Welsh Parliament
Senedd Business

Guidance on the proper conduct of Senedd Business

Issued by the Llywydd under Standing Order 6.17

April 2026

The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people. Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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Issued by the Presiding Officer under Standing Order 6.17 following consultation with the Business Committee, the guidance should be considered alongside the following:

Standing Orders of the Welsh Parliament

Guide to Plenary

Guidance on Virtual and Hybrid Proceedings

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1. General provisions: Tabling and laying

Admissibility of business

1. The Presiding Officer is the final authority on the acceptability of business but in practice delegates this authority to the Table Office. The Table Office's decision to refuse to accept an item of business is subject to appeal to the Presiding Officer. There is no formal process for appeals. Members should contact the Presiding Officer directly if they are not satisfied with a decision by the Table Office.

Tabling procedures

2. Business must be tabled through the Table Office System.

3. Members may authorise another Member or a Member's support staff to table business on their behalf by emailing tableoffice@senedd.wales. Table Office will ensure that the relevant access permissions are provided as soon as possible, and will maintain a list of authorisations given by each Member.

4. If any item of business is tabled in the names of more than one Member, each Member must approve the co-submitted item through the Table Office System.

English and Welsh

5. Any document laid or business tabled by the Presiding Officer, the Commission, the Government, any committee or the Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd, must be laid or tabled in both English and Welsh, so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable. (SO15.4)

Notice periods

6. Standing Orders specify notice periods for the tabling of certain items of business. The following notice periods must apply unless Standing Orders provide otherwise:

i. **Oral questions**: Questions to the First Minister must be tabled at least three working days before they are to be answered; questions to Ministers, the Counsel General and the Commission must be

tabled at least five working days before they are to be answered (Standing Order 12.59);

ii. Written questions: At least five working days before they are to be answered (Standing Order 14.3);

iii. **Motions**: At least five working days before they are to be debated (Standing Order 12.20);

iv. **Amendments**: At least three working days before the motion is to be debated (Standing Order 12.22);

v. Adding a name to a motion or amendment: Any time up until the end of the working day before it is due to be considered in Plenary (Standing Orders 12.21 and 12.22(ii)).

N.B. different rules apply to amendments to Bills. For further information please contact the clerking team supporting the Bill in question.

7. Standing Orders provide that a working day is any day unless it is:

i. a Saturday or a Sunday;

ii. Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Maundy Thursday or Good Friday;

iii. a day which is a bank holiday in Wales; or

iv. a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning.

8. In practice, to be considered at a Tuesday Plenary meeting, a motion must be received by the Table Office during its agreed office hours no later than the previous Tuesday. An amendment to this motion must be received by the Table Office during its agreed office hours no later than the previous Thursday. Where a bank holiday etc. intervenes, this deadline will change and the Table Office will notify Members of any such changes.

9. The receipt, by the Clerk (in practice, the Table Office), of any document or business on a working day during its agreed office hours (including receipt by electronic means) constitutes (as the case may be) the laying of the document or the tabling of the business (Standing Order 15.5). The Presiding Officer has ruled that it is the time of receipt by the Table Office, and not the time any business was sent, that must be considered. Any business received outside the

agreed office hours is recorded as if it had been tabled or laid on the following working day.

Declaration of financial interests

10. It is an offence under **Section 36 of the Government of Wales Act 2006** for Members to take part in any Senedd proceedings without complying with the provisions of Standing Order 2 relating to registering and declaring registrable interests. Standing Order 13.8A and 17.24A also require Members to declare relevant interests relating to them or any family member which could reasonably be thought by others to influence the Member's contribution.

11. Under Standing Order 15.6, Members must also declare any relevant interests they have in the matter concerned before tabling any business. . Members can do so by indicating that they have a relevant interest to declare on the relevant forms or in the Table Office System. Business tabled with a declaration of relevant interest is marked on the order paper. If Members are in any doubt they should seek advice from the Registrar of Members' Interests through the Table Office.

Withdrawal of business

12. Business may be withdrawn by the Member or those authorised to table on behalf of the Member, by giving notice to the Table Office by e-mail. The following rules apply:

i. **Motions** can be withdrawn at any point before they are moved, although the Table Office should be given notice of at least two hours.

ii. The Table Office will notify Members of any such withdrawals by electronic means. If a withdrawal has not been made, a Member may consider (as an alternative) not moving a motion or amendment . Once a motion or amendment has been moved it can only be withdrawn with the unanimous agreement of the Senedd.

iii. Once Members have added their name to a motion or amendment they, or those authorised to table on their behalf, may withdraw it by e-mail at any point before it is moved, although the Table Office should be given notice of at least two hours.

iv. Withdrawing **oral questions** is detrimental to the Senedd's ability to scrutinise Ministers, and Members therefore should only do so where they cannot attend Plenary due to unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances. The Presiding Officer will expect Members to provide a reason for the withdrawal. Oral questions can only be withdrawn before the start of Plenary. Any requests to withdraw after this point cannot be accepted by the Table Office and the question will instead be 'not asked'.

On receiving notice of the withdrawal of an oral question, the Table Office will confirm receipt to the sender, and notify the Government's Cabinet Division as well as the Chamber Secretariat and the Record of Proceedings. If the question is withdrawn before the start of Plenary, the question will be shown as being withdrawn on the published list of questions.

v. **Written questions** may be withdrawn at any time during the Table Office's opening hours before the day they are due for answer. The question will be shown as being withdrawn on the published list of questions. Written questions cannot be converted for oral answer.

vi. **Statements of opinion** may be withdrawn by a Member without reference to any of those who have subscribed to it later. However, if a statement is tabled jointly by two or more Members, they must all be in agreement if the statement is to be withdrawn. Members may also withdraw their name as subscribers to a statement or any amendment at any time.

2. Questions

Oral and written questions

Introduction

13. Standing Orders 12 and 14 provide for Members to ask oral and written questions to the First Minister, a Minister, the Counsel General or the Senedd Commission ('the Commission') on any matter relating to their responsibilities. This chapter sets out the purpose, related procedures and the form and content of questions.

Purpose

14. The purpose of tabling questions is to obtain information or press for action. Questions and answers are published in the Senedd's official **Record of Proceedings** and are therefore important ways for Members to hold the Welsh Government ('the Government') and the Commission to account.

15. Questions are not the only means for Members to obtain information from the Government. Depending on the nature of the information sought, the Research Service, requests under the **Freedom of Information Act 2000** or writing directly to Ministers are all options open to Members. Clerks may remind Members of these alternatives, particularly where questions are out of order.

Categories of questions

16. Standing Orders provide four avenues for obtaining answers to questions:

- **Oral questions** are tabled with the intention that an oral answer is given during designated oral question sessions in Plenary meetings;
- **Written questions** are not answered orally in Plenary. They are answered in writing and the answers are sent directly to the Member and subsequently published in the Record of Proceedings;
- **Topical questions** are tabled at short notice for oral answer in Plenary but can only be asked if the Presiding Officer is satisfied it relates to a matter of national, regional or local significance where an expedited Ministerial response is desirable, and where the subject matter has

arisen since the deadline for tabling topical questions the previous week; and

- **Emergency questions** are tabled without notice (though 2 hours must pass between the question being tabled and it being asked) for answer in Plenary. If relating to the functions of the Government, they can only be asked if the matter is judged by the Presiding Officer to be of urgent national significance and necessitates an immediate response. If a matter relates to the functions of the Commission, it is for a Deputy Presiding Officer to judge.

Procedures – the role of the Presiding Officer and the Table Office

17. The Presiding Officer is responsible for facilitating the tabling of questions and has discretion regarding the admissibility, content and length of questions (see Appendix 1). In practice the Presiding Officer has delegated these functions to the Table Office, though they remain the final authority on such matters.

18. Members are responsible for the form and content of their questions, although the Table Office clerks may offer confidential and impartial advice to Members on such matters. Appendix 1 sets out the criteria used by the Table Office when considering the admissibility of questions. Where a question has been ruled inadmissible, the Table Office will explain the reasons why, and where possible, assist with changes to bring the question in order. Minor points of grammar and drafting will be corrected by the Table Office if necessary.

Timetable for oral questions

19. The statement and announcement of forthcoming business made in accordance with Standing Order 11.11 will include the dates and times of forthcoming questions to each Minister, the Counsel General or the Commission.

20. Standing Order 12.56 provides for the First Minister to answer questions once in each week that the Senedd meets in Plenary and for Ministers, the Counsel General and the Commission to answer at least once in every 4 weeks that the Senedd meets in Plenary. In practice, questions are taken in a set rotation which, apart from questions to the Commission, is determined by the Government. The Business Committee schedules the rotation for Commission questions.

21. The Table Office will remind Members at the end of each week of the oral question ballots that will be conducted the following week.

22. Specific tabling days are scheduled towards the end of each main recess period so that oral questions can be answered in the first week following a recess. The Table Office will produce a list of dates and times that has been agreed with the Business Committee. The list will be emailed to Members.

Number and order of questions

23. There is no limit on the number of written questions Members may table when the Senedd is sitting.

24. Standing Order 12.63 provides for Members to enter their names into the ballot under Standing Order 12.61 once for oral questions to the First Minister, a particular Minister or the Counsel General (if they are answering questions in relation to any responsibilities they may have other than those of the Government's law officer). Members can remove themselves from the ballot completely if they wish.

25. Party leaders may not enter their names into the ballot for questions to the First Minister.

26. There is no ballot for questions to the Counsel General (in relation to their law officer responsibilities) or Commission. Any Member may table up to two questions for any scheduled session to the Counsel General (in relation to their law officer responsibilities), but only one for the Commission.

27. Standing Order 12.64 specifies how the order oral questions are answered is determined. In practice, the Table Office will ask Members to submit their names in advance of each of the ballots to be held under Standing Order 12.61. The Table Office will conduct the ballot(s) and contact, by e-mail, those Members who have been drawn as the top 16 names in each ballot inviting them to submit a question by the deadline set by the Business Committee. The Table Office will then conduct a further shuffle after the deadline to determine the final order of the questions.

28. Only the first 12 questions selected in the final shuffle will go forward for answer and the remaining four questions will fall. The final order of questions is published on the Senedd's website and Members are notified by email of their question's position on the order paper, or if the question was not selected. If fewer than 12 questions are tabled to a particular Minister before the deadline,

then any questions received after the published deadline, and up until five working days before they are due to be answered, will be added to the list of questions and taken in the order they are received.

Procedure for oral questions in Plenary

29. The Presiding Officer starts question time by calling the name of the Member whose question is first on the list. The Member reads the question, which should not differ from the tabled version. The Presiding Officer then invites the First Minister, Minister, Counsel General or member of the Commission, as appropriate, to provide an answer.

30. The Presiding Officer has ruled that answers must be succinct. They should not be expanded into statements. Exceptionally, the answer to a question requiring a lengthy answer may be published in the Record of Proceedings instead of being given orally. However, those answering should provide a short oral answer referring to the substantive reply being sent to the Member and being made available in the Record.

31. If a Member is not present to ask their oral question, the Presiding Officer calls the next question on the agenda. If a Member knows in advance that they will be unable to attend a Plenary meeting to ask a question they have tabled, they should withdraw the question by informing the Table Office.

32. Following an answer, the Presiding Officer invites the Member who asked the original question to ask a follow-up question (a supplementary question) that relates to the original question. When the first supplementary question has been answered the Presiding Officer may call other Members to ask related supplementary questions. Decisions on who is called to ask supplementary questions are entirely at the discretion of the Presiding Officer and cannot be challenged.

33. Any oral questions that are not answered during the period allocated for oral questions will receive a written answer on the same day. If all questions are answered before the allocated time is complete, the Presiding Officer will call for the next item on the agenda.

Grouping of questions

34. There may be occasions where a Minister or a member of the Commission wishes to give a single reply to more than one question where they are on the same or a closely related topic. This is known as 'grouping'. For oral questions,

grouping is a matter for the person answering the questions to propose, but ultimately for the Presiding Officer to agree. The Table Office is not responsible for the grouping of questions and will not offer any advice on grouping. Any queries regarding grouping will be referred to the Chamber Secretariat in the first instance.

Transfer of questions

35. If Ministers consider that a question has been addressed to the wrong Minister and decide to transfer the question for written answer, they will notify the Member of this decision and explain why. The decision is not taken by the Table Office. If an oral question is transferred, the Member will receive a written answer, and loses the chance of receiving an oral answer in Plenary. By convention, questions are transferred during the Table Office's office hours (as agreed by the Business Committee), at least 2 working days before they are due for answer.

36. When a question is transferred, a formal notice is sent by Government officials to the Member and also to the Table Office who will use the information as a precedent to avoid future transfers.

Publication of oral and written questions and answers

37. Questions are given a unique reference number by the Table Office. The 12 oral questions chosen in the shuffle are published in the order that they are to be answered. Answers to oral questions are published in the Record of Proceedings. Written questions are usually published the next working day after they are tabled and are listed by Ministerial portfolio. Once the Table Office receives answers to written questions, they are published in the order paper where the related question first appeared.

Amendments to tabled questions

38. Members may make minor typographical amendments to questions tabled for written or oral answer up to one day before the question is due to be answered. Significant amendments that would alter the subject matter or nature of the question will not be accepted.

Topical questions

39. Standing Order 12.68A provides for Members to ask topical questions to a member of the Government for which the usual notice has not been given.

40. A topical question may only be asked if the Presiding Officer is satisfied that the question relates to a matter of national, regional or local significance where an expedited Ministerial response is desirable. The Presiding Officer will also expect that the subject matter of the topical question has arisen since the deadline for tabling topical questions the previous week and will give consideration to whether the matter has been or could be raised elsewhere during proceedings.

41. The Business Committee has allocated time for topical questions to be taken immediately after oral questions in Plenary on Wednesday. Members may submit requests for topical questions between 9am on Monday and 10am on Wednesday. In exceptional circumstances, the Presiding Officer may consider requests for topical questions submitted after this deadline if they relate to a matter which has arisen since the 10am deadline. Members can only table one topical question request per week and they are subject to the same rules on form, content and order as all questions. While a Member who has tabled a topical question may then withdraw it and submit another, the Presiding Officer may give lower priority to Members who do so, especially if other Members have tabled topical questions on the same topic.

42. Members are expected to provide supporting information to explain why they consider the question meets the required threshold for a topical question and why an expedited Ministerial response is desirable. Supporting information is expected to contain a narrative and not simply a link to further information. The information will be taken into consideration by the Presiding Officer when reaching a decision on a topical question request. Table Office will seek further information from Members who provide just a link or no information at all, but will not otherwise judge the adequacy of the supporting information.

43. Once an application for a topical question has been made, the Table Office will circulate each request to Government officials for information and will notify the Presiding Officer that an application has been made. Decisions on whether or not to accept such requests are entirely at the discretion of the Presiding Officer.

44. If the Presiding Officer is satisfied that the application meets the criteria set out above, and decides to allow the Member to ask the question during the time allocated for topical questions on Wednesday, the Table Office will immediately inform the Member and the Government. The Government will determine which Minister or Deputy Minister will answer the question. Table Office will also notify all Members of the topical questions accepted ahead of

the relevant Plenary meeting taking place, and the questions will be published to the Plenary agenda and the Record website. All topical question submissions, including those not selected by the Presiding Officer, will be published to the Record website by the end of the week in which they were tabled.

45. It is up to the Presiding Officer to determine how many topical questions to select within the time allocated. Business Committee has determined that 20 minutes should be allocated to topical questions each week and, therefore, the Presiding Officer will not ordinarily select more than two topical questions for each session. The Presiding Officer does not have to select any question if it did not meet the criteria set out above, even if it was the only question tabled that week.

Emergency questions

46. Standing Order 12.67 provides for Members to ask an emergency question without notice in Plenary if the matter is judged to be of urgent national significance, has arisen suddenly and necessitates an immediate response. If it relates to the functions of the Government, it is for the Presiding Officer to judge; if it relates to the functions of the Commission, it is for a Deputy Presiding Officer to judge. The Presiding Officer will decide whether, and at what time, the emergency question may be asked although they would normally be scheduled as the first item of business in Plenary. Under Standing Orders, at least two hours must pass between an application for an emergency question being made and it being asked. Emergency questions are subject to the same rules on form, content and order as all questions.

47. Once an application is made, the Table Office will circulate the request to Senedd and Government officials for advice and will notify the Presiding Officer (or a Deputy Presiding Officer) that an application has been made. Decisions on whether to accept such requests are entirely at the discretion of the Presiding Officer (or a Deputy Presiding Officer). The Presiding Officer (or a Deputy Presiding Officer) may consult the appropriate member of the Government or member of the Commission on the issue of urgent national significance but is not required to do so.

48. If the Presiding Officer (or a Deputy Presiding Officer) is satisfied the application meets the dual criteria of urgency and national significance, and decides to allow the Member to put the question at the next available Plenary meeting, the Table Office will immediately inform the Member and the appropriate member of the Government or member of the Commission. Table Office will also notify all Members that an emergency question has been accepted.

Leaders' and spokespeople's questions

Format

49. The formats for spokespeople's questions and leaders' questions are very similar, and work as follows:

- During questions to the First Minister, each opposition group leader will be called to ask questions without notice to the First Minister. The same convention applies to opposition group spokespeople's questions to a portfolio Minister during their oral question time sessions. The number of questions to be asked is at the discretion of the Presiding Officer;
- Leaders' or spokespeople's questions are not tabled in advance and are not published on the agenda, thus allowing them to be on any matter within the Minister's responsibilities;
- The Plenary agenda will note when leaders or spokespeople will be called to ask their questions - this will generally be after question 2;
- Spokespeople will remain free to enter the ballot in the normal way, although the Presiding Officer may reduce their question allocation by one if they have a tabled question on the order paper for the same session;
- Spokespeople will remain free to request supplementaries on other tabled questions, although the Presiding Officer may give them lower priority when being called;
- Leaders may not enter the ballot for questions to the First Minister, but are free to enter all other oral question ballots;
- Leaders and spokespeople are allocated 1 minute per question, and, except where there are exceptional circumstances, the Presiding Officer expects spokespeople to use their questions to pursue a broad theme.

Order of leaders and spokespeople

50. Leaders and spokespeople are called in an order agreed by the Business Committee.

Notification of spokesperson and questioning Deputy Ministers

51. Party groups' spokespeople portfolios do not correlate exactly with Ministerial portfolios, and so for some oral questions sessions a group may have more than one Member who could potentially fulfil the spokesperson role.

52. The Business Committee agreed each party could only have one Member fulfil the spokesperson role for any oral questions session i.e. all questions will have to be asked by the same Member.

53. The Business Committee agreed the Government should have advance notice of who will be fulfilling the spokesperson's role for each party during an oral questions session.

54. The general expectation is that spokespeople's questions will be answered by the Minister. However, should Members wish to direct their spokespeople questions to a Deputy Minister, they should discuss this directly with the Government or the relevant Minister in advance. They should then notify the Presiding Officer through the Plenary Requests mailbox.

55. Spokespeople should direct all their questions to either the Minister only or the Deputy Minister only. If it is immediately obvious that a question relates to an area for which the other is responsible, it is for the Minister and Deputy to decide who responds, though the Presiding Officer may intervene.

Substitutions

56. Where a Member is unable to attend an oral questions session where they would normally fulfil the role of their group's leader or spokesperson on that topic, another Member who does not have specific responsibility for any area of the Minister's portfolio may take their place. The Presiding Officer will only expect such substitutions to happen in the absence of the usual spokesperson(s).

3. Statements

Oral Statements

Types of oral statement

57. In accordance with Standing Order 12.50, oral statements may be made by the following individuals:

- the Presiding Officer;
- a member of the Government;
- a member of the Commission about any matter coming within the responsibilities of the Commission; and
- any other Member, where the subject matter of the statement relates to a function of the Senedd for which they are responsible, with the agreement of the Presiding Officer (this includes, for example, statements by Committee Chairs, and introductory statements on a piece of Member proposed legislation by the Member in Charge of that legislation).

58. The Business Statement and Announcement (BSA) is another specific type of oral statement. The BSA outlines Plenary business for a three-week period. The first week contains the agreed business for the following week's Plenary meetings. The two subsequent weeks are provisional lists of business and are subject to change.

59. The BSA is made in Plenary by the Minister responsible for Government business each week, in accordance with Standing Order 11.11. Members are permitted to ask questions on the BSA. This is an opportunity for Members to request that the Government makes a statement or holds a debate in the Siambr on a matter of concern to the Member, and Members' contributions must be framed in those terms. As for other statements, Members must ask questions, and not make long speeches. Members should not use the BSA to question the Minister on matters relating to the scheduling of non-Government business, or other matters which are the responsibility of the Business Committee.

Notice of oral statements

60. In accordance with Standing Order 12.16, statements by the Presiding Officer, a member of the Government or the Commission can be made without notice. In practice, this means that they can be added to the Plenary agenda at any point. This is different to the notice required for debates or decisions on motions, which require five days' notice.

Timing and length of oral statements

61. Statements are usually allocated a maximum time on the Plenary Agenda. It has become usual practice for statements not to exceed 1,000 words or 10 minutes to allow sufficient time for Members to question the Member delivering the statement.

Questions on oral statements

62. In accordance with Standing Order 12.51, the Presiding Officer may permit questions to be asked of a Member making a statement.

63. Group spokespeople will normally be called first to ask questions, followed by any other Member who has indicated a desire to speak. Members are called at the Presiding Officer's discretion.

64. Individual contributions are subject to an allocated time limit. Accepted practice has developed whereby group spokespeople are permitted up to 5 minutes to give a short preamble and to ask their questions. Other speakers have a maximum of one minute to ask their questions and those questions should be succinct.

Interventions on oral statements

65. By convention, Members should not normally intervene on a Member who is delivering a statement.

Personal statements

66. In accordance with Standing Order 12.52, the Presiding Officer may allow a Member to make a personal statement subject to receiving written notice of their intention to do so in advance.

67. Standing Order 12.53 requires personal statements to be brief and factual. It also specifies that personal statements cannot be subject to debate. In

practice, this means that no other Member can be called to contribute to any such item of business.

68. In practice, personal statements have been a rare occurrence, though this Standing Order is used to enable Members to make **90 Second Statements**, for which time is made available every Wednesday.

Statements by committee chairs

69. Standing Order 12.50 states that statements may be made by either the Presiding Officer, a member of the Government or the Commission, or:

> *any other Member, where the subject matter of the statement relates to a function of the Senedd for which they are responsible, with the agreement of the Presiding Officer.*

70. Committee chairs may make a statement under this provision to inform the Senedd of their committee's work and priorities.

71. Statements by committee chairs may serve a different purpose to debates on committee reports, and may, among other things, be used to:

- scope out a committee's inquiry at its outset;
- scope out a committee's future work programme; and
- provide an update on a committee's recommendations.

72. It is up to chairs, in consultation with their committees, to decide when they wish to make a statement. Chairs, or clerking teams working on their behalf, will be expected to request time for a statement at least two weeks before it is to be made so that it can appear on the Business Statement and Announcement.

73. The item will normally be allocated 30 minutes.

74. The structure of the statement will be the same as for a Government statement: after the statement is made, Members will be allowed questions, with the committee Chair responding to each in turn.

75. While members of the Government are free to question the committee Chair like any other Member, no Government response is required.

76. As a courtesy to Members, it is normally expected that a copy of the statement, in Welsh and English, is issued to them via email ahead of its delivery.

90 Second Statements

Structure

77. 90 Second Statements appear as a regular item on Wednesday's Plenary agenda, immediately after questions.

78. The item is allocated 5 minutes in total and Members may speak for a maximum of a minute and a half. This will allow at least three Members to be called each week.

79. There is no opportunity for other Members to ask follow-up questions, and no response is required by the Government or anyone else.

Procedure

80. 90 Second Statements will be taken under Standing Order 12.52 and 12.53, which state that the Presiding Officer may allow a member to make a personal statement, and that such statements must be brief, factual, and not subject to debate.

81. Any Member may make a 90 Second Statement on any subject of concern and can be used, for example, to;

- raise matters of pressing concern to their constituents;
- draw attention to local issues;
- mark anniversaries or significant dates;
- pay tributes.

82. The usual rules of order apply to 90 Second Statements, including sub judice and contempt of court. The Presiding Officer will call to order any Member who abuses the privilege of being called to make a statement. As there is no right of reply to a statement, they should not be used for personal attacks on other Members or individuals outside the Siambr who cannot defend themselves, nor as an alternative method of asking questions. Neither should they be used to raise matters which can be appropriately raised via other business procedures; these matters would include subjects relating to Ministerial functions open to scrutiny via alternative means.

Requesting a statement

83. Requests must be made to the Presiding Officer by 10am on the Wednesday that a Member wishes to make the statement. The Presiding Officer may consider requests for statements submitted after this deadline if not all slots for the day are filled.

84. When requesting a statement, Members should indicate briefly the subject matter they intend to speak on. The Presiding Officer will use their discretion to select statements based on the information provided.

85. Members will be notified ahead of time if the Presiding Officer intends to call them to make a 90 Second Statement. Members who have been unsuccessful are also notified prior to Plenary by Chamber Secretariat, and are allowed to re-submit their request the following week.

Statement on the draft budget

86. Standing Order 20.8 states that a Minister may make a statement in plenary on the draft budget as soon as possible after the outline budget proposals are laid. The statement is structured as a debate, rather than be subject to questions only.

87. The Presiding Officer will in the first instance call the Minister to make the statement, which is expected to last up to 15 minutes.

88. The Presiding Officer will then call other speakers in turn. The first speaker from each group will be allocated up to 10 minutes, with subsequent speakers allowed up to 5 minutes **in the usual way**. While Members are not confined to asking questions, their contributions should include a question or questions.

89. The Minister will not be invited to respond to each contribution in turn as would normally be the case on statements, but will be called to respond to all contributions at the end of the item and will be allocated up to 10 minutes to do so.

90. Interventions will be permitted, except for on the Minister when making the initial statement.

Written statements

91. In accordance with Standing Orders 14.6 and 14.7, written statements can be issued by the Government or the Commission on any matter within their respective responsibilities.

92. All written statements are published on the Senedd's website alongside the **Record of Proceedings**. Written statements issued by the Government are also published on the Government's website.

4. Motions and amendments

General

93. Business in Plenary meetings must proceed on the basis of motions proposed, except for:

i. statements;

ii. introduction of new Members;

iii. obituary tributes to former Members and others;

iv. oral questions;

v. matters for Urgent Debate;

vi. topics for Short Debate; and

vii. topics for Open Debate.

94. Except where Standing Orders provide otherwise, amendments may be proposed to any motion. In general, motions and amendments may be tabled by any Member (although there may be specific exclusions for certain types of motion and amendment e.g. Annual Budget Motions). Standing Orders 12.19 to 12.49 provide an outline of the main procedures relating to motions and amendments and should be referred to in conjunction with this document.

95. In accordance with Standing Orders 12.21 and 12.22 Members may indicate their support for any motion or amendment by adding their name to it. Any Member wishing to add their name to a motion or amendment must do so by supporting the motion or amendment in the Table Office System prior to the end of the last working day before that motion or amendment is due to be debated.

Format

96. All motions and amendments must be submitted through the Table Office System.

97. There are no hard-and-fast rules on the format of motions. However, the numbering convention for motions set out in the sample motion below should

be used as far as is reasonably practicable. This format makes it easier to describe which parts of motions are being referred to in any amendments.

Sample motion

To propose that the Senedd:

1. This should be the first tier of bullet points within motions; and

2. The first tier should be numbered:

a) this should be the second tier of bullet points within motions; and

b) the second tier should be lettered:

i) this should be the third tier of bullet points within motions; and

ii) the third tier should be numbered in Roman numerals.

Sample amendment

In sub-point 2 (b) (ii), after "should" insert "always".

Types of motion: named/no named day

98. Motions will be accepted and published as either "Named Day" or "No Named Day". A "Named Day" motion is one where a specific date for a debate on the subject of the motion has been included in the statement or announcement of business made in accordance with Standing Order 11.11. "No Named Day" motions are ones where no date for debate has yet been agreed.

99. It should be noted that Standing Orders makes no reference or distinction between these two types of motion. However, this is an established convention to distinguish agreed business from other proposed business.

100. Although a "No Named Day" motion may be tabled at any time, it cannot be debated until the normal notice period for the motion in question has expired and must in all other ways comply with Standing Orders. Notice periods commence on the day that motions are tabled. Members may especially wish to consider seeking permission from the Business Committee for time to be allocated to debate a "No Named Day" motion, or, alternatively,

submit them for consideration as **Member Debates** or **Members' Legislative Debates**.

101. If the Senedd resolves to defer debate on a "Named Day" motion to another day, amendments tabled in relation to the motion need not to be tabled again and "travel with" the original motion.

Refusal of motions

102. Subject to the overriding discretion of the Presiding Officer, the Table Office will refuse to accept motions that:

i. do not relate to Wales or the functions and powers of the Welsh Government or the Senedd Commission;

ii. are in breach of the Senedd's Standing Orders;

iii. are in breach of the Government of Wales Act 2006 (as amended) or any other relevant legal provisions;

iv. contain language considered by the Presiding Officer to be disorderly, discriminatory, offensive or which detracts from the dignity of the Senedd; or

v. bring into question the proper conduct of Senedd business.

103. In addition, motions must not be overly long. The Table Office clerks can provide advice to Members on all matters relating to the admissibility of a motion.

Amending a motion

104. Except where Standing Orders provide otherwise, Members may propose amendments to any motion. Amendments are tabled by 'amending' the original motion in the Table Office System.

Purpose of amendments

105. The objective of an amendment may be either to modify a motion to increase its acceptability or to present to the Senedd a different proposition as an alternative to the original motion. Amendments must be within the scope of the subject of the original motion. Where they seek to present a different

proposition this should not be a direct negation of the terms of the motion. The proper method of expressing a contrary opinion is by voting against a motion.

106. Amendments may:

i. leave out certain words;

ii. leave out certain words in order to insert or add others; and

iii. insert or add certain words.

Refusal and selection of amendments

107. Acting under the instructions of the Presiding Officer, the Table Office will refuse to accept amendments that:

i. do not relate to Wales or the functions and powers of the Welsh Government or the Senedd Commission;

ii. are in breach of the Senedd's Standing Orders;

iii. are in breach of the **Government of Wales Act 2006** (as amended) or other relevant legal provisions;

iv. raise issues tangential to the motion, are irrelevant to the subject matter or outside the scope of the original motion;

v. are a direct negation of the motion;

vi. contain language considered by the Presiding Officer to be disorderly, discriminatory, offensive or which detracts from the dignity of the Senedd; or

vii. bring into question the proper conduct of Senedd business.

108. Once an amendment has been accepted and tabled, it is for the Presiding Officer to decide whether it should be selected for debate. Under Standing Order 12.23(iii), the Presiding Officer may decline to select an amendment where they consider that the proper conduct of the business of the Senedd makes it appropriate to do so. Reasons for non-selection might include:

i. amendments that would significantly alter the content and nature of the debate;

ii. amendments that could enable another Member or group to 'take over' a debate or shift its focus away from that intended by the proposer of the motion;

iii. amendments that dilute the motion to such an extent that voting against the motion would be a more appropriate course of action;

iv. amendments that are substantively similar to questions the Senedd has recently debated and voted on; and

v. amendments that seek to pre-empt a decision the Senedd is scheduled to consider in the near future.

109. The number of amendments tabled, and whether they are likely to attract the support of other Members, are also considerations. The Presiding Officer may decide not to select an amendment if:

i. it is similar to another amendment;

ii. a number of amendments could reasonably have been tabled as one amendment; or

iii. selection would give a Member a disproportionate amount of speaking time, relative to the size of their group or individual membership of the Senedd; time that could be allocated to other speakers.

110. During Voting Time, the Presiding Officer may de-select amendments that, in light of amendments already agreed to, would have the effect of rendering the motion unintelligible, repetitive or self-contradictory. As such, the Presiding Officer may not select amendments if they are likely to be de-selected at Voting Time, particularly if the points above also apply.

111. Standing Orders set out categories of motions that cannot be amended, or place conditions on the nature of amendments that can be tabled. There are also some categories of motions that, in accordance with parliamentary conventions, are generally considered inappropriate to amend. For example, it is a longstanding practice that the Presiding Officer will not select amendments to 'take note' motions, particularly on Committee reports, so the Senedd is not asked to take a view on the content of the report.

Order of amendments

112. To facilitate debate, the Presiding Officer will generally exercise discretion to order and number amendments on the agenda so that they are considered in the order they arise in the text of the motion. Where amendments arise in the same place in the text, the Presiding Officer will order, and call Members to propose, amendments either in the order they were tabled or in the order they consider will facilitate debate.

Grouping of amendments

113. The Presiding Officer has discretion to group amendments to motions. It is made clear on the agenda which amendments will be considered together in debate (although changes may be made at any time).

114. To facilitate debate, the Presiding Officer may choose to group amendments by political party (and thus call one speaker from each party to speak to all their amendments). They may also group amendments by subject matter.

Procedure in the Siambr - proposal of motions

115. Generally, any Member present in the Siambr can move most motions although there are certain exceptions set out in Standing Orders. When the relevant item of business is reached, the Presiding Officer will call the Member who is to propose the motion. If the motion is not moved the motion falls and business moves to the next item on the agenda for the day.

Withdrawing an amendment

Withdrawing an amendment before it is moved

116. A Member can withdraw an amendment before it is moved by providing notice in writing to the Table Office.

117. An amendment can be withdrawn at any point before it is moved although there is precedent for the Table Office to be given 2 hours' notice, to allow time for the Presiding Officer and Business Managers to be informed and the agenda to be updated. In practice, this means an amendment can be withdrawn during a Plenary meeting.

118. An amendment can only be withdrawn by the Member who tabled it.

Withdrawing an amendment after it is moved

119. When Members are called in a debate to move amendments, they are called to move all the amendments tabled by their group in that debate. Unless the Member specifies otherwise, those amendments are taken as having been moved.

120. If the Member subsequently wishes to withdraw an amendment that has been moved, it is only possible if no Member objects (Standing Order 12.20). The Member must inform the Presiding Officer before the end of the debate. There is precedent for either the Member who tabled the amendment or the Member who moved it to do this.

121. The Presiding Officer must then ask the Senedd whether any Member objects to the withdrawal. If a Member does object, the amendment will be voted on as usual.

Amendments not moved

122. When being called to move their amendments, the Member can decide not to move one or more amendments.

123. If this is the case, the Member must indicate clearly in their speech that they are not moving the amendment, having informed the Presiding Officer of their intention beforehand if possible. Any amendment which is not moved is not voted on.

Conventions for dealing with opposition motions and amendments to such motions

Tabling

124. The usual rules in relation to **tabling** apply to motions and amendments tabled under these conventions.

Procedure

125. Where no amendment is tabled to an opposition motion proposed under Standing Order 12.19, or if no amendment has been selected, at the end of the debate the Presiding Officer will make an initial proposal that "the motion be agreed". If any Member objects, a vote on the motion will be taken at Voting Time.

126. If amendments to the motion have been tabled and selected, the Presiding Officer will make an initial proposal that "the motion be agreed without amendment". If any Member objects to the proposal, a vote will be taken at Voting Time.

127. If the Senedd votes against the proposal that "the motion be agreed without amendment", the Senedd will vote on any amendments to the motion, before voting on the motion as amended.

128. If the initial proposal that "the motion be agreed without amendment" is not agreed to, and all amendments are not agreed to, the motion will fall.

129. In accordance with Standing Order 12.23(iii), the Presiding Officer may decline to select an amendment where they consider the proper conduct of business makes it appropriate to do so. The Presiding Officer will not deselect amendments seeking to "delete all" of the original motion. There is also an expectation that opposition parties will not table amendments to their own motions.

Other non-Government debates

130. The Presiding Officer may decide to apply these conventions to other types of non-Government business where they consider it appropriate to do so.

Urgent Debates

General principles

131. The procedure for holding an Urgent Debate is set out in Standing Orders 12.69 – 12.71 and takes place in two parts:

- the initial proposal to hold the debate, which is subject to the Senedd's agreement; and
- if the Senedd so agrees, the Urgent Debate itself.

132. Urgent Debates may be held on matters within the Government or the Commission's responsibilities.

Proposal for an Urgent Debate

133. The Presiding Officer may allow a Member to propose that an Urgent Debate be held in Plenary, provided that:

- the Presiding Officer has been notified of the proposed matter for discussion at least one hour before the beginning of the meeting;
- if the matter relates to the function of the Government, the Presiding Officer has been able to provide the relevant individual member of the Government with the opportunity to comment in private to them on the matter. If the matter relates to a function of the Commission, it is for a Deputy Presiding Officer to provide a member of the Commission with the opportunity to comment;
- if the matter relates to the function of the Government, the Presiding Officer is satisfied that the matter is of urgent public importance, and has informed the proposing Member and relevant member of the Government of their decision. If the matter relates to the functions of the Commission, it is for a Deputy Presiding Officer to decide and inform the relevant member of the Commission of their decision.

134. The procedure for allowing a Member to propose an Urgent Debate is similar to that for requesting an emergency question. It should also be noted, however, that whereas a decision to allow an emergency question lies with the Presiding Officer or a Deputy Presiding Officer alone, a decision to allow an Urgent Debate has to be approved by a majority of Members in Plenary following the Presiding Officer's permission for the proposal to proceed.

Consideration of the proposal in Plenary

135. For an Urgent Debate to proceed, a proposal to consider a matter of urgent public importance must be put before Plenary. Generally, this will take place following ministerial questions.

136. The Member proposing the Urgent Debate will be permitted 3 minutes to deliver a speech in favour of the proposal. Where the matter relates to functions of the Government, the relevant member of the Government will be permitted 3 minutes to respond. Where the matter relates to the Commission's functions, a member of the Commission will be permitted 3 minutes to deliver their response.

137. Once the proposal to conduct an Urgent Debate has been made and the member of the Government or member of the Commission's response has been given, the Presiding Officer must put the proposal to a vote immediately. The proposal can be approved on the nod unless any Member objects and wishes it to be put to a vote.

138. If the proposal is rejected by a simple majority, the Urgent Debate will not take place. If accepted, Standing Orders require that the Urgent Debate is scheduled during the same meeting or, if the Presiding Officer decides, the one immediately following.

The Urgent Debate

139. Urgent Debates take place on a particular matter, and not on a motion. In accordance with Standing Order 12.19(v), a motion does not need to be tabled in the Table Office for an Urgent Debate to proceed. As such, there is no mechanism for amendments to be tabled.

Arrangements for scheduling the Urgent Debate

140. If the Senedd agrees to consider the matter proposed, it must do so at that meeting, or (if the Presiding Officer decides) at the one immediately following.

141. The Presiding Officer may make appropriate arrangements for the adjustment of the timetable to accommodate an Urgent Debate:

- If the Urgent Debate is proposed by a member of the Government, Standing Order 11.18(ii) requires time is found during Government business.

- If the Urgent Debate is proposed by a Member who is not a member of the Government, or by a member of the Commission and relates to the Commission's functions, Standing Orders require time is found during Senedd business time.

142. As Urgent Debates do not proceed on the basis of a substantive motion, **no vote is taken at the end of the item**. They are intended for discussion rather than decision.

Debates proposed by individual Members

Short Debates

143. The Senedd Timetable, published in accordance with Standing Order 11.9, includes the dates, for a period of no less than 6 months, when Short Debates will be held in Plenary. In accordance with Standing Order 12.72, the Presiding Officer must hold a ballot to determine the name of the Member, or Members, other than a member of the Government, who may propose a topic for a Short Debate(s).

144. Under Standing Order 12.72, the Presiding Officer decides when the ballot is held, and how it is run. The Presiding Officer may select more than one Member at a time to propose topics for Short Debates. The Table Office will inform all Members of any decision made by the Presiding Officer under Standing Order 12.72, including the details of how the ballot will be run.

145. Any Member that does not want to be included in the ballot for the Short Debate should inform the Table Office in advance. The successful Member or Members will be notified and, in accordance with usual tabling deadlines, Members will be required to table their chosen topic at least five working days before it is due to be debated.

146. The topic can be provided to the Table Office in any format but it:

i. must not contain language considered by the Presiding Officer to be disorderly, discriminatory, offensive or which detracts from the dignity of the Senedd;

ii. must not bring into question the proper conduct of Senedd business.

iii. must not be subject to any other specific requirements in Standing Orders or in statute; and

iv. should give a clear indication of the subject area.

147. The Table Office may refuse to accept a chosen topic if it does not comply with these rules. No amendments can be tabled to a Short Debate and it is not subject to a vote.

Member Debates

148. In accordance with Standing Order 11.21(iv), time must be made available in each Senedd year for debates on motions proposed by any Member who is not a member of the Government (otherwise known as 'Member Debates'). The time allocated to these debates and their frequency is determined by the Business Committee. Table Office will inform all Members of when each debate will take place.

149. Members are invited to table a motion before the close of business (5pm) on the Thursday two weeks prior to the debate and must find at least two other Members, one of whom must represent a different political party, to support it. To achieve the required level of support Members can: jointly propose a motion with Members of different parties; seek the support of Members from other parties once the motion has been tabled; or combine a jointly tabled motion with additional support. The Business Committee then considers the motions tabled by individual Members a week before the debate and decides which motion to select for debate. Members have until 12pm on the day after the tabling deadline to obtain the level of support required for the motion to be considered by the Business Committee

150. The Business Committee has agreed to select motions that will deliver a balance of the following features over time:

- motions raising specific local or regional matters or issues of national policy in a local or regional context;
- motions focussing on matters of particular significance and resonance at that point in time or are likely to attract public interest;
- motions likely to generate a vigorous debate in the Siambr with a high level of participation;
- motions where opinion does not divide obviously along party lines;
- motions adding to the diversity of debate in the Siambr;
- motions attracting high levels of support from Members. While this would not be the determining factor, the motion could be given higher priority.

151. Any motions not selected by the Business Committee will be automatically considered a second time, unless the proposal is withdrawn.

Once a motion for a Member Debate has been considered on two occasions by the Business Committee, it will no longer be considered.

Members' Legislative Debates

152. A 30-minute slot may be made available once every half term to debate No Named Day Motions tabled by individual Members on legislative debates. The Business Committee will announce these dates early on in each term to give Members the maximum window for tabling. For each scheduled debate, Members will be invited to table motions for consideration by a set deadline, as happens with Member Debates. The Table Office will notify Members of such deadlines in advance. The Business Committee will then select from among the motions tabled a week prior to the scheduled debate.

153. Unlike Member Debates, there is no requirement to secure the support of other Members before motions on legislative proposals are considered for debate. However, the Business Committee may take the level of support for different motions into account in deciding which motion to schedule. Only one motion proposed or supported by any individual Member will be considered by the Business Committee at a time.

154. It is important to note that motions on legislative debates, if agreed, would have no binding effect. There would be no requirement for the Government, an individual Member, a Senedd committee or the Commission to introduce legislation as a result of the motion being agreed.

155. These debates provide individual Members with an opportunity to debate ideas for legislation and test the level of support in the Senedd, outside the confines of the formal legislative process.

156. Motions can include proposals for new legislation of any type within the Senedd's legislative competence, including Bills, Statutory Instruments, Orders in Council (under Section 109 of the Government of Wales Act 2006) and new devolved taxes (under Section 116C).

157. The Business Committee has agreed to select motions that will deliver a balance of the following features over time:

- debates on legislative proposals that focus on matters that are not contained within the legislative programme of the Government, a Senedd Committee, the Commission, or another Member;

- debates on legislative proposals which focus on matters of particular significance and resonance at that point in time or are likely to attract public interest;
- debates on legislative proposals which are likely to generate significant and/or diverse interest with a high level of participation;
- debates on legislative proposals which present innovative approaches to addressing issues.

158. .Any motions not selected by the Business Committee will be automatically considered a second time, unless withdrawn by the Member. Once a motion for a Member's Legislative Debate has been considered on two occasions by the Business Committee it will no longer be considered. Once a legislative debate has been held by the Senedd on a certain subject, the Business Committee will not consider for debate any other motion on the same subject. This is unless a case can be made that a motion on the same subject should be considered in light of certain developments.

159. To be considered, the motion must be a 'take note' motion, inviting the Senedd to note the proposal for legislation. So that the focus is solely on the proposal as tabled by the Member, the Presiding Officer will not select any amendments to such motions for debate.

Structure

160. The 30-minute debate will be structured as follows:

- Eight minutes for the Member to open and close;
- Other Members called to speak (three minutes per Member rather than the usual five minutes);
- Six minutes for the Minister/Deputy Minister to respond.

Motion and supporting documentation

161. The motion itself should make clear the aims and objectives of the proposed legislation, and follow the structure in the example below:

To propose that the Senedd:

1. Notes a proposal for a Bill on healthier school meals.

2. Notes that the purpose of this Bill would be to:

(a) improve the nutritional standards of school meals, based on best practice and research, which would provide children with at least a third of their nutritional needs;

(b) place a duty on education authorities to ensure that meals provided at schools complies with nutritional regulations that ensure the provision of a meal that provides largely a third of a child's daily nutritional needs; and

(c) allow education authorities to specify particular foods or drinks which fail to satisfy the nutritional regulations so that they can be banned from school premises.

162. In accordance with Standing Order 12.25, Members are expected to make any supporting documents and/or additional information referred to in the motion available to all Members when they table the motion.

Open Debates

163. Open Debates are longer-form, deliberative debates on key political themes. These debates will normally be scheduled for 120 minutes each.

Structure

164. In accordance with Standing Order 12.19(vii), Open Debates proceed on the basis of topics and not motions. As with Short Debate topics, they are not amendable and are not subject to a vote.

165. The 120-minute debate will be structured as follows:

- An allocation of 20 minutes in total given to the opening and closing contributions;
- Other Members called to speak – the Business Committee may table a motion to suspend Standing Order 13.6 ahead of each debate to allow multiple contributions from individual Members (eight minutes for a Member's first contribution, three minutes thereafter), with interventions also encouraged;

- Members of the Government are also able to contribute, though not in the form of a reply, with an allocation of 10 minutes when called to speak.

Tabling and selection process

166. The Business Committee has agreed to select topics that:

i. focus on an overarching political theme or principle;

ii. are likely to generate an open, deliberative yet vigorous debate in the Siambr with a high level of participation;

iii. add to the diversity of debate in the Siambr; and

iv. attract a high level of support from Members. While this would not be the determining factor, a topic with more supporting Members may be given higher priority.

167. The Table Office will invite Members to table topics for Open Debates during a tabling window that will last no less than five working days, ending at the close of business (5pm) on a stipulated Thursday. Members will be able to co-submit topics, and indicate support for topics tabled by other Members, though no minimum requirement for support is required for a submission to be considered. Members will be asked to provide additional information alongside their submission in support of their topic. The Business Committee will then consider the topics tabled by the deadline and decide which one to select for the upcoming debate.

168. The topics will be tabled via the Table Office system and:

i. should be succinct, not exceeding more than one sentence;

ii. may be expressed as a question;

iii. should give a clear indication of the theme, question or principle to be debated;

iv. must not contain language considered by the Presiding Officer to be disorderly, discriminatory, offensive or which detracts from the dignity of the Senedd;

v. must not bring into question the proper conduct of Senedd business; and

vi. must not be subject to any other specific requirements in Standing Orders or in statute.

169. The Table Office may refuse to accept a topic if it does not comply with these rules. No amendments can be tabled to an Open Debate and it is not subject to a vote.

170. Once selected for debate, a topic will be included on the Business Statement and Announcement, and Members will be informed by email. Any motions not selected by the Business Committee will be automatically considered a second time, unless the proposal is withdrawn. Once a motion for an Open Debate has been considered on two occasions by the Business Committee, it will no longer be considered.

Presiding Officer and Deputies: voting in Siambr proceedings (Presiding Officer's guidance)

171. In accordance with Standing Orders 6.20 and 6.21, the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer(s) may only vote in Plenary when:

- a casting vote is required; or
- legislation requires a resolution or motion to be passed on a vote in which the number of Members voting in favour is not less than two-thirds of the total number of Senedd seats (that is, 40 out of 60 Members).

172. Should a decision on a motion or amendment result in a tie, the Presiding Officer must use their casting vote, in accordance with Standing Order 6.20.

173. Standing Order 6.20 states that where there is an equality of votes,[1] the casting vote by the Presiding Officer must be given:

- in the affirmative where further discussion of the matter before the Senedd is possible; and
- in the negative where further discussion is not possible or where there is a vote on an amendment.

174. Underlying this are three principles derived from use in many Commonwealth Parliaments:

- the chair should always vote for further discussion;
- where no further discussion is possible, decisions should not be taken without majority support; and
- an original text should be preferred to an amended text.

175. In most cases, these will result in the Presiding Officer and Deputies using their casting vote to defeat a motion and always to defeat an amendment. The Presiding Officer would only vote in favour of a motion if its acceptance would result in further consideration of that specific question by the Senedd.

[1] Motions which require the agreement of two-thirds of Members of the Senedd are, of course, not subject to a casting vote, for example, a motion to suspend Standing Orders.

176. Instances where the Presiding Officer may use their casting vote in favour of a motion, would be when the Senedd is deciding whether to agree the general principles of a Bill (the Stage 1 debate), and a proposal for an **Urgent Debate**.

177. For example, because the effect of using the casting vote to agree the Stage 1 motion would be to allow the Bill to progress to Stage 2 and Stage 3 proceedings (likewise with any decision on a related financial resolution), this would therefore give the Senedd a further opportunity to consider the Bill.

178. The judgements made by the Presiding Officer when exercising their casting vote will establish precedents to guide similar decisions in the future.

Timings for Debates

179. *NB the Chair may extend or limit this allocation at their discretion, but will usually announce at the beginning of the debate if this is the case.

Government Debates

	30 minute debate	45 minute debate	60 minute debate	90 minute debate
Minister/Deputy Minister to open and close	10 mins in total	15 mins in total	15 mins in total	20 mins in total
Movers of amendments	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins
Other speakers	5 mins*	5 mins*	5 mins*	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)

Opposition Debates

	60 minute debate	30 minute debate	90 minute debate
Party speaker(s) to open and close	15 mins in total	8 mins in total	20 mins in total
Movers of amendments	5 mins	3 mins	5 mins
Other speakers	5 mins*	3 mins*	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to reply	8 mins	6 mins	12 mins
Party speaker to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)

Committee Report Debates

	30 minute debate	60 minute debate
Chair of the Committee to open and close	8 mins in total	15 mins in total
Other Speakers	5 mins*	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to reply	5 mins in total	8 mins in total
Chair of the Committee to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)

Member Debates

	30 minute debate	60 minute debate
Individual Member to open and close	8 mins in total	15 mins in total
Other Speakers	5 mins*	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to reply	5 mins in total	8 mins in total
Individual Member to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)

Members' Legislative Proposals

	30 minute debate
Individual Member to open and close	8 mins in total
Other Speakers	3 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to reply	6 mins in total
Individual Member to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Open Debates

	120 minute debate
Individual Member to open and close	20 mins in total
Members of the Government (first contribution)	10 mins
Other speakers (first contribution)	8 mins

Additional contributions (all speakers)	3 mins
Individual Member to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Motion for Annulment

	30 minute debate
Individual Member to open and close	8 mins in total
Other Speakers	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to reply	6 mins in total
Individual Member to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Legislative Consent Motions

	90 minute debate	**60 minute debate**	**45 minute debate**	**30 minute debate**	**15 minute debate**
Minister/Deputy Minister to open and close	20 mins in total	15 mins in total	10 mins in total	10 mins in total	5 mins
Committee Chair	10 mins	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins
Movers of amendments	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins	5 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins	5 mins*	5 mins*	5 mins*	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)	5 mins

Statement on the Draft Budget (90 mins)

	90 minutes
Minister/Deputy Minister to open	15 mins
1st speaker from each non-Government group	10 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister to close	10 mins

Debate on the Draft Budget (120 mins)

	120 minutes
Minister/Deputy Minister to open	20 mins in total
Chair of the Finance Committee	10 mins
1st speaker from each non-Government group and movers of amendments	10 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Urgent debate proposed by a Member who is not a member of the Government

	60 minute debate	**90 minute debate**
Proposing Member to open and close	15 minutes in total	20 minutes in total
Other speakers	5 mins	5 mins
Member of the Government/Commissioner (if the debate hasn't been proposed by a member of the Government or Commission)	8 mins	12 mins
Proposing Member to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)

Urgent debate proposed by a member of the Government / Member of the Commission

	60 minute debate	90 minute debate
Minister/Deputy Minister/ Commissioner to open and close	15 minutes in total	20 minutes in total
Other speakers	5 mins*	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister/ Commissioner to close	(Time remaining from allocation)	(Time remaining from allocation)

Debates seeking the Senedd's leave to introduce a Member-proposed Bill

	60 minute debate
Member in charge of the legislation to open and close	15 mins in total
Minister/Deputy Minister to speak on behalf of the Government	8 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins*
Member in charge to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Stage 1 (Government) Bill Debates

	60 minute debate
Minister/Deputy Minister to open and close	15 mins in total
Chair of the Committee	8 mins
Chair of the Finance Committee (if appropriate)	5 mins
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee (if appropriate)	5 mins
Movers of amendments	5 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins*
Minister/Deputy Minister to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Stage 1 (Member-Proposed) Bill Debates

	60 minute debate
Member in charge to open and close	15 mins in total
Chair of the Committee	8 mins
Chair of the Finance Committee (if appropriate)	5 mins
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee (if appropriate)	5 mins
Movers of amendments	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister to speak	8 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins*
Member in charge to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Stage 1 (Committee-Proposed) Bill Debates

	60 minute debate
Chair of the Committee in charge to open and close	15 mins in total
Chair of the Finance Committee (if appropriate)	5 mins
Chair of the Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee (if appropriate)	5 mins
Movers of amendments	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister to speak	8 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins*
Chair of the Committee in charge to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Stage 3 Bill Debates

All speakers have 10 minutes.

Stage 4 Bill Debates

	15 minute debate
Minister/Deputy Minister/Member in Charge to open and close	5 mins in total
Other Speakers	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister (penultimate speaker if it is not a Government bill)	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister/Member in Charge to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

Initial consideration of a Consolidation Bill debate

	45 minute debate
Minister/Deputy Minister to open and close	12 mins in total
Chair of the Committee	8 mins
Movers of amendments	5 mins
Other Speakers	5 mins
Minister/Deputy Minister to close	(Time remaining from allocation)

5. Statements of Opinion

180. Standing Order 14.9 provides for Members, other than a member of the Government, to table Statements of Opinion not exceeding 100 words on a matter affecting Wales. These Statements of Opinion may be supported, opposed or amended by any other Member.

181. Statements of Opinion are a mechanism for Members to draw attention to issues of concern or highlight achievements by putting their views on a subject on record and canvassing support from other Members.

Content of Statements

182. A Statement may bear one name or may be co-submitted with other Members. There is no limit to the number of Members who may give support to the Statement.

183. Members may table amendments to another Member's statement but only if they have not supported it, as this indicates the Member's agreement with the whole of the statement. Amendments must be tabled in the same way as the original statement and must not increase the total length of the Statement to over 100 words.

184. Amendments may be supported in exactly the same way as a Statement.

185. A record of all Statements of Opinion and the Members who have raised, subscribed to or amended them will be maintained by the Table Office and published on the Record.

186. Statements of Opinion and amendments to support or oppose them remain current for the rest of the Senedd in which they were tabled. At the end of a Senedd they fall, although they can be tabled again as new Statements in the next Senedd.

187. When raising a Statement of Opinion or submitting an amendment to one, it is important to remember they must not:

i. exceed 100 words;

ii. contain language considered by the Presiding Officer to be disorderly, discriminatory, offensive or which detracts from the dignity of the Senedd;

iii. refer to matters sub-judice; or

iv. bring into question the proper conduct of Senedd business.

188. The Presiding Officer is the final authority on the admissibility of a Statement.

6. Laid documents

189. Standing Order 15 makes provision for certain categories of documents to be laid before the Senedd.

Laying procedure

190. Where Standing Order 15 provides for a document to be laid, the person undertaking the laying must:

i. complete the relevant form (available from the Table Office or via the Members' Intranet);

ii. identify the specific legislation or Standing Order provision that requires or permits the document to be laid; and

iii. submit the form with electronic version of the document(s) to the Table Office in both English and Welsh, so far as is appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable.

Access to documents

191. The Table Office will ensure all documents laid are published on the Senedd's website.

Documents circulated for information

192. Where there is no entitlement to lay a document under Standing Order 15, that document cannot be formally laid before the Senedd. Documents being sent to Members for information may be e-mailed or placed in the Library, or both.

7. Other relevant procedures and practices

Principles for conduct in the Siambr

Key principles

193. The rules of debate are governed by Standing Order 13. Members must at all times in their conduct promote respect for the Senedd and extend respect and courtesy to other Members. Members must comply with any directions given by the Presiding Officer about conduct in the Siambr and order in Plenary meetings.

General principles

194. In addition, the following points outline general principles relating to Members' attendance at, and participation in, Plenary meetings:

- Members should give priority to attending Plenary meetings;
- Members may not bring food, drink (except water) or intrusive electronic equipment into the Siambr;
- Members may speak in proceedings only when called to do so by the Presiding Officer;
- the calling of speakers is at the discretion of the chair;
- only one Member may speak at a time;
- Members may speak in either English or Welsh;
- Members called to speak by the Presiding Officer may either stand or sit in their places and must address the chair;
- when the Presiding Officer is speaking, Members may not speak and if standing must resume their seats;
- Members wishing to speak are expected to have been present in the Siambr throughout the item of business, and to stay for the remainder of an item if they have spoken.

Rules of debate

195. **Time limits** for speeches will be set by the Presiding Officer and notified to Members; however, the standard time limit will usually be 5 minutes. If the Presiding Officer receives many requests to speak during a debate, they may, in accordance with Standing Order 13.5, announce a further time limit for contributions. The Presiding Officer may also direct a Member who has exceeded the time limit to stop speaking.

196. When calling Members to speak, the chair gives regard to the balance of party representation in the Senedd.

197. As a general principle, all speeches must be relevant to business, concise and avoid tedious repetition (Standing Order 13.4).

198. Usually, a Member may speak only once on any matter unless they have proposed the motion and wishes to exercise a right of reply or, with leave of the Presiding Officer, wishes to clarify a material point in their original speech (Standing Order 13.6).

199. A Member who is speaking may give way to another Member who wishes to intervene for the purposes of clarification. Interventions should be brief and the intervening Member may not give way to a second Member who wishes to intervene. Under Standing Order 13.7, there is no right of intervention and it is not a matter for the chair if the Member speaking refuses to give way.

200. Debates should not be a series of set speeches and Members should not read out prepared speeches without taking account of earlier contributions. Members should remain in the Siambr to hear any comments made in response to their speech. Members should notify the chair in advance if they are unable to attend for the entire debate and should also apologise to the Siambr.

Language and conduct

201. In accordance with Standing Order 13.9, the Presiding Officer maintains order in Plenary meetings and must call to order any Member who:

i. is engaging in conduct that would, in the opinion of the Presiding Officer, constitute a criminal offence or contempt of court;

ii. is obstructing the business of the Senedd;

iii. seeks to raise a matter outside the scope of the debate or motion;

iv. is guilty of discourteous or unbecoming conduct;

v. is using disorderly, discriminatory or offensive language or language that detracts from the dignity of the Senedd;

vi. refuses to conform to any Standing Order or other requirement for the conduct of Members; or

vii. disregards the authority of the chair.

202. The Presiding Officer will decide what constitutes disorderly language. Racist, sexist, or ageist references will be considered both discriminatory and offensive.

203. Members must comply with any directions given by the Presiding Officer about any conduct for which they have been called to order (Standing Order 13.10).

204. Under Standing Order 13.11, the Presiding Officer may also ask a Member to withdraw from Senedd proceedings for the remainder of the day if they consider the Member's conduct to warrant withdrawal.

205. If a Member does not withdraw from proceedings when the Presiding Officer asks them to do so, a motion to exclude the Member from Senedd proceedings may be proposed by the Presiding Officer and must be voted on immediately. If the motion is agreed, the exclusion of the Member takes immediate effect in accordance with Standing Order 13.13.

206. During the period of exclusion the Member shall not be entitled to receive any salary from the Senedd and shall not be permitted to attend any Senedd proceedings (Standing Order 13.14).

207. Under Standing Order 12.18, when the Presiding Officer thinks it appropriate (including any case of grave disorder arising in Plenary meetings), they may adjourn proceedings without putting any proposition to the vote, or may suspend proceedings for a specified time.

Privilege

208. Under **section 42 (1) of the Government of Wales Act**, for the purposes of the law of defamation only, any statement made in Senedd proceedings is

absolutely privileged. Personal allegations against Members or other persons will usually be considered offensive. This includes allegations of uttering falsehoods, allegations of corrupt, unfair or illegal practices and allegations of deliberate misrepresentation.

Sub judice

209. In accordance with Standing Order 13.15, Members are forbidden from raising or pursuing in Plenary meetings any matter which relates to active court proceedings (as defined by **Schedule 1 to the Contempt of Court Act 1981**), except to the extent permitted by the Presiding Officer. Before permitting such matters to be raised, the Presiding Officer would wish to be satisfied that:

i. the matter is clearly related to a matter of general public importance or a ministerial decision is in question;

ii. the matter does not relate to a case which is to be heard, or is being heard, before a criminal court or before a jury, nor to a case which is to be heard, or is being heard, in family proceedings; and

iii. the Member does not, in their comments, create a real and substantial risk of prejudice to the proceedings of a court either generally or in respect of a particular case.

Relations with the Judiciary

210. In accordance with Standing Order 13.16, Members must not, in Plenary meetings, make criticisms of the conduct of judges of the courts of the UK in the discharge of their judicial office.

211. In addition, under Standing Order 13.17, the Senedd must not discuss individual judicial appointments.

Members not speaking in debate

212. Members who are not speaking will be expected to listen courteously to the debate and should not interrupt the Member speaking.

213. Any messages from officials or staff outside the Siambr should be sent electronically to the Member or passed to the ushers within the Siambr.

Use of audio-visual content

Virtual and hybrid proceedings

214. Due to the technical complexity involved, use of audio-visual aids is not permitted in virtual or hybrid Plenary meetings.

Proxy voting

Introduction

215. The procedures for exercising a Proxy Vote are set out under Standing Orders 12.41A-G.

Parental leave

Eligibility

216. Proxy voting is available to Members who are absent from all Senedd proceedings for reasons of childbirth, care of an infant or child as a result of a new adoption or surrogacy arrangement, or who have suffered a miscarriage or stillbirth.

217. A Member must demonstrate eligibility for the scheme by notifying the Presiding Officer of their intention to take parental leave, and providing any additional documentation or forms of notification that the Presiding Officer deems appropriate.

218. The scheme is not compulsory and Members are free to vote in person or use any other informal pairings available to them.

219. In the event of any ambiguity, the Presiding Officer will use their discretion to determine compliance with the proxy voting scheme.

Duration

220. Subject to the Presiding Officer's discretion, the maximum duration of the dispensation to vote by proxy is:

- seven months for the biological mother of a baby; the primary or single adopter of a baby or child; or the primary or single carer of a baby or child in a surrogacy arrangement; and
- seven months for the biological father or the partner of the person giving birth who has parental responsibility for the child; the second adopter of a baby or child; or the secondary carer of a baby or child in a surrogacy arrangement.

221. Of this, a maximum of four weeks shall be taken before the due date, adoption date or surrogacy date and a maximum of six months after the due date, adoption date or surrogacy date.

222. The duration will include periods when the Senedd is in recess or dissolved. In exceptional circumstances the Presiding Officer can use their discretion to vary the duration.

223. A Member must specify in writing to the Presiding Officer the dates the absence will begin and end, subject to the maximum durations permitted. The Member is entitled to cast a vote by proxy for the period specified in the certificate issued by the Presiding Officer under Standing Order 12.41E (paragraph 232).

224. The Presiding Officer's discretion will be used to determine eligibility and maximum durations for proxy voting when Members or their partners have suffered a miscarriage or stillbirth. In determining such factors, the Presiding Officer will be mindful of statutory entitlements.

Long-term illness or injury and caring responsibilities

Eligibility

225. Proxy voting is available to Members who are absent from all Senedd proceedings for reasons of long-term personal illness or injury, or due to their caring responsibilities.

226. A Member must notify the Presiding Officer of their intention to take leave, and provide any additional documentation or forms of notification that the Presiding Officer deems appropriate.

227. The scheme is not compulsory and Members are free to vote in person or use any other informal pairings available to them.

228. In the event of any ambiguity, the Presiding Officer will use their discretion to determine compliance with the proxy voting scheme.

Duration

229. The usual duration of the dispensation to vote by proxy is for a minimum of four weeks and a maximum of six months, including periods when the Senedd is in recess or dissolved. In exceptional circumstances the Presiding

Officer can use their discretion to extend the duration of a proxy voting arrangement.

230. A Member must specify in writing to the Presiding Officer the dates on which the absence will begin and end, subject to the maximum durations permitted. The Member is entitled to cast a vote by proxy for the period specified in the certificate issued by the Presiding Officer under Standing Order 12.41E (paragraph 232).

Bereavement

Eligibility

231. Proxy voting is available to Members who are absent from all Senedd proceedings for reasons of bereavement.

232. A Member must notify the Presiding Officer of their intention to take leave, and provide any additional documentation or forms of notification that the Presiding Officer deems appropriate.

233. The scheme is not compulsory and Members are free to vote in person or use any other informal pairings available to them.

234. In the event of any ambiguity, the Presiding Officer will use their discretion to determine compliance with the proxy voting scheme.

Duration

235. The duration of a proxy vote for bereavement is to be agreed between the Member and the Presiding Officer, and may be extended at the Presiding Officer's discretion. The agreed duration will include periods when the Senedd is in recess or dissolved.

236. A Member must specify in writing to the Presiding Officer the dates on which the absence will begin and end. The Member is entitled to cast a vote by proxy for the period specified in the certificate issued by the Presiding Officer under Standing Order 12.41E (paragraph 232).

General provisions

237. The following provisions are applicable in all circumstances.

Designation of a proxy

238. When specifying the dates of absence, the Member eligible for proxy voting must name the Member who has agreed to carry out their proxy vote, thereby vouching that an agreement has been entered into.

239. A Member is free to choose any other Member to carry out their proxy vote, subject to the agreement of the other Member and notification to the Presiding Officer.

Publishing the arrangement

240. On receipt of this information, and once the Presiding Officer has determined compliance, the Presiding Officer will lay a certificate setting out the name of the Member nominated as proxy and the start and end dates. The certificate will note the proxy has been granted for reasons related to parental leave, long-term illness or injury, caring responsibilities or for bereavement but will not specify any further detail in relation to the circumstances.

241. The votes summary for each Plenary or Committee of the Whole Senedd meeting will note that a proxy vote has been cast by listing the Member and how they voted in the usual way, in accordance with Standing Orders 12.48 and 17.35, and by noting which Member cast a proxy vote on their behalf.

Varying the arrangement

242. A Member who wishes to change their proxy, to end their period of proxy voting earlier than originally notified, or to cast a vote in person on (a) specific item(s) of business, or suspend the arrangement for a period of time, must give written notice to the Presiding Officer as soon as is reasonably practicable after the circumstances that have led to the request become known (for example, publication of a Plenary agenda, tabling of a motion). A Member may also request to participate in Senedd proceedings whilst in possession of a proxy vote. The Presiding Officer will use their discretion to determine compliance in these circumstances.

243. The Presiding Officer will issue and lay a new certificate under paragraph 232 if required.

244. Changes of proxy made for a specified period will take effect from the start (or end) of the day(s) specified.

Exercising the proxy vote

245. A Member eligible to vote by proxy must agree with the Member nominated as their proxy when the proxy vote will be cast and how it will be exercised on each vote.

246. A Member designated as a proxy must act in strict accordance with the instruction given by the absent Member.

247. A Member designated as a proxy may cast their own vote one way and the proxy vote in the other, and may cast a proxy vote without casting their own vote at all.

248. A Member registered as voting by proxy who wishes to vote in person will be entitled to do so, provided that the Presiding Officer has been notified as soon as is reasonably practicable after the circumstances that have led to the request became known. The Presiding Officer's discretion will be used to determine compliance in these circumstances.

249. A Member eligible to vote by proxy must inform the Member nominated as their proxy of any relevant interest which prohibits them from voting under Standing Order 2.9.

Practical arrangements for voting by proxy

250. The Clerk will make practical arrangements with the Member nominated as proxy to exercise the proxy vote.

8. Office holders

Election of the Presiding Officer and Deputies

251. The procedures for the election of the Presiding Officer and Deputies are set out in Standing Order 6.

252. At the first meeting following a Senedd election, the Presiding Officer will be elected first, followed by the election of the first Deputy Presiding Officer. The incumbent Presiding Officer cannot both chair proceedings and be nominated for election as Presiding Officer. Should the incumbent Presiding Officer wish to stand as Presiding Officer, the Clerk will chair the election proceedings.

253. The election of a second Deputy Presiding Officer is optional and, if it is required, would take place at a later meeting than the election of the Presiding Officer and first Deputy. Under Standing Order 6.14A., the Presiding Officer, having consulted the Business Committee, may propose by motion that the Senedd agrees to elect a second Deputy. If the Senedd agrees the motion, the election process for a second Deputy is conducted using the same process as for the Presiding Officer and first Deputy.

Secret ballot arrangements

254. A secret ballot is required when any Member objects to a single nomination or if there is more than one nomination. The chair will suspend the meeting and announce the time when voting will close. The bell will be rung to indicate that the voting booths are open.

255. The secret ballot will be held in a designated space in the Senedd building. Ushers will be on hand to direct Members.

256. Ballot forms will be printed once the candidates are known. A different colour will be used for each round of voting (if necessary).

257. Members will be issued with their ballot papers on entering the designated space. Their names will be checked on a list by Chamber Secretariat officials.

258. Voting will take place in a voting booth. Ballot papers will be placed by Members in a ballot box.

259. The Presiding Officer may make arrangements for Members to vote in the secret ballot remotely by electronic means.

260. Voting will last until all Members have voted or for 30 minutes, whichever is shorter.

261. The Clerk of the Senedd will be responsible for supervising the voting and counting of votes.

262. If there is only one nomination, Members will be asked to vote for or against the Member nominated. In the case of multiple nominations, Members will be asked to select their preferred candidate. In both instances, Members may abstain.

263. If two Members have been nominated and the secret ballot results in a tie, further secret ballots will take place until one candidate has secured a greater number of the votes cast in the ballot..

264. If more than two Members have been nominated and no Member receives more votes than the total number of votes cast for all the other candidates in a ballot, the candidate (or candidates) who has received the smallest number of votes is excluded. Further secret ballots will be held until one candidate obtains more votes than the total number of votes cast for all the other candidates .

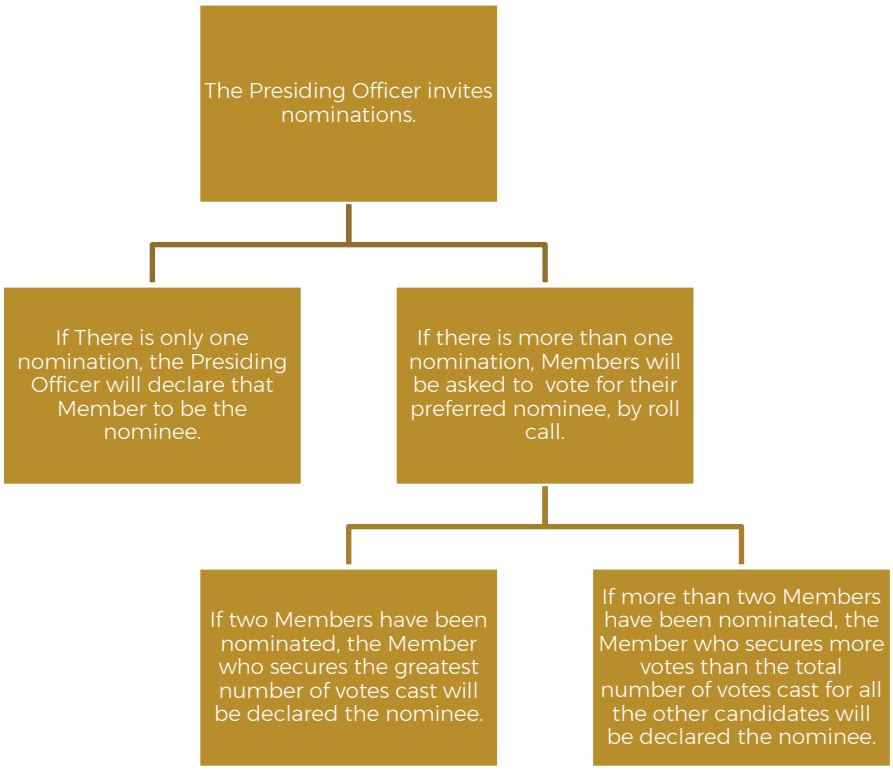
265. The bell will be rung to resume the meeting and the chair will announce the result of the election in the Siambr. The Member elected as Presiding Officer will take the oath if they have not already done so, and will immediately take the chair for any remaining items of business on the Plenary Agenda, including the election of the first Deputy.

Nomination of the First Minister

266. The Senedd is required to nominate a First Minister within 28 days of a Senedd election. The procedure for nominating the First Minister is set out in Standing Order 8.

267. Nominations for the appointment of First Minister can take place during the first Plenary meeting after an election or at any subsequent Plenary meeting, subject to the Senedd resolving to do so, in accordance with Standing Order 12.11. The Senedd will be invited by the Presiding Officer to agree that nominations take place. If any Member objects, an electronic vote will be called. Nomination proceedings will only take place if a majority of Members voting agree.

268. The process for nominating the First Minister is outlined below:



Roll call

269. If a roll call is required, the Presiding Officer will ask each Member present (in alphabetical order) to state the name of their preferred candidate. Members will also be given the option to abstain. The Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer are not permitted to vote.

270. If two Members have been nominated (or if there are two remaining candidates after others are eliminated) and the roll call results in a tie, further votes by roll call will take place. The Presiding Officer may suspend or adjourn the meeting at any time if they think it appropriate to do so. A nomination may be withdrawn between rounds of voting.

271. If more than two Members have been nominated and no Member receives more votes than the total number of votes cast for all other candidates, the candidate with the smallest number of votes will be excluded. Further votes by roll call will take place until one candidate obtains more votes than the total number of votes cast for all other candidates.

Nomination result

272. The Presiding Officer will immediately recommend to His Majesty that the Member nominated by the Senedd be appointed as First Minister. This will be done by sending an e-mail to the Palace on the Presiding Officer's behalf.

273. The nominee for the appointment of First Minister may wish to make a speech immediately after their nomination.

Election of a committee chair

274. In accordance with Standing Orders 17.2A–D, for each committee established by the Senedd, the Business Committee must table a motion to allocate each chair to a political group. In tabling that motion, the Business Committee must have regard to the political balance of chairs. The Senedd must then consider that motion, and at least two-thirds of Members must agree to it for it to pass.

275. Similarly, in accordance with Standing Orders 17.2L–R, if the position of a chair becomes vacant, the Business Committee:

- must consider the effect of that vacancy on the balance of committee chairs between political groups; and
- may table a motion to propose to change the political group of the vacant chair, or the chair of any other committee.

276. Following the outcome of the above consideration, a vacancy must be filled by an election.

Job-sharing committee chairs

277. In tabling a motion under Standing Order 17.2A to allocate committee chairs to political groups, Business Committee may also table a motion under Standing Order 17A.6. to indicate which committees are eligible to receive nominations for candidates who wish to share the position of committee chair on a job-sharing basis. The Business Committee must ensure that no more than three committees are eligible for two Members to be nominated or appointed as job-sharing chairs at any one time.

278. If the Senedd agrees that a committee is eligible to receive nominations for candidates who wish to share the position of committee chair on a job-sharing basis, the nomination process is as follows:

i. the two Members must both be from the political group to which the chair has been allocated;

ii. the two Members must be named in a single nomination and must be seconded by another Member; and

iii. neither of the two Members is nominated as an individual Member for the same committee chair, or as an individual or joint candidate for any

other committee chair for which nominations are being taken at the same meeting.

279. In all other respects, the nomination and election process will follow the process outlined in the remainder of this section. References to a "Member" being nominated and seconded should be read as "Members".

280. If the Senedd agrees to a motion under Standing Order 17.2T to disapply the normal provisions for electing committee chairs under Standing Orders 17.2A to 17.2S in respect of a specific committee, and a motion under Standing Order 17A.6. for the same committee, the relevant motion under Standing Order 17.3 may propose two Members of the same political group to share the position of committee chair.

Invitation of nominations

281. The Presiding Officer will invite nominations for the chair of a committee in Plenary.

282. Only a Member from the political group that has been allocated that committee may be nominated as chair, and only a Member of the same political group may make the nomination. The nomination must be seconded by another Member of the Senedd.

283. The Presiding Officer may invite nominations for several chairs at the same session, but no Member may be nominated for more than one committee chair at a time.

284. If only one Member is nominated and seconded, the Presiding Officer must ask the Senedd if any Member objects. If there are no objections, the Presiding Officer must declare that Member elected as chair of the committee. If any Member objects, the Presiding Officer must make arrangements for the election to take place by secret ballot. Members will be asked to vote for or against the Member nominated. Members may abstain.

285. If there are two or more nominations, the Presiding Officer must make arrangements for the election to take place by secret ballot.

286. If nominations are required for more than one vacant chair, and two or more nominations are received for any one committee, the Presiding Officer will continue with the nominations for other vacancies until all nominations have been made.

287. At the end of the process, the Presiding Officer will announce the time and date of the secret ballot(s) of those committee chairs that need to be elected.

Secret ballot process

288. If there are two nominations, Members will be asked to select their preferred candidate. The Presiding Officer must declare elected the Member who has secured the greatest number of votes cast in the ballot. If there is an equality of votes between the two candidates, a further secret ballot must take place.

289. If there are more than two nominations, Members will be asked to vote by ranking as many candidates as they wish in order of preference. If no Member receives more votes than are cast for all the other candidates, the candidate (or candidates) who has received the smallest number of first preferences must be excluded and their votes will be distributed among the remaining candidates according to the next preferences. This process of exclusion and distribution will be repeated until one candidate obtains more votes than the total number of votes cast for all the other candidates.

290. If there is an equality of votes between the two remaining candidates a further secret ballot must take place.

Secret ballot arrangements

291. The Presiding Officer will announce the date and time of the secret ballot(s), which will normally be as soon as practically possible after nominations have been taken. Members will be informed by email that the voting booths are open. The arrangements for the secret ballot(s) will normally be as follows:

- The secret ballot(s) will be held in a designated space in the Senedd building. Ushers will be on hand to direct Members.
- Members will be issued with their ballot papers on entering the designated space. Their names will be checked on a list by Chamber Secretariat officials.
- A different colour will be used for each ballot paper for each committee chair election.
- Voting will take place in a voting booth. Ballot papers will be placed by Members in a ballot box.

- The Clerk of the Senedd will be responsible for supervising the voting and counting of votes.
- The Presiding Officer may make arrangements for Members to vote in the secret ballot remotely by electronic means.

Announcing the results

292. The Presiding Officer will announce the results of the secret ballot(s) as soon as practicable after the process has completed.

9. Political groups

293. Standing Order 1.3(i) defines a political group as a "group of at least five Members belonging to the same registered political party that won at least one seat at the previous Senedd election".

294. Standing Order 1.3(ii) provides that, in exceptional circumstances, the Llywydd may recognise five Members not satisfying the criteria in Standing Order 1.3(i) as a political group.

295. Examples of exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to, a split in a registered political party, a national crisis, or a major event that changes political affiliations. By-elections may also change the Senedd's political make-up in a way that makes it appropriate to recognise a new group.

Appendix 1 – Form and content of questions

Members should observe the following criteria when tabling questions:

1. Delegated responsibilities

1.1 Questions may be tabled to the First Minister, a Welsh Minister, the Counsel General or the Senedd Commission on any matter relating to their responsibilities. The First Minister may answer oral questions relating to any matter within the remit of any Welsh Minister. However, written questions on detailed policy issues relating to the responsibility of Welsh Ministers must be directed to the appropriate Minister.

1.2 Questions can ask for information regarding the actions of Ministers or the Commission in relation to non-devolved matters, or matters outside their responsibilities, but cannot ask for direct action on those matters.

1.3 The responsibilities of individual Welsh Ministers are published on the **Cabinet pages** of the Welsh Government's website. The responsibilities of the Senedd Commission are set out in Section 27 and Schedule 2 to the Government of Wales Act 2006.

2. Proper form of questions

2.1 Language - questions containing language considered by the Presiding Officer to be disorderly, discriminatory or offensive or which detracts from the dignity of the Senedd will not be accepted.

2.2 Length - questions should be drafted as concisely as possible (no more than 50 words). This is particularly relevant for oral questions.

2.3 Open questions – such as asking about the First Minister's engagements for the day, or an open-ended question on the Welsh Government's priorities, will not be accepted. The focus of a question must be clear from its wording. Examples of open questions and suggested alternatives are in **Appendix 2**.

2.4 Scope - questions should be worded as to indicate a particular subject matter. Questions may be deemed inadmissible if they are vague or meaningless. Questions should not seek an answer to hypothetical propositions. Questions should not (primarily) convey information or put forward a particular point of view.

3. Other considerations

3.1 Answered questions – questions that have previously been answered by the same Minister, or which renew, or repeat in substance, one that has been answered, or has been refused an answer, may not be asked again for an interval of three months. However, questions that seek updates on, for example, statistical information, may be acceptable.

3.2 Factual basis - extracts from newspapers or books and paraphrases of, or quotations from, speeches etc. are not admissible but the facts on which a question is based may be briefly set out within the framework of a question, provided the Member asking it makes themselves responsible for the accuracy of such facts.

3.3 Accuracy of statements – questions cannot query whether statements made in the press, or by private individuals or unofficial bodies, are accurate. However, questions that refer to the content of messages from another Government to the Senedd are admissible.

3.4 Personal reflections - questions must not reflect on the character or conduct of a Member. A question is not admissible if it introduces names of persons in any way unless leaving out such details would render the question unintelligible.

3.5 Legal matters - questions seeking an expression of opinion on a question of law may not be accepted. Questions may not be asked about matters in respect of which court proceedings have been initiated, or where notice of appeal has been given, until the time when judgement has been given (Standing Order 13.15). Questions which reflect on the decision of a court of law are not acceptable. Questions relating to the sentence passed by a judge or which criticise the judiciary are inadmissible (Standing Order 13.16).

3.6 Readily available information - Questions seeking information that the Member can easily obtain of their own accord or through another source are not admissible.

Appendix 2 – Examples of open questions tabled

1. What are the Welsh Government's priorities for 2023? - Tabled to the First Minister

Open as it could cover any aspect of this Ministerial portfolio. As tabled to the First Minister, this question could be reworded to include detail on any aspect of the Welsh Government's responsibilities.

2. Will the First Minister make a statement on the Welsh Government's priorities for the new year? - Tabled to the First Minister

Open as it could cover any aspect of this Ministerial portfolio. As tabled to the First Minister, this question could be reworded to include detail on any aspect of the Welsh Government's responsibilities.

3. Will the Minister provide an update on policies the Welsh Government intends to deliver in 2023? - Tabled to the Minister for Education and Welsh Language

Open as it could cover any aspect of this Ministerial portfolio.

4. What steps is the Minister taking to improve the lives of the residents of Cardiff and the valleys? - Tabled to the Minister for Climate Change

Open as it could cover any aspect of this Ministerial portfolio.

5. What are the Minister's budget priorities for the next 12 months? - Tabled to the Minister for Social Justice.

Open as it could cover any aspect of this Ministerial portfolio.

6. Will the Minister provide an update on their department's activities in South Wales Central? - Tabled to the Minister for Economy

Open as it could cover any aspect of this Ministerial portfolio.

7. Will the First Minister make a statement on the Welsh Government's priorities for young people? - Tabled to the First Minister

Although limited to a particular age group, this is open as it could cover aspect from a wide range of Ministerial portfolios.

8. Will the First Minister outline the Welsh Government's plans for North Wales in 2023? - Tabled to the First Minister

Although limited to the Member's electoral region, this is open as it could cover any aspect of all Ministerial portfolios.

9. What are the Minister's priorities for north Wales in the next 12 months? - Tabled to the Minister for Economy

Although limited to a particular region, this is open as it could cover any aspect of all Ministerial portfolios.

10. Will the First Minister make a statement on the cost-of-living crisis? - Tabled to the First Minister

Although this question is limited to a particular issue, the focus of this question is not clear, as it gives no indication what information is being sought or what government policy is being asked about.

11. Will the Minister make a statement on Natural Resources Wales? - Tabled to the Minister for Climate Change

Although this question is limited to a particular part of the portfolio, the focus of this question is not clear, as it gives no indication what information is being sought and what government policy is being asked about..

Suggested alternative questions to the above

1. What action will the Welsh Government take during 2023 to help the rural economy?

2. Will the First Minister make a statement on the Welsh Government's priorities for social care in the new year?

3. Will the Minister provide an update on policies for higher education the Welsh Government intends to deliver in 2023?

4. What steps is the Minister taking to improve ~~the lives of~~ public transport for the residents of Cardiff and the valleys?

5. What are the Minister's budget priorities for tackling poverty for the next 12 months?

6. Will the Minister provide an update on their department's activities in relation to supporting businesses in South Wales Central?

7. Will the First Minister make a statement on the Welsh Government's priorities for getting young people into work?

8. Will the First Minister outline the Welsh Government's plans for the economy in North Wales in 2023?

9. Will the Minister outline their priorities for sport in north Wales in the next 12 months?

10. Will the First Minister make a statement on what action the Welsh Government is taking to tackle the cost-of-living crisis?

11. Will the Minister make a statement on Welsh Government funding of Natural Resources Wales?