

Annual report 2020-21 on the exercise of the Llywydd's Committee's functions

This is an annual report on the exercise of the functions of the Senedd's Llywydd's Committee during the financial year 2020-21.

The Committee's remit is to scrutinise financial estimates and five-year plans submitted to it by the Electoral Commission in discharging their functions relating to devolved Welsh elections and devolved Welsh referendums.¹

¹ See Schedule 1 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 as amended by the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020



1. Background

1. The Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020 provides for the funding of the Electoral Commission's work on devolved Welsh elections and devolved Welsh referendums from the Welsh Consolidated Fund. The Act also provided for the establishment of a new committee of Senedd Cymru, the Llywydd's Committee, with responsibility for scrutiny of the Electoral Commission's financial estimates and five-year plans relating to the Commission's work on devolved Welsh elections and devolved Welsh referendums.

2. On 23 September 2020, Members of the Senedd agreed a motion to establish the Llywydd's Committee and elect its members. The Committee has six members, two ex-officio members and four members on behalf of the political groups represented in the Senedd. The two ex-officio members are Ann Jones MS (chair), in Ann's capacity as the Senedd's Deputy Presiding Officer, and Llyr Huws Gruffydd MS in Llyr's capacity as the Chair of the Senedd's Finance Committee. The four members on behalf of political groups are:

- Suzy Davies MS (Welsh Conservatives)
- Dai Lloyd MS (Plaid Cymru)
- Rhianon Passmore MS (Welsh Labour)
- David J Rowlands MS (Independent Alliance for Reform)

3. Paragraph 20B of Schedule 1 to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, as inserted by section 28(5) of the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020, requires the Llywydd's Committee to report annually on the exercise of its functions:

"20B(1) The Llywydd's Committee must, at least once in each year—

- (a) prepare a report on the exercise by the Llywydd's Committee of its functions under this Schedule, and*
- (b) lay the report before Senedd Cymru."*

4. This is the first annual report on the exercise of the Llywydd's Committee's functions. It covers the period from 23 September 2020 (the date on which the Senedd established the Committee) to 31 March 2021.

2. The Committee's work during 2020-21

Arrangements for the funding of the Electoral Commission

5. The Electoral Commission has prepared a Statement of Funding Principles² between itself, the Llywydd's Committee, Speaker's Committee of the House of Commons and Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on the allocation of the Electoral Commission's costs between those committees and corporate body. This non-legally binding statement sets out the formula to be used to calculate each body's contribution to the Electoral Commission's annual budget in future. It is this Committee's view that such a statement provides clarity and assurance to all the relevant parties on the basis for the preparation of Electoral Commission financial estimates in future.

Financial scrutiny

6. The Committee is required to scrutinise financial estimates and five-year plans submitted to it by the Electoral Commission. The Committee must decide whether it is satisfied that such estimates and plans are consistent with the economical, efficient and effective discharge by the Commission of their functions in relation to devolved Welsh elections and devolved Welsh referendums.

7. In determining whether it is so satisfied the Committee must take account of reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the economy, efficiency or effectiveness with which the Electoral Commission have used their resources in discharging their functions in relation to devolved Welsh elections and devolved Welsh referendums. The Committee must also consult the Welsh Ministers on financial estimates and five-year plans submitted by the Electoral Commission and have regard to any advice the Welsh Ministers may give.

8. On its establishment this Llywydd's Committee adopted the Senedd's Finance Committee's Statement of Principles. This statement sets out the principles bodies funded directly from the Welsh Consolidated Fund are expected to have regard to when making budget proposals for consideration by the Finance Committee. They are intended to help ensure that financial estimates submitted to the Finance Committee are transparent, prudent and reflective of wider economic circumstances in Wales. The Electoral Commission was asked to consider the statement of principles when preparing its financial estimates. We

² The Electoral Commission's Statement of Funding Principles

recommend that the Sixth Senedd's Llywydd's Committee also adopts the Finance Committee's statement of principles.

9. On 1 October 2020 the Electoral Commission submitted to the Llywydd's Committee a financial estimate for 2021-22 and a five-year plan for 2020- 21 to 2024-25. The Committee met on 6 November 2020 to scrutinise the estimate and plan, taking evidence from representatives on behalf of the Electoral Commission.

10. Having considered the evidence provided by the Electoral Commission, as well as a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General and advice from the Welsh Ministers, the Committee was satisfied that the estimate and plan were consistent with the economical, efficient and effective discharge by the Electoral Commission of its functions in relation to devolved Welsh elections and devolved Welsh referendums. The Committee recommended that the Electoral Commission should monitor its spending on devolved Welsh elections against the estimate provided. It also recommended changes to the presentation of the Electoral Commission's financial estimates in future.

11. This Committee recommended in its autumn 2020 scrutiny report that the Electoral Commission keeps the Committee informed on any cost increases resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and whether these costs are likely to require a revised estimate. It is recommended that should the pandemic persist into the financial year 2021-22, to which the financial estimate considered in autumn 2020 relates, the Electoral Commission should liaise closely with the Committee on the need for a revised estimate to reflect any unforeseen increases to the Electoral Commission's costs.

12. The Committee's report on its scrutiny of the estimate and plan is available [here](#).³

Meetings

13. The Committee met once during the financial year 2020-21, on 6 November 2020, to scrutinise the Electoral Commission's financial estimate and five-year plan for 2021-22. Details of the meeting including a transcript and video recording are available [here](#).⁴

³ <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13834/cr-ld13834-e.pdf>

⁴ <https://business.senedd.wales/ielListDocuments.aspx?CId=555&MId=6615&Ver=4>