,380 per annum. The consultation also provided context on Members' pay during the Sixth Senedd term: that salaries were frozen for a time during the COVID pandemic and that since March 2021, Members' salary increases have been linked to the Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings in Wales (ASHE) but been subject to a cap on increases of 3%. The Board decided to remove this cap from April 2025 and salaries increased by 6%, in line with the ASHE rate.

6. The consultation document set out the issues that the Board considered on Members' pay, including:

- comparisons with similar roles in the public, private and third sectors;
 - benchmarking of Members' pay in other UK legislatures;
 - Members' role and responsibilities,
 - Feedback from the engagement exercises included members of the public, Senedd Members – including Government Ministers, Commissioners, Committee Chairs and backbenchers, referred to as 'additional office holders' - Members of the Youth Parliament and social media comments;
 - the rate of pay that Members will receive at the start of the Seventh Senedd;
 - The pay for additional responsibilities, referred to as 'additional office holders' pay'; and
 - how pay should be increased annually.
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Summary of responses

7. The majority of the consultation responses did not provide comment on the proposals regarding Members' salaries.

8. In response to Proposal 1 to increase Members' salary by the ASHE Wales rate in November 2025, the Senedd Commission noted that Members' salaries have not been re-set during the Sixth Senedd but instead have had inflationary uplifts applied each year. These uplifts were capped at 3% prior to 2025-26, with the cap then removed giving Members a 6% increase in the year.

9. Although there were no responses from members of the public to the Part Two consultation, the Board noted the feedback to the earlier annual review consultation, when some respondents were not supportive of above inflation pay increases and others argued that that Members' salaries should not be increased at all.

10. Prof Kerry Howell from Northumbria University called for parity of pay across UK legislatures, saying:

'...one may consider that such differentiation illustrates hierarchy and is not helpful when establishing recognition, further powers and the notion of devolution as process. In the 7th Senedd the membership will be elected as Members of the Senedd MSs which does put them on a par with MPs and MSPs'.

11. In response to the proposal to use the ASHE Wales index to determine annual changes to Members' salaries, the Plaid Cymru Group agreed that the index continues to be the most appropriate data set to use given that it is the only index that takes into account data specifically from Wales. The Plaid Cymru Group also noted that:

'the decision on setting Members' salaries and any subsequent changes in salary should be one for the independent Remuneration Board.'

12. The Senedd Commission noted that the index has been higher than the 3% cap on salaries which was removed in 2025-26, and this will be factored into the budgeting process.

Consideration of responses

13. The Board noted the responses to the proposals to increase Members' salaries by the ASHE Wales index in November 2025 and to use the ASHE Wales index to determine annual changes to Members' salaries in the Seventh Senedd.

14. ASHE Wales remains the most robust and appropriate dataset currently available for this purpose, as it provides official earnings data specific to Wales. It is widely used and offers a

transparent, comparable basis for pay decisions, maintaining a direct link to trends in the Welsh labour market.

Outcome

The Board decided to retain a Member's salary at £76,380 per annum for the start of the Seventh Senedd, increased by the ASHE Wales rate to be published in November 2025, from 1 April 2026.

The Board decided that Members' salaries in the Seventh Senedd would increase annually by the ASHE Wales index.

Proposal Three:

An additional office holders' salary will be paid to those roles listed in Chapter 3 of the Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances 2025-26. The rate of additional office holders' salary will be increased each year in line with ASHE.

Proposal Four:

Removal of the lower rate of additional salary for Committee Chairs for the Seventh Senedd.

Proposal Five:

Business Committee Members will be paid the rate currently referred to as the Committee Chair (higher) rate

Background

15. The Determination provides for additional salaries to be paid to certain office holders in recognition of the extra responsibilities they undertake. These include Ministers, the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer, Committee Chairs, and Business Committee Members.

16. Currently, 35 of the 60 Members receive an additional office holder's salary for 2025–26. The relevant roles and corresponding salary levels are outlined in Chapter 3 of the Determination.

17. Although the Determination currently provides for two different rates for Committee Chairs, only the higher rate has been used during the Sixth Senedd. Business Committee

Members currently receive a fixed rate of additional salary, while Chief Whips are not separately remunerated under the Determination.

18. In the consultation, the Board proposed that:

- additional office holder salaries should increase annually in line with the ASHE index;
- the lower rate for Committee Chairs should be removed;
- and Business Committee Members should be paid the rate currently referred to as the Committee Chair (higher) rate.

Summary of responses

19. The Senedd Commission commented on the proposal on additional office holder salaries to say that it 'is in agreement with the Board's conclusion that it would not be appropriate for the Board to set a cap' on the number of additional office holder salaries payable.

20. The Plaid Cymru group commented that:

'...it is disappointing that the Board's proposals once again have not taken into account the considerable demand and workload of a Group Whip... We therefore believe that the Chief Whip role should be a recognised remunerated additional office'.

21. In response to the proposal to remove the lower rate of additional salary for Committee Chairs, the Chief Executive suggested retaining it for flexibility, saying:

as the structure, scope and composition of committees in the Seventh Senedd will be unknown until the Seventh Senedd, there may be value in retaining a lower rate in case the Board consider there to be reasons to distinguish between the rates for certain committees.

22. The Senedd Commission noted the impact that the proposal to pay Business Committee members the equivalent of the Committee Chair (higher) salary would have on the budget estimates.

Consideration of responses

23. The Board considered the broad support for recognising additional responsibilities through supplementary salaries and noted that aligning these with ASHE maintains consistency with the Members' salary mechanism.

24. In relation to Committee Chairs, the Board observed that the lower rate has not been used during the Sixth Senedd and that seeking evidence or assessing a particular criterion to justify a

small difference in salary between the upper and lower rates was difficult at the outset of a new committee's work. The Board agreed that removing it would simplify the Determination. The Board is also of the view that it is a matter for the Senedd to make any decision as to the relative 'seniority' of committees. In considering the role of Business Committee Members, the Board reviewed the evidence presented and reaffirmed that remuneration should reflect responsibilities linked to the formal business of the Senedd.

25. The Board reiterated its position on the remuneration for Group Whips, stating that internal party roles — including political functions undertaken by Whips — do not fall within the scope of the Determination. The Board remains of the view that only Business Managers with responsibilities for managing Senedd business should receive an additional salary.

Outcome:

The Board decided to set additional office holders' salaries for the Seventh Senedd at the current levels, as follows (subject to an increase equal to the rate of the ASHE Wales index published in November 2025) and that salaries would increase annually in line with ASHE Wales figure published in the preceding November:

Additional Office Holder	Additional Salary	Total salary
First Minister	£90,701	£167,081
Welsh Minister	£42,963	£119,343
Counsel General	£42,963	£119,343
Deputy Minister	£25,063	£101,443
Presiding Officer	£48,930	£125,310
Deputy Presiding Officer	£25,063	£101,443
Senedd Commissioner	£15,514	£91,894
Committee Chair	£15,514	£91,894
Business Committee Member	£15,514	£91,894
Leader of a Group not in Government	£15,514 + £1,194 per Member up to a maximum of £42,963	Up to a maximum of £119,343

Additional support for Members

Should 'additional support' provisions be retained in a separate, specific chapter or mainstreamed throughout the Determination?

Are the definitions, terminology and provisions included in Chapter 3A appropriate and do they reflect the social model of disability?

Is the support relating to disabilities sufficient and responsive enough to meet Members, staff and constituents' needs?

Proposal One:

Members may claim up to £350 per dependant per month (up to a maximum of 3 dependants) for costs of care during sitting weeks and recess periods outside of usual working hours, as set out in Standing Orders, and on weekends

Background

26. Chapter 3A of the Determination provides additional support for Members who face barriers to carrying out their role, including those with caring responsibilities and those requiring adjustments linked to disability. These provisions are intended to reflect the principles of the social model of disability and is intended to offer a more responsive framework to support individual needs that fall outside the standard allowances.

27. In the consultation, the Board sought views on whether these provisions should continue to be presented in a separate chapter or be integrated throughout the Determination. It also asked whether the current definitions and terminology remain appropriate, and whether the support available is sufficient to meet the needs of Members, their staff, and constituents.

28. The Board reviewed and proposed extending current provisions to support Members with caring responsibilities. The proposals included allowing Members to claim up to £350 per dependant, per month (up to a maximum of three dependants), for care costs incurred during sitting weeks, recess periods outside of usual working hours, and at weekends.

Summary of responses

29. Most respondents did not comment directly on the Board's questions regarding the format and structure of Chapter 3A of the Determination. However, the Plaid Cymru Group supported retaining a distinct chapter for additional support, noting that a standalone section provides easy access to relevant information.

30. In relation to Proposal One — to allow Members to claim up to £350 per dependant per month (up to a maximum of three) for care costs outside usual working hours — responses were supportive. The Welsh Labour Group welcomed and the Plaid Cymru Group supported the proposals. No comments were received from other respondents. The Senedd Commission noted it would take a view on adequately budgeting for this provision.

31. The Group also encouraged the Board to consider the recommendations of the Future Senedd Committee relating to caring costs, and proposed that the provision be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and responsive to Members' needs.

Consideration of responses

32. The Board considered the feedback received on the proposals for additional support. While responses were limited, there was broad agreement with the principle of supporting Members with caring responsibilities, and with the changes to entitlement as proposed.

33. The Board also noted support for ensuring definitions and terminology align with the social model of disability. It agreed that retaining a dedicated chapter within the Determination helps to promote visibility, accessibility, and consistency in the provision of support which is designed to remove some of the barriers which may otherwise deter some from standing for election.

Outcome:

The Board decided to implement the proposal to allow Members to claim up to £350 per dependant (a child under the age of 16 or adult dependant) per month (for up to three dependants) to cover care costs during sitting weeks, recess periods outside usual working hours, and weekends.

The Board decided to retain the additional support provisions in a separate, specific chapter of the Determination, and to keep the current terminology aligned with the social model of disability.

Proposal Two:

Members with caring responsibilities for a dependant normally resident with them in the Cardiff area may claim additional overnight accommodation costs of up to £3,870 per year for the first dependant and up to £1,290 per year per additional dependant (up to a maximum of 2)

Background

- 34.** The Determination currently makes provision for support where Members incur additional costs as a result of caring responsibilities.
- 35.** The Board recognises that Members who relocate to Cardiff during the week may have caring responsibilities for dependants who live with them while they are in the capital. These responsibilities may give rise to additional accommodation costs which are not currently covered by the Determination.
- 36.** The Determination currently provides support for Members who can demonstrate having caring responsibilities for 'a dependant who is normally resident with them in the Cardiff area' up to £1,905 per year in addition to their core overnight accommodation costs.
- 37.** In the consultation, the Board proposed extending the current provision allowing Members to claim up to £3,870 per year for the first dependant and up to £1,290 per year for each additional dependant (up to a maximum of two) normally resident with them in the Cardiff area. The proposal aims to provide practical support to enable Members with caring responsibilities to fully participate in Senedd business in Cardiff.

Summary of responses

- 38.** Most respondents did not provide comments on this proposal.
- 39.** The Plaid Cymru Group encouraged the Board to consider recommendations from the Future Senedd Committee on caring costs and suggested the proposal be reviewed annually. The Welsh Labour Group welcomed the support for Members with caring responsibilities. No comments were received from other respondents. The Senedd Commission noted the need to ensure appropriate budget provision
- 40.** The Senedd Commission noted it would take a view on ensuring that adequate budget provision is made to support this proposal, should it be implemented.

Consideration of responses

- 41.** The Board considered the feedback received in relation to overnight accommodation costs for dependants. While the number of responses was limited, those received were generally supportive of the proposal. The Board acknowledged that the proposal reflects the reality of Members' caring responsibilities and the need to maintain family life while working in Cardiff. It also recognised the importance of ensuring that support remains proportionate and transparent, and noted that the proposal is consistent with the Board's broader commitment to accessibility and inclusion.
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42. The Board considered the conclusions of the Future Senedd Committee report. The Committee suggested that the Senedd Commission should establish a creche and recommended a continued commitment to remote working in the Senedd. The Board's proposals and decisions have sought to facilitate and support Members with a range of caring needs and the Board's Ways of Working review has considered the anticipated continuation of hybrid working. However, these issues set out in the Future Senedd Committee are a matter for the Senedd and Senedd Commission. Should the Senedd Commission decide to establish a creche in the future the Board would wish to review the childcare support to ensure it remained appropriate and proportionate.

Outcome:

The Board decided to implement the proposal to allow Members with caring responsibilities for a dependant normally resident with them in the Cardiff area to claim additional overnight accommodation costs of up to £3,870 per year for the first dependant, and up to £1,290 per year per additional dependant (up to a maximum of two).

Travel costs

Proposal One:

Remove the limit on the number of journeys a Member can claim via central funds for staff travel to Cardiff from the constituency.

Background

43. The Determination currently places a limit on the number of journeys a Member can claim via central funds for support staff travelling between the constituency and Cardiff. This limit was originally introduced to ensure effective budget management and to reflect the expectation that staff would be based primarily in one location.

44. In practice, Members often require their staff to work flexibly across both constituency and Cardiff locations, depending on business needs and the sitting pattern of the Senedd. The Board has received feedback during previous review periods suggesting that the existing limit does not adequately reflect this working model.

45. In the consultation, the Board proposed to remove the limit on the number of journeys claimable for staff travel from the constituency to Cardiff. The intention is to provide greater flexibility for Members to organise their office arrangements and staffing support in a way that best suits their working practices.

Summary of responses

46. The Welsh Labour Group, Plaid Cymru Group and the Welsh Conservative Group all welcomed the proposal. The Plaid Cymru Group commented that it would allow Members to utilise staff more flexibly and support their professional development.

47. The Senedd Commission noted that the removal of the cap could result in uncapped expenses being claimed against the Determination budget, which may create planning challenges. It also noted that the change may have tax implications if staff travel is considered commuting to a second workplace, and advised that further advice would be required on this point.

Consideration of responses

48. The Board considered the feedback relating to staff travel and noted that responses were broadly supportive of the proposal to remove the limit on centrally funded journeys to Cardiff.

49. The Board noted the potential budgetary and tax implications for increased staff travel and agreed to further clarify the purpose in the Determination that this provision was for occasional travel to the Cardiff area by staff whose normal place of work is in a constituency outside of the Cardiff area; the provision is to ensure constituency staff could attend key events, meetings or training at the Senedd, rather than for normal commuting to work. The Board noted that previous claims for such costs, as set out in the consultation document, were low.

50. The Board also agreed to consider renaming 'central funds' for the Determination for the Seventh Senedd to provide greater clarity and aid understanding of its purpose.

Outcome:

The Board decided to clarify and implement the proposal to remove the limit on the number of journeys a Member can claim via central funds for occasional travel to the Cardiff area by staff whose normal place of work is in a constituency outside the Cardiff area.

Proposal Two:

Remove the limit on the number of journeys Members are able to claim for family members travelling to Cardiff from the constituency

Background

51. The Determination currently places a limit on the number of journeys a Member may claim for family members travelling between the constituency and Cardiff. This provision recognises that, due to the nature of the role, Members may spend extended periods away from home and may need to be accompanied by family members on occasion.

52. The existing cap was introduced to ensure responsible use of public funds while maintaining support for Members in balancing their work and family life. The Board has received feedback suggesting that the limit may be restrictive in certain circumstances and may not reflect modern expectations around work–life balance.

53. In the consultation, the Board proposed removing the cap on the number of claimable journeys for family members, while maintaining accountability through the continued publication of expenses. The intention is to provide greater flexibility and to support Members in fulfilling their role while maintaining family commitments.

Summary of responses

54. The Chief Executive sought clarification regarding the definition of “family members” as the definition set out in Standing Orders is broader than a partner or child under 18 noting that:

‘it would be beneficial to include additional parameters around the purpose of the provision as referencing “family members” will potentially bring a large group within the scope of the right to claim for travel expenditure.’

55. The Plaid Cymru Group did not support the proposal. It suggested that the current limit should remain in place and, if a review is deemed necessary, it should be informed by ‘good practice in comparable legislatures’.

Consideration of responses

56. The Board considered the responses to the proposal to remove the limit on family travel claims.

57. The Board agreed that providing flexibility in family travel arrangements supports Member wellbeing and work-life balance, especially for those with caring responsibilities or who live further from Cardiff.

58. The Board noted that the IPSA Scheme allows Members of Parliament to claim for journeys by their dependants (and their carers where necessary), their spouse or partner between their constituency and London, without a prescribed limit.

59. The Board also noted that any claims would continue to be made in line with existing accountability and transparency mechanisms and that previous claims for such costs, as set out in the consultation document, were low

60. The Board agreed that the definition of ‘family member’ to be applied to this provision should include a partner, child under the age of 18 or adult dependant, to align with the definition of the same for other purposes set out in the Determination.

61. The Board concluded the limit of 12 on the number of permitted journeys by family members should be retained in order to ensure value for money and reasonable use of public funds and avoidance of the perception of risk of improper direct or indirect personal benefit to Members, but would be applied on a per dependant rather than a per Member basis. This approach would ensure greater equity to provide support to Members who have larger families or more than one dependant.

Outcome:

The Board decided to extend the current limit on the number of journeys Members are able to claim for partners or dependants (child under the age of 18 or adult dependant) travelling to Cardiff from the constituency to apply on a per partner and per dependant basis, rather than per Member basis.

Proposal Three:

Removal of the requirement to present a business case for international journeys and to publish a report on the journey after it has been undertaken. Members remain accountable to the people of Wales via the publication of their expenses

Background

62. The Determination currently requires Members to submit a business case before undertaking an international journey, and to publish a report following their return. These requirements were introduced to ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public funds for overseas travel.

63. The Board recognises that international engagement forms a legitimate and valuable part of a Member's role, particularly in the context of inter-parliamentary relations, learning from international best practice, and representing the Senedd abroad.

64. In the consultation, the Board proposed to remove the requirement to submit a business case and publish a post-journey report. Under this proposal, Members would continue to be held accountable through the publication of their expenses, which include international travel. The intention is to reduce administrative burden while maintaining public transparency.

Summary of responses

65. The Welsh Conservative Group supported the removal of the business case and reporting requirements, welcoming the proposal as a sensible reduction in administrative burden.

66. The Plaid Cymru Group did not support the proposal. The Group argued that the requirement to justify international travel should remain in place to ensure the accountability and appropriate use of public funds. It also called for flexibility on what is considered a 'report'.

67. The Chief Executive noted that the removal of controls could lead to an increase in international travel without oversight. It advised that the Board may wish to retain existing

parameters around the purpose of such travel, even if the business case requirement is withdrawn.

Consideration of responses

68. The Board considered feedback on the proposal to remove the requirement for Members to submit a business case in advance of international travel and to publish a report after the trip.

69. The Board noted that there were mixed views in response to the proposal.

70. The Board considered its original policy intention to provide greater flexibility to Members whilst maintaining proportionate safeguards for value for money.

71. The Board concluded that a business case remained an appropriate and proportionate safeguard to ensure value for money, however, as all travel claims are published on the Senedd website, there remained limited value in retaining the requirement to publish a post-trip report.

Outcome:

The Board decided to retain the requirement for Members to present a business case for international journeys but to remove the requirement to publish a report after the journey has been undertaken.

Constituency office and engagement

Proposal One:

Increase the limit on the amount that may be vired between the Members' constituency office and engagement budget and staffing budget to 50%

Background

72. Chapter Six of the current Determination provides that Members may be reimbursed for reasonable costs relating to the running of an office and engaging with constituents, known as the Office and Constituent Liaison Fund (OCLF), to assist them with their duties as elected representatives.

73. Currently the Determination allows for the virement of funds between a Member's OCLF and staffing budgets up to a maximum of 25% of the value of the OCLF budget (£6,857 in 2025-26).

74. The Part One consultation undertaken by the Board sought views on the current levels of permitted virement. Two political groups noted in their responses to that first consultation their support for an increase to the limit on the amount that may be vired.

75. The Board is committed to providing Members with flexibility as to their use of budgets and therefore proposed that the limit should be increased.

Summary of responses

76. The Welsh Conservative Group, Plaid Cymru Group and Welsh Labour Group agreed with the proposal as did the individual member of support staff who responded to the consultation.

77. The PCS union and the Chief Executive both highlighted that viring funds from OCLF to Members' staffing budgets to fund staff salaries is not sustainable year-on-year due to the OCLF budget being increased by CPI and staffing budget in line with ASHE. This could lead to a situation where the salaries of staff fully or partly funded by funds transferred from OCLF to staffing budgets become unaffordable over time.

78. The Senedd Commission highlighted that National Insurance and pension contributions (on-costs) would be payable on any funds vired into staffing budgets and used to pay staff salaries. The Senedd Commission noted that the maximum total on-costs incurred if all 96

Members vired the full 50% from their constituency office and engagement budget to their staffing budget would be £329k (at 2025-26 rates). It should be noted however that viring of 25% of the value of the constituency office and engagement budget is already permitted. The maximum total additional on-costs incurred if all 96 Members vired the additional 25% from OCLF to their staffing budgets would be £174k (at 2025-26 rates).

Consideration of responses

79. The Board agreed to increase the level of virement to 50% of the constituency office and engagement budget, given the general support for the proposal during consultation.

80. The Board recognised the potential additional costs that would arise in the form of salary on-costs but considered that, on balance, the additional flexibility provided to Members should be realised.

81. The Board also acknowledged the issue raised about the sustainability over time of any staff salaries fully or partly funded via virement from the constituency office and engagement budget to staffing budgets. The Board has noted the risk that salaries may increase at a higher (ASHE)_rate than inflation and the potential impact of this on the affordability of staff salaries over time, however the Board is of the view that this can be mitigated by Members considering these risks when making decisions on salary levels at the time of virement, and ensuring sufficient contingency is built in for the duration of the Senedd term. The Board notes that the Senedd Commission provides information and guidance to Members on staffing matters and budget management.

Outcome

The Board decided to implement the proposal to increase the amount of permitted virement by Members from the constituency office and engagement budget to staffing budget from 25% to 50% of the value of the constituency office and engagement budget.

Proposal Two:

Increase the limit of the Office Start-up costs to up to £6,500 per Member

Background

82. Members leasing a new constituency or regional office are currently entitled to a budget of up to £5,000 for the purpose of 'starting up' and equipping their office with furniture, to

make any minor changes needed to the layout of the office and to re-decorate the office. This figure has not changed since 2011.

83. The Board proposed in its part one consultation and subsequently published that it was minded to make the office start up budget available to all Members at the beginning of the Seventh Senedd, not only those leasing a new office. This was agreed in recognition that most of the 96 Members of the Seventh Senedd will be leasing a new office and that re-elected Members who retain their current office will also need funding to pay for changes to their offices including the replacement of signage to reflect new constituency names for the Seventh Senedd.

84. Taking into consideration that some Members exceeded the office start up budget limit at the beginning of this current Senedd and inflationary increases since 2011, the Board proposed to increase the limit of claimable Office Start-up costs from £5,000 to up to £6,500.

Summary of responses

85. The Plaid Cymru Group and the Welsh Labour Group agreed with the proposals as did the individual member of support staff who responded to the consultation.

86. The Chief Executive suggested the Office Start Up Budget should be available only to those Members who need a new office, as the full amount should not be needed by returning Members who remain in their current office.

87. The Senedd Commission noted the combined Office Start Up Budgets of all 96 Members at this increased amount would be £624,000 but that the estimated actual cost based on historic spending trends would be c£349,000. The £1,500 increase to the budget is an overall budget increase of £144,000 for 96 Members combined. The actual cost increase will depend on the extent of Members' use of the increased budget in the Seventh Senedd and while this cannot be predicted the actual cost would likely be lower than the budget increase of £144,000.

Consideration of responses

88. The Board noted the clear support for its proposal.

89. The Board agreed with the Chief Executive that returning Members who retain their current office into the Seventh Senedd would not incur the same level of office start-up costs as Members leasing new offices. The Board considered its principle of simplicity and the principle of value for money and the benefit of making a lesser amount available to Members staying in the same office.

90. The Board concluded that it was minded to make an Office Refresh Budget of up to £2,500 available to returning Members who retain the same office into the Seventh Senedd, to refresh their offices and replace any signage displaying current constituency names early in the Seventh Senedd.

91. The Board identified that in light of these proposals the current £1,000 office furniture refresh budget which is available to Members serving a third term or greater is no longer needed and should therefore be removed.

Outcome

The Board decided to:

- Increase the Office Start Up Budget available to Members who lease a new office from up to £5,000 to up to £6,500;
- provide an Office Refresh budget of up to £2,500 for returning Members who retain the same office from the Sixth to the Seventh Senedd, with this funding to be available only until the end of the first year of the Seventh Senedd;
- Remove the current Office Furniture Refresh Budget of £1,000 for Members serving a third (or greater) term.

Proposal Three:

All expenditure by Members on health and safety measures to be funded from central funds

Proposal Four:

Change the requirements for Members' seeking a competent person for health and safety measures

Background

92. Section 6.6 of the Determination sets out that the first £500 spent by a Member on health and safety measures (cumulatively) is currently met from their OCLF budget with any spending above this threshold to be met from central funds. In line with its principle of simplicity and in order to avoid unnecessary limitation on Members' expenditure on health and safety measures

the Board proposed that all health and safety expenditure will, from the start of the Seventh Senedd, be met from central funds.

93. This proposal would provide Members with additional flexibility within their constituency office and engagement budget in future.

94. The Senedd Commission's Chief Executive previously drew the Board's attention to challenges associated with identifying an 'appropriate person' (typically a professional with relevant health and safety experience or qualifications) able to recommend health and safety measures that may be funded via the Determination. The Board agreed and felt that responsibility should lie with Members to decide whether and when the advice of 'competent persons' should be sought in respect of Members' health and safety requirements.

95. As such, the Board also proposed to remove the requirement in the Determination that Members must appoint an 'appropriate person' approved by the Chief Executive for any health and safety measures and, instead, replace it with the requirement that for any health and safety expenditure over a limit of £250, Members should seek the advice of a 'competent person' as set out in guidance from the Health and Safety Executive to reflect the requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Summary of responses

96. The Plaid Cymru Group and the individual member of support staff who responded to the consultation agreed with both proposals.

97. The Welsh Conservative Group agreed that all health and safety costs should be met from central funds.

98. The PCS union commented that changes to legislation on sexual harassment and dignity at work should be taken into account as part of the Board's consideration of provisions for health and safety.

99. The Chief Executive noted that the £250 threshold on health and safety expenditure on which the advice of a competent person should be sought appears reasonable. The Chief Executive also suggested that the Board provide clarity for Members on the definition of a health and safety measure.

Consideration of responses

100. The Board noted the support for its proposals and agreed that it was minded to implement both.

101. The Board considered the Chief Executive's suggestion on clarity and discussed how this could be achieved. The Board concluded that a health and safety measure should be considered any measure identified as required as a result of a health and safety risk assessment carried out on a Member's office in line with health and safety regulations, and that the wording of the Determination should confirm this position.

102. For the purpose of clarity the Board considered that it would be useful to confirm in the Determination that the costs of any advice required from competent persons in respect of health and safety expenditure above £250 and the costs of health and safety assessments carried out by Members will be met from central funds alongside all other health and safety costs. As noted above, the Board also agreed to consider renaming 'central funds' for the Determination for the Seventh Senedd to provide greater clarity and aid understanding of its purpose.

103. The Board noted that work is being undertaken within the Senedd to promote dignity and respect at work and the Board has been engaged as part of this work and is aware that the Standards of Conduct Committee is also undertaking an inquiry into Dignity and Respect. The Board will consider any matters of relevance to it arising from the inquiry. The Board is of the view that this is a separate issue to health and safety which is the focus of the proposals set out above.

Outcome

The Board decided to:

- Implement the two consultation proposals relating to health and safety expenditure;
 - Insert wording into the Determination to make clear that, for the purpose of the Determination, a health and safety measure is any measure identified as required as a result of a health and safety risk assessment carried out on a Member's office, in line with health and safety law.
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Staffing support for Members

Proposal One:

Introduce a new job families pay and grading framework for support staff

Background

104. During the course of this Board's term in office Members, support staff and trade unions have raised various issues relating to the pay and grading framework for support staff set out in the Board's Determination.

105. As part of its thematic review of staffing support for Members undertaken in advance of the Seventh Senedd the Board commissioned an independent, expert review of the current framework. The purposes of the review were set out in detail in the Part Two consultation document, to:

- Enable Members and Groups to provide fair pay for Senedd Member Support and Group Staff
- Take into account the roles and responsibilities of Members' Staff and Group Staff in the context of similar roles in UK Parliaments, the Senedd Commission and suitable public and private sector comparators in the wider employment market in Wales,
- Consider the skills required and range of roles that may be required to support Members of the Senedd and Political Groups in the Seventh Senedd, given changes in ways of working and the reform of the Senedd,
- Support Members and Groups to encourage diversity amongst Senedd Member Support and Group Staff,
- Enable Members to recruit and retain staff with the necessary experience, knowledge and skills, and
- Consider opportunities to simplify the current framework in order to develop a simpler Determination, providing an appropriate balance between achieving value for money for taxpayers and flexibility for Members.

106. Having considered the findings of the review the Board consulted Members, support staff and trade unions on its intention to commission specialist external support to develop a new pay and grading framework for support staff based on the job families model. The proposal was

well received and the pay and grading consultancy Beamans were subsequently commissioned to undertake this work.

107. Members, support staff and trade unions were engaged by Beamans throughout the development of the new framework.

108. In light of the work undertaken by Beamans the Board proposed the following new job families pay and grading framework for support staff:

	Communications	Policy & Research	Casework	Business Management & Administration
Senior Advisor	✓	✓		
Band 1	✓	✓	✓	✓
Band 2	✓	✓	✓	✓
Band 3	✓	✓	✓	✓

109. A classification framework document which provides details of the characteristics of job roles in each job family and at each pay-band was included in the [part two consultation document](#) (see Annex B).

110. The Board's intention is that all Members will be required to employ staff in accordance with the new pay and grading framework from day one of the Seventh Senedd where the salaries of such staff are funded from the Members' staffing budget. Accordingly Members seeking re-election would be required to follow the process of grading job roles to be employed in the Seventh Senedd in advance of the election. This will be a requirement for Members before they can claim for any staff salaries and therefore the expectation is that staff who continue to be employed by the Member will be employed in line with the new framework from the first day of the new Senedd.

111. Support on the process of grading job roles in line with the new pay and grading framework in advance of the Seventh Senedd will be available to Members by the Senedd Commission. The Board proposed to make additional Determination resources of up to £1,275 per Member available to obtain external support where necessary, for example specialist external HR or legal support, where such support cannot be provided by the Senedd Commission, and the Board sought feedback on this proposal.

112. Further information on the new pay and grading framework and its application by Members is provided in these [frequently asked questions](#).

Summary of responses

113. The Plaid Cymru Group was generally supportive of these proposals. It noted the lesser distinction between the role characteristics of the Senior Advisor and Band 1 pay bands (as set out in the role profiles prepared by Beamans and included in the consultation materials) than between the characteristics of other pay-bands. This view was also expressed by the individual member of support staff who responded to the consultation.

114. The Plaid Cymru Group also noted:

“We believe the job families can better define the different workstreams within Members’ offices and the expected roles and responsibilities of each staff member on a particular band.”

115. The PCS union commented that the proposed new job families framework is an improvement on the current framework.

116. The Welsh Labour Group and the Chief Executive agreed that additional financial support for any specialist external advice required by Members should be provided.

117. The Unite union, the Welsh Labour Group and the Plaid Cymru Group expressed the view that the Senior Advisor pay-band should apply to the Casework and Business Management and Administration job families as well as Policy & Research and Communications. Responses noted that Members should be provided flexibility to employ caseworkers and business managers at the Senior Advisor pay-band if they so wish, and that caseworkers and business managers are often experienced staff with a high levels of responsibility.

118. The individual respondent noted that the responsibilities of some staff do not fit neatly into one job family and that community engagement is not sufficiently reflected in the role profiles published as part of the consultation. They also raised the question of whether the policy development work typically undertaken by Senior Advisors would sit better within political groups than within individual Members’ offices.

Consideration of responses

119. The Board was pleased to note the positive feedback to the proposed new pay and grading framework generally.

120. The Board considered the specific issues raised in respect of the details of the framework. As noted by respondents, there is less distinction between the role profiles for the Senior Advisor and Band 1 pay-bands than between other pay-bands. This applies to the proposed salaries for these two pay-bands also. The new framework has been developed to reflect the types and complexity of work currently undertaken by support staff as identified via Beamans' detailed research work. The lesser distinction between the job characteristics and salaries of these two pay-bands compared with other pay-bands reflects the nature of the work undertaken by staff currently employed in these two pay-bands.

121. The Board's view is that the new framework aims to reflect the work currently undertaken by support staff and that it provides a more clear and consistent framework for identification by Members of the appropriate pay-band to apply to each job role. The new framework does not aim to alter the work undertaken by support staff including the level of distinction between work undertaken by staff employed at particular pay-bands.

122. The Board considered in detail the representations made in respect of the Senior Advisor pay-band and the job families to which it applies.

123. The Board noted that the Senior Advisor pay-band was introduced in the Fifth Senedd as a pay-band for a specific role to advise Members on policy and supporting their scrutiny of the Welsh Government and agrees that such a role continues to be required by individual Members. This pay-band was not intended to be applied to staff undertaking other types of work, although the Board recognised at the time that this may sometimes happen in practice due to the wide range of duties assigned in some support staff roles (which would be a "hybrid" role). The Board also took into consideration that Beamans found very limited evidence that Senior Advisors are routinely undertaking casework and business management responsibilities.

124. Having considered this issue, the Board reached a view that the Senior Advisor pay-band should apply to the Policy & Research and Communications job families only, recognising that senior staff in such roles usually have a higher level of responsibility and more complex roles than senior staff undertaking other types of roles.

125. In light of the positive responses to the proposal to provide additional financial support of £1,275 to Members to access external expert support for the job grading process, the Board agreed to introduce this provision through an exceptional determination for 2025-26.

Outcome

The Board decided to implement the proposals set out to introduce a new pay and grading framework for support staff from the start of the Seventh Senedd.

The Board agreed to make a sum of up to £1,275 of additional financial support available in 2025-26 to each Member standing for re-election, to help prepare for implementation of the new framework.

Proposal Two:

Introduce new salary ranges for support staff to take effect at the beginning of the Seventh Senedd

Proposal Three:

Pay protection of 2 years will be offered to staff members currently employed at the Band 3 salary maximum and who remain on Band 3 for the Seventh Senedd

Background

126. The Board's thematic review of staffing support for Members included a comprehensive exercise undertaken by Beamans to benchmark the support staff roles and salaries against the salaries of comparable roles in the jobs market. Based on this detailed benchmarking exercise Beamans proposed new pay-bands for support staff roles in the Seventh Senedd.

127. Further details of the work undertaken and the specific findings of the benchmarking work were set out in the part two consultation document.

128. Additionally Beamans recommended changes to pay-bands to address identified shortcomings in the current framework. These changes included reduced band overlaps and the establishment of consistent pay-band widths of 87.5%-112.5% based around the identified new mid-point for each band. Beamans also recommended fewer pay-points in each pay-band, with four pay-points suggested for all bands except Band 3 for which three pay-points was recommended. The revised number of pay-points recommended for each pay-band reflects the period of time within which staff can reasonably be expected to reach full competence (and therefore the maximum pay-band salary) in their roles.

129. On the basis of the work undertaken by Beamans the Board proposed the following new pay structure for support staff:

Level	Pay Point 1	Pay Point 2	Pay Point 3	Pay Point 4
Chief of Staff	£48,987	£53,652	£58,317	£62,982
Senior Adviser	£41,055	£44,965	£48,874	£52,784
Band 1	£37,583	£41,163	£44,743	£48,322
Band 2	£31,802	£34,831	£37,859	£40,887
Band 3	£25,211	£28,812	£32,414	N/A

130. Whilst the proposed changes would positively affect the salaries of a majority of current support staff, the Board recognised that Band 3 staff who continue their service into the Seventh Senedd at Band 3 would see a reduced maximum pay-point for their band, from the current £33,706 (as at 2025-26) to £32,414.

131. In order to mitigate the impacts of this change the Board proposed to provide pay protection for up to two years for those staff who are on Pay Point 5 at the end of the Senedd term, and for the costs of this pay protection to be met from central funds. Further details of the implications of this salary reduction, the numbers of support staff likely to be affected and the pay protection arrangements proposed by the Board were included in the Part Two consultation document and the [frequently asked questions](#) published alongside the consultation.

Summary of responses

132. The Welsh Conservative Group commented that senior salaries provided for within the proposed new pay and grading framework are not competitive with comparators in the public and private sectors and that the proposed salaries would not be sufficient to allow Members and groups to hire and retain top-quality and experienced staff.

133. The Unite union commented that support staff roles are undervalued in comparison to counterparts in other institutions and in the Senedd Commission and that Beamans' work focused only on pay, not other factors such as pensions, lack of career progression or job instability. Unite suggested the cost of Beamans' work should be published.

134. The PCS union, Plaid Cymru Group and individual respondent all disagreed with the proposed reduction to the maximum Band 3 salary.

135. The Plaid Cymru Group welcomed the reduction in the number of pay points per pay-band. The individual member of support staff disagreed with the reduction from four to three pay points for Band 3.

136. The Welsh Labour Group and the individual respondent noted agreement with the proposed pay protection arrangements. The PCS union and the Plaid Cymru Group made the case that the proposed pay protection will not provide the recognition of continuous service which should be in place for support staff. The Unite union argued that there should be no loss in pay or status for support staff and that two years of pay protection is not enough.

137. The Welsh Conservative Group also noted that the proposed new pay and grading framework does not provide pay-bands for senior group positions such as Heads of Research and Communications, Directors of Strategy or Deputy Chiefs of Staff.

138. The Senedd Commission noted that estimated new salary costs and cost of pay protection will be factored into the Commission's budget planning for future years.

Consideration of responses

139. Reflecting on the comments regarding the competitiveness of the proposed new salaries with the salaries paid for similar roles elsewhere, the Board considered that the pay benchmarking work which informed the proposals was comprehensive and took into account data on the salaries of a significant number of comparable roles in the Welsh public sector, other parliaments and the Senedd Commission.

140. The Board noted that the annual pay progression of support staff through the pay-points of their pay-band meant that all support staff reach the maximum salary of their pay-band over time. The Board concluded that staff employed in some other organisations, including the UK and Scottish Parliaments, are typically paid spot salaries and do not automatically progress upwards through the pay-band over time. MPs and MSPs determine a specific salary for the roles they employ within pay ranges determined by IPSA and the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body and there is no mechanism for automatic progression upwards through the pay ranges over time.

141. The Board acknowledges that reducing the Band 3 pay-band maximum will impact a limited number of support staff, including those who have not reached the current maximum before the end of this Senedd. However, the change is based on benchmarking and ensures alignment with market rates for roles of similar complexity and responsibility. Retaining the current maximum would undermine the objective of maintaining a fair and consistent pay structure for example by causing inconsistency in pay-band widths (therefore affecting the level of distinction in pay between the lowest two pay-bands), as well as losing the alignment of the Band 3 pay-band with market rates.

142. In respect of the comments made about the scope of the review only focusing on pay, the Board regularly reviews the support staff pension scheme, the terms of which are favourable

compared to the pension schemes of MPs' and MSPs' staff and other comparator schemes in the private and third sectors. Support staff are not eligible to join the Civil Service Pension Scheme available to Senedd Commission staff.

143. The costs of Beamans' work exclusive of VAT was £52,700 for the review of the current pay and grading framework for support staff and £43,710 for the development of a new framework; this work included research, engagement with Members and staff, the preparation and testing of the new framework, advice to the Board on pay and grading matters, the benchmarking of salaries and production of a Review report, draft Job Families framework, draft job description templates and step-by-step guidance for Members.

144. The Board welcomed the feedback received on the proposed reduction to the number of pay-points per pay-band and the acknowledgement received that this will benefit all support staff by ensuring they reach the maximum of their pay-band within a shorter period of time, including staff employed at Band 3 who will reach the band maximum within three years of employment.

145. The Board received advice that pay protection should not exceed two years, in line with practice in other organisations. Pay protection allows current staff to retain their existing salaries temporarily while new staff are paid at the revised rate. While short-term differences are justifiable, long-term disparities are more difficult to justify. The Board is of the view that the new pay and grading framework and the proposed job families, pay-bands and salaries encompass the full range of types and levels of responsibilities normally assigned to support staff roles (as identified via Beamans' work), including the senior group roles referenced in response to the consultation and noted above. It would not be feasible for the framework to provide a salary range for each individual role employed by Members and groups and the job families approach (used in the UK and Scottish Parliaments) is preferred. It is for Members (and in respect of group roles, Party Leaders) to determine the appropriate job family, pay-band and salary for each role, based on roles characteristics and the complexity and level of responsibility of roles including the specific senior groups roles highlighted in response to the consultation.

146. The Board acknowledged in the Part Two consultation that the proposed reduction to the maximum salary of the Band 3 pay-band is likely to have an adverse and disproportionate effect on female and disabled employees. Despite the reduction in maximum salary level, staff employed on the Band 3 pay-band will progress through the pay points to the maximum more quickly, during a two year period rather than the current four year period and will receive larger annual pay increases/increments than the current framework as Band 3 includes three pay-points rather than the current five. The Board's Part Two consultation document noted that affected staff were being consulted 12 months in advance of the possible introduction of the

proposed changes. In order to mitigate the effect of the reduced maximum pay-point for those who are paid that salary at the end of the Sixth Senedd term, the Board will provide 24 months' of pay protection through the Determination; it is a matter for Members, as employers, to apply the new pay and grading framework to current roles and to consult with any staff who may be affected from the start of the Seventh Senedd.

147. It is the Board's view that the proposed changes to support staff pay-bands have been informed by comparative benchmarking of salaries for similar roles elsewhere and the proposed steps are necessary in order to achieve the stated aims of the new pay and grading framework which have been widely supported.

148. A majority of staff will be positively impacted by the Board's proposals to increase the highest pay points for Bands 2, 1, Senior Advisor and Chief of Staff and the staffing data indicates approximately 56% of employees across these bands are female.

149. The Board published an Equality Impact Assessment of all its proposals for the Seventh Senedd (available [here](#))

Outcome

The Board agreed that the Support Staff salaries and as set out in the Part Two consultation document (paragraph 129 above) would apply from the start of the Seventh Senedd (subject to an increase equal to the rate of the ASHE Wales index published in November 2025).

The Board agreed to offer pay protection of up to two years to staff employed at the Band 3 salary maximum at the end of the Sixth Senedd and who remain on Band 3 with the same employing Member for the Seventh Senedd.

Proposal Four:

Retain the current formula for calculating the Members' Staffing Budget

Background

150. . The Members' staffing budget is calculated on the basis of an accumulation of the highest three pay points of the three most senior bands within the Members' staff pay and grading framework set out in Chapter 7 of the Determination. The Members' staffing budget for 2025-26 is £138,438.

151. The proposed new pay bands would provide Members with a slight increase in staffing budget. Using 2025-26 figures as a comparator and the current methodology the Members' staffing budget based on the new framework salaries would be £141,993. This constitutes a c2.6% increase in the budget.

152. The rationale for the Board's proposal to retain the current staffing budget formula was explained in the part two consultation document. The Board is aware that the changes resulting from Senedd reform and particular expansion of the Senedd will result in significant additional costs. The Board plans to review staffing support requirements and budgets during the Seventh Senedd, once the impacts of new constituencies, Senedd business, and changes to Senedd Group Support are clearer.

Summary of responses

153. The Plaid Cymru Group suggested the Members' staffing budget does not currently allow for the employment of the full range of skills required by Members.

154. The PCS union and the Plaid Cymru Group both referred to a disconnect between the proposed four job families and the staffing budget which provides for three full time equivalents only. They also noted that the proposed budget level may lead to 'creative' staffing arrangements leading to potential HR issues e.g. lack of line management accountability.

155. The Unite union stated that the proposed staffing budget is insufficient to fund proposed changes.

Consideration of responses

156. The Board noted the comments received which reflect previous comments from Members, groups and support staff that the Members' staffing budget should be increased, with references often made to the higher staffing budgets available to MPs.

157. As noted in the consultation document the Board will consider whether the budget should be reviewed once the impacts of Senedd reform and other developments which may impact Members' work are better understood.

158. The four job families identified by Beamans reflect the types of work normally undertaken by support staff and provide a framework to help identify the appropriate level and salary to assign to staff job roles. The Board does not state that Members are required to employ the full range of roles set out in the four job families, rather, that these job families reflect the roles typically employed by Members. Not all Members employ staff in each or all of the job families; for example, some Members' primary focus is their work within the Senedd and the support

needed may be primarily in the area of policy and research, whilst other Members have a greater emphasis on their constituency work and will focus their staffing complement mainly on casework and communications. The range of roles set out in the four job families reflects the full range of types of work routinely undertaken by staff currently but no suggestion has been made that each Member should employ staff in each of the job families.

159. Whilst the formula for calculating the Members' budget is based on the maximum salaries of three fulltime equivalent posts, this is a mechanism for determining the amount of the budget and is not intended to reflect the number of staff Members should or do employ. As set out on page 19 of this [evidence paper](#) on use of the Members' staffing budget a significant proportion of Members employ more than three staff. The setting of the budget based on the highest three salaries within the pay and grading framework for Members' staff provides flexibility to employ more than three staff on salaries other than the highest salaries for the three most senior pay-bands.

Outcome

The Board decided to retain the current formula for calculating the Members' Staffing Budget.

Proposal Five:

Removal of the Homeworking Allowance from the start of the Seventh Senedd

Background

160. The Board consulted on removing the Homeworking allowance in its Annual Review of the Determination 2024-25, as the Allowance was introduced specifically for the purpose of supporting staff to work from home when working at home was mandatory, and as other organisations had removed the Allowance post-Covid.

161. In light of concerns raised that the removal of the allowance would disproportionately affect support staff who worked mainly or exclusively from home due to their personal circumstances including protected characteristics, the Board decided not to remove the allowance at that time noting its intention to review the provision of this allowance ahead of the Seventh Senedd.

162. As noted in the consultation document the Board has undertaken an assessment of the impact of the removal of the Allowance on those with protected characteristics. On the basis of

the data collected by the Board the majority of those who responded and reported to be in receipt of the Homeworking Allowance identified themselves as female with some carers and disabled staff also in receipt of the Allowance.

163. Whilst acknowledging that removal of the Allowance may have a potentially disproportionate impact staff with these protected characteristics the Board does not see any justification for retaining the Allowance beyond the end of this Senedd, as those who are unable to work anywhere other than home may be eligible for the HMRC's 'working from home' tax relief.

Summary of responses

164. The Welsh Conservative Group and the individual respondent agreed with the proposal.

165. The Plaid Cymru Group suggested the Allowance should be retained for staff who can only work from home.

166. The Chief Executive noted that the Board's proposed approach appears proportionate and consistent with its principle of decisions within context of Welsh earnings and financial circumstances of Wales.

167. The PCS union noted that a more in-depth equalities impact assessment should be carried out.

Consideration of responses

168. The Board's equalities impact assessment identified that the removal of the Homeworking Allowance may disproportionately affect female support staff and some carers and disabled support staff will also be affected.

169. The Homeworking Allowance provision was introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic to meet the specific circumstances and needs of employees at the time; the public health and employment circumstances have changed since then and staff are no longer required to work from home. The Board's proposals to remove the provision are consistent with other public sector organisations who removed the provision of homeworking allowance several years ago.

170. This proposal has been subject to two consultations, during the Part Two process and during the 2024-25 annual review. The Board published an Equality Impact Assessment of all its proposals for the Seventh Senedd ([available here](#))

171. The Board has also noted that affected individuals and their employing Members have 12 months' notice to make any necessary adjustments and some affected staff may be eligible for the HRMC's 'working from home' tax relief.

Outcome

The Board decided to remove the Homeworking Allowance from the start of the Seventh Senedd.

Other issues raised

172. Numerous issues relating to staffing support for Members were raised by respondents which were not directly related to the consultation proposals.

173. The PCS union, the Welsh Labour Group and the Plaid Cymru Group argued for the recognition of past service with a different employing Member when assessing or calculating support staff eligibility for certain entitlements. Reference was made to the provisions recently introduced by IPSA to recognise past service in respect of the redundancy and parental pay entitlement of MPs' staff.

174. The PCS union raised the following points:

- A thorough equalities impact assessment should be conducted especially on pay and gender matters;
- The synchronisation of the indexation of Member and Staff pay remains completely illogical;
- Measures are needed to ensure staff on maternity or long-term sickness absence cannot be made redundant during their leave period.

175. The Plaid Cymru Group suggested the following points:

- The Board should look into establishing access to HR support for Members/Groups beyond the service provided by Members' Business Support and that the Plaid Cymru group would be happy to explore pooling resources for this purpose;
 - The Determination should allow for progressive practices such as internships, secondments, sabbaticals or unpaid leave;
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- The Board should review staff pensions and align employer contributions with those made to other public sector pension schemes.

Consideration of responses

176. As noted in the Part Two consultation document and in relevant sections of this report, an equalities impact assessment of the Board's proposals has been undertaken and several mitigations, where possible, have been introduced. For example, the proposed period of pay protection for staff employed on the maximum pay point of Band 3. The equality impact assessment has been published alongside the Board's final decisions.

177. The indexation of Member and staff pay is not purposefully synchronised. The Board has regularly reviewed potential indices for adjusting Member and staff pay to reflect changes in the Welsh economy and remains of the view that the Annual Survey of Household Earnings figures published by the Office for National Statistics remains the most appropriate index to use in respect of both Member and staff pay, particularly as this is the only source of data on salaries that is specific to Wales.

178. The Board acknowledges suggestions regarding support staff terms and conditions, including recognition of past service, pension changes, and options like internships, secondments or unpaid leave. The Board will consider some Support Staff terms and conditions in the future and will engage with support staff and Members to explore potential changes and their implications.

179. Staff on maternity or long-term sickness absence are not protected by law from redundancy during their leave period. Some statutory protections exist, for example that those on such leave are priorities for redeployment where possible, however it would not be feasible for the Board to require Members to continue to employ staff on maternity or sickness absence for example following the loss of the Member's seat. Members are not eligible to use their staffing budget following the end of their term in office and would not therefore be in a position to be able to continue the employment of staff who are on leave for particular reasons.

180. The Senedd Commission is considering the support to be provided to Members in respect of the implementation of the new pay and grading framework and, as set out above, the Board intends to provide Members with additional financial support to fund any specialist external support required beyond that provided by the Senedd Commission.

Senedd Group Support

Background

181. The Board consulted on proposals to replace the current Political Parties Support Allowance with a revised scheme of Senedd Group Support during its Part One consultation. The Board confirmed it was minded to implement its Senedd Group proposals as set out in the Part One report.

182. The Board considers that Senedd Group Support provides Groups as defined in Standing Orders with resources to provide central administration and coordination, support for scrutiny, research and policy development related to Members' duties, communications support, pastoral and wellbeing support, equipment and services. This includes costs related to staffing, externally commissioned services, as well as operating a group office.

183. The Board proposed a per Member formula for distributing Senedd Group Support, which reduced as groups increased in size and applied a reduction to groups represented in government, to ensure the majority of resources were provided to non-government groups. The agreed formula is as follows:

Tier	Per Member Rate Non-Government Group	Per Member Rate Group represented in Government (reduced by 75% compared to non-government groups)
First 5 Members	100%	25%
6-39 Members	50%	12.5%
40+ Members	25%	6.25%

184. The Board included an indicative 'building block' Per Member rate of £55,000 for the purposes of the Part One consultation, in order to demonstrate the potential allocation and distribution of group support resources. The Board also sought views on the implications of the proposed formula on groups that might be represented in government and, in particular, coalition arrangements.

185. The Board noted that it would finalise the proposed sums of funding per Member per group and implications for groups in a coalition government following the Part Two consultation.

Consideration of responses

186. Although the Board did not include Senedd Group Support proposals in the Part Two consultation document, the Plaid Cymru Group reiterated its previously submitted views on 'Group Budgets' and that 'greater flexibility' was needed to give '...better recognition to the true nature of the specialist work of parliamentary parties.'

187. The Board is of the view that the 'purpose' of Senedd Group Support provides clarity and flexibility and has broadened the scope of support compared to the current Party Political Support Allowance. The Board has also previously noted that the Board's functions and powers relate only to providing support for "political groups" under the National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 and the Government of Wales Act 2006, rather than political parties.

188. The Board also considered the balance of costs the Senedd Group Support would provide relating to staffing and externally commissioned services, as set out in the revised purpose. Although the Board seeks to provide Members and Groups with flexibility to organise their offices or business support to meet their needs, the Board remained of the view that Senedd Group Support is to be used predominantly to employ staff, with any remaining funding used, as is currently the case, for external support such as policy development or research.

Board Decisions: per Member rate and coalition considerations

189. The Board has noted that the Business Committee is undertaking a review of Standing Orders including the threshold for political groups. The Future Senedd Committee report concluded that political group size should be increased from three, and that a figure of between five and ten Members should be considered.

190. The Board's original modelling and proposals in Part One were premised on political groups consisting of a minimum of three Members, consistent with current Standing Orders. However, in light of the Future Senedd Committee's recommendation to increase the political group size threshold and the ongoing Business Committee review, the Board has based its decision on a working assumption of a political group at the lower end of the Future Senedd Committee's range (i.e. 5 Members).

191. The Board's proposals for a new pay and grading framework have seen the maximum pay points of several pay bands increase, including the role of the Chief of Staff, which is a role only applicable to Senedd groups.

192. Modelling the distribution and the total costs of Senedd Group Support is challenging given the number of groups that could be eligible for Senedd Group Support, the size of those

groups and that the size and/or number of groups represented in government will be shaped by the outcome of the Senedd election in May 2026.

193. The Board has however modelled a range of scenarios based on different group sizes and combinations of government groups and the Board is of the view that £60,000 is an appropriate Per Member ‘building block’ which would provide proportionate and sufficient resource for groups of differing sizes to employ staff necessary to support the purposes of Senedd Group Support.

Outcome

The Board has decided that the core per Member rate for the start of the Seventh Senedd will be set at £60,000.

The per Member rate will be adjusted from 1 April 2027 and each year following by the change in the ASHE published in the preceding November.

194. To provide comparative context, the Board’s Part One consultation modelled the proposed new formula, if it were applied to the political balance and group distribution of the current Senedd of 60 Members. The following is an updated version of this comparative table:

	Labour	Cons	Plaid Cymru	Lib Dem	Ind (Con)	Ind	Total
Members	30	15	12	1	1	1	60
Current PPSA allocation 2025-26	£203,480	£531,249	£438,433	£30,939	£30,939	£0	£1,235,040
Senedd Group Support	£262,500	£600,000	£510,000	£0	£0	£0	£1,372,500

195. The Board has confirmed the core Per Member rate at this stage, so that current groups and political parties can model their potential group support allocation, including any staffing structures (and applying the pay and grading review ahead of the Seventh Senedd), based on their own electoral modelling scenarios.

196. The Board also considered the implications of the reduced Per Member rate applied to groups represented in government.

197. The Board remains committed to ensuring that Senedd Group support is weighted to provide greater resources to non-government groups than to groups represented in government. However, the Board also recognises that government groups can include a

number of backbench Members who undertake policy development, scrutiny of legislation and scrutiny of the government, including in a coalition scenario.

198. One of the Board's guiding principles is to support the strategic purpose of the Senedd. The Board noted in its Part One consultation that coalitions have been a regular feature of devolved government over various terms of the Senedd and National Assembly for Wales. With the new electoral system, it is anticipated that coalitions will continue to be a feature, if not a necessity, to enable a stable Government and a Senedd that can operate effectively.

199. In the Board's modelling, in some coalition scenarios, government groups with significant number of Members would see a reduction in Senedd Group Support to a level that would provide a budget insufficient to employ staff required to support the group's core functions and the purpose of Senedd Group Support.

200. The Board therefore considered a range of options to mitigate the impact in such situations, including a floor mechanism. The Board concluded that a floor based on an accumulation of the highest three pay points of the three most senior bands employable within a Group Office (Chief of Staff, Senior Advisor and Band 1), similar to the Board's existing methodology for calculating a Member's staffing budget, was appropriate and ensured the provision of proportionate staffing resources; this approach would ensure groups of 17 or fewer Members have a sufficient budget to employ at least 3 members of staff.

Outcome

The Board decided to set a Senedd Group Support floor for government groups, based on an accumulation of the highest three pay points of the three most senior bands employable within a Group Office (Chief of Staff, Senior Advisor and Band 1).

Other issues

The following issues were raised by the Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd:

201. The Chief Executive drew attention to their dual role in the process outlined in the Determination for determining whether or not late claims by Members for the reimbursement of costs should be accepted or rejected, and suggested the process should be reviewed. Claims must be submitted within three months of the end of the month to which the expenditure relates. Paragraph 2.3.8 of the Determination sets out that where a late claim is made by a Member the Chief Executive may be asked to decide on the reasonableness of any justification provided for the lateness of claim. Should a Member be dissatisfied with the outcome of a decision on a claim they may appeal the decision to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive noted their role in the initial stage of deciding the reasonableness of any justification should be removed to avoid the unreasonable position of appealing to the Chief Executive when they have previously given a view on the claim.

202. The Chief Executive also drew attention to the absence in the Determination of clear provisions on subsistence for Members, other than £20 per night for an evening meal for a Member or their staff when staying overnight in a hotel or serviced accommodation. The Chief Executive noted that the introduction of a clear provision which details the entitlement of Members and support staff in relation to subsistence in all circumstances would provide clarity to Members and simplify the administration of claims.

Consideration of issues

203. On the first of these two issues the Board acknowledged the conflict of interest arising from the Chief Executive's dual role in the process of determining late claims. In line with its strategic aim of simplifying the Determination the Board is reviewing the content and wording of the Determination, in advance of the Seventh Senedd. The Board will consider the issue raised as part of this work of simplifying the Determination.

204. The Board agreed to review the subsistence provisions for Members in advance of the Seventh Senedd.

Annex 1: Respondents to the consultation

Senedd Commissioner for Standards

Welsh Conservative Group

Welsh Labour Group

Plaid Cymru Group

Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd

Elin Jones MS, Llywydd and Chair of the Senedd Commission

Anonymous, Support Staff

Unite Union

PCS Union

Prof Kerry Howell, Northumbria University
