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Senedd Cymru

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Dear David,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Electoral Commission's funding proposals for 2025-26. I am replying as the Minister responsible for elections. I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language given his interest in expenditure out of the Welsh Consolidated Fund.

The Electoral Commission is a valued partner for the development and implementation of electoral reform, through two recent Acts in particular, the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Act and the Elections and Elected Bodies (Wales) Act. It has been crucial in shaping and refining this legislation as well as its ongoing implementation.

I note the need to have an extensive programme of voter engagement and public awareness ahead of the 2026 Senedd elections and welcome the inclusion of an information booklet to all voters as part of this programme. I am aware there were some issues with delivery of a similar booklet ahead of the last Senedd election and expect these will not arise given the Electoral Commission's experience.

I am aware that the Electoral Commission is part of the Senedd 2026 Communications Group, which is led by the Senedd Commission and includes Welsh Government officials, with the aim of supporting a coordinated approach to public awareness-raising in advance of the 2026 election. The Electoral Commission's proposals would complement the efforts of the other interested organisations.

I appreciate the role the Electoral Commission is taking in supporting democratic education, especially with the establishment and co-ordination of the Democratic Education Forum. Welsh Government officials will continue to support and engage with this work to build

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

teachers' confidence and expertise in helping young people play their full role in our democracy.

Welsh Government officials will maintain close contact with the Electoral Commission regarding the proposed funding of the Democracy Club's polling station lookup tool for the 2027 polls. It will be essential to coordinate this work alongside the development of the Wales Elections Information Platform the Senedd recently legislated for and is intended to be operational for the 2026 Senedd elections. As always, Welsh Government officials will strive to ensure that our efforts are complementary, not duplicative, and we will look to leverage the Commission's resources and expertise wherever possible.

I note the positive steps the Commission has outlined in relation to value for money and I appreciate that core costs for 2025-26 are reduced in comparison to 2024-25. However, I am sure the Committee will note that the proposed budget is significantly increased compared to 2024-25 (by 75.3%) due to "event costs", i.e. the heightened activities leading up to the Senedd election in May 2026. Given the current budget pressures on the Welsh Consolidated Fund, the Committee may wish to seek further clarification on these costs and the reasons why they were not outlined in the Corporate Plan for 2022-23 to 2026-27.

The Committee may also wish to satisfy itself with the small discrepancies between the letter and the estimate table, for example the letter separates core and event costs, but the table does not.

The letter suggests the majority of additional costs consist of £650,000 for a public awareness campaign and £375,000 for bilingual information booklets. The registration campaign is mentioned later in the letter, with no specific cost attached. It is not clear how this aligns with the table, which includes the budget line "Campaigns & Corp Identity" - £1.112m for "paid for media campaigns in the lead up to the 2026 Senedd elections", including "the registration campaign" and "voter information booklets".

In terms of affordability, the fiscal context remains challenging, placing continued pressures on the Welsh Government's budget. We are unable to comment on our own funding settlement until after the UK Government's Autumn Budget on 30 October as we have no certainty of funding for 2025-26 at this point. Our Draft Budget will be published on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Following your Committee's scrutiny of the Electoral Commission's proposals, my officials will work with the Electoral Commission to put in place a payment agreement to set out how the costs will be paid from the Welsh Consolidated Fund, according to the budget agreed by the Senedd.

Yours sincerely,



**Jayne Bryant MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai  
Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government