



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill**

DATE **2 October 2023**

BY **Mick Antoniw MS, Counsel General and Minister for the
Constitution**

Today the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Bill and Explanatory Memorandum is laid before the Senedd.

The Bill is the next step in our commitment to modernise and reform Welsh elections. So far, we have extended the franchise to 16 and 17-year-olds and qualifying foreign citizens, announced a clear framework for Electoral Reform, and delivered a set of electoral innovations at last year's local elections. It also builds on provisions relating to digital imprints and disqualification orders in the Elections Act 2022 which the Senedd consented to and now apply to Welsh elections.

The Bill and wider reform package will help drive up participation in Welsh elections. It will improve accessibility for disabled people and take steps to ensure every eligible voter is registered to vote at Welsh elections through proposed new provisions requiring all Electoral Registration Officers to automatically register eligible electors for the local government register. It will clarify the offence of undue influence and mirror some rules in the Elections Act 2022 in relation to campaign finance. It will establish an Electoral Management Board to strengthen electoral administration.

It will also provide for the reform of the processes for conducting community and electoral reviews, abolish the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and confer the remuneration functions formerly undertaken by the Panel, on the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru.

Welsh Ministers will be required, through regulations, to establish and operate an online platform with information regarding Senedd, and ordinary principal council elections to help build understanding about elections in Wales.

The Bill will require the Welsh Ministers to take steps to increase opportunities for underrepresented groups to play a full role in supporting and representing their communities by standing for elected office. It will build on our pilot scheme of financial assistance to help disabled candidates in a Welsh election remove barriers to their participation.

I look forward to scrutiny of the Bill by Members, and to hearing the views of stakeholders, delivery partners, and the public during the legislative process.