

Amending Standing Orders: Standing Order 26: Member Bills

March 2026

In accordance with Standing Order 11.7(iv), the Business Committee is responsible for making recommendations on the general practice and procedures of the Senedd, including any proposals for the re-making or revision of Standing Orders.

This report explores issues relating to the Senedd's Member Bill procedures, and recommends changes to the relevant provisions in Standing Order 26 to:

- Convert the existing proposal-based ballot procedure into a name-only ballot procedure, including changes to the ballot process and the deadlines for tabling and debating leave to proceed motions.
- Increase the level of certainty about when ballots will be held and the number of Member Bill opportunities there will be in each Senedd.
- Adjust the interaction between recess periods and the deadline for introducing a Member Bill (to prevent the time available to Members being unintentionally curtailed), and enable the Senedd to agree by motion to extend the deadline.

The Senedd is invited to approve the proposals to revise the Standing Orders as at Annex 1, and agree that the changes should take effect from the start of the next Senedd. The amended Standing Orders, if approved, are at Annex 2.



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1. Review of the Member Bill process

Terms of reference

1. One of the Senedd's main responsibilities is to make laws. It does this by considering and passing Bills. Most Bills are introduced by the Welsh Government, but the rules also allow the Senedd Commission, Senedd committees and selected individual Members to introduce Bills.
2. In December 2024, the Business Committee agreed to review the Member Bill procedure to identify what is working well, and what could be improved. The terms of reference for the review were:

“To explore options for improving the operation and effectiveness of the Senedd’s Member Bill process, by:

- *Reviewing experiences in the Sixth Senedd (and previous Seneddau where relevant), including relevant procedures, practices, conventions, culture and ways of working prior to a Member Bill’s introduction (including but not limited to the way in which Members are selected for the opportunity to propose a Bill, the process for gaining ‘leave to proceed’, and the level of information Members are required to provide at these stages).*
- *Identifying any potential implications for the Member Bill process arising from the increase in the number of Members of the Senedd.*
- *Identifying and, where appropriate, raising with relevant decision-makers including the Senedd Commission and the Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd, issues relating to the resource and support available to Members during the Member Bill process.”*

Evidence gathering

3. In spring 2025, the Business Committee:
 - Called for written evidence.

- Conducted interviews and group discussions with former and current Members of the Senedd, Commission officials, and current Members of other parliaments in the UK with experience of Member Bills.
- Held a drop-in session for Members of the Senedd.
- Invited the Chairs' Forum to share its views.

4. In summer and autumn 2025, the Business Committee considered the evidence gathered, explored procedures and practice in other legislatures, and reached conclusions. Where required, Business Managers consulted their political groups on emerging conclusions.

2. Background

Current procedures

5. Currently, to introduce a Member Bill, a Member must:
- **Be selected in a ballot.** Ballots are held “from time to time” at the Presiding Officer’s discretion.¹ To enter, Members must table a proposed Bill title and policy objectives. Members who have been selected in a ballot may not enter subsequent ballots in the same Senedd.
 - **Secure leave to proceed from the Senedd.** Members selected in ballots have 25 working days (including days in non-sitting weeks) to table a motion seeking agreement that they may introduce a Bill, and lay a Standing Order 26.91A explanatory memorandum (“EM”) setting out the proposed Bill title and policy objectives, details of any support received/consultation undertaken, and an initial costs/savings estimate. The proposed title and policy objectives must be broadly consistent with the pre-ballot proposal. Time must be made available for the motion to be debated within 35 working days of the ballot (excluding days in non-sitting weeks).
 - **Introduce any resulting Bill within 13 calendar months of being granted leave to proceed.** The Bill must give effect to the proposal tabled at the leave to proceed stage. The Member in charge must comply with the

¹ Standing Order 26.87

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same general procedural requirements that apply to all Bills introduced in accordance with Standing Order 26 (for example the laying of a Standing Order 26.6 EM, and compliance with the Presiding Officer's determination on the proper form of Public Bills).

6. Once introduced, a Member Bill is subject to the same scrutiny and timetabling procedures as any other Bill introduced under Standing Order 26.²

Procedural change to date

7. The Member Bill³ procedure was introduced in 2007. With some exceptions (see Table 1) the procedure has remained broadly consistent.

Table 1 Changes to the Member Bill procedure since 2007

Issue	Changes
Eligibility to enter a ballot	Originally, a Member selected in a ballot could not enter any further ballots in that Senedd. The restriction was suspended for a period in the Third Assembly after two ballots attracted no proposals. In 2011, Standing Orders were changed so that a Member who had been selected but denied leave to introduce a Bill could enter subsequent ballots. In 2013, Standing Orders were changed to revert to the original position.
Deadlines for tabling and debating leave to proceed motions	Originally, the deadlines following a ballot were 10 working days (including days in non-sitting weeks) to table a motion, and 20 working days (excluding days in non-sitting weeks) for the motion to be debated. In 2011, the deadlines were extended to 25 working days (including days in non-sitting weeks) and 35 working days (excluding days in non-sitting weeks) respectively.
Deadline for introducing a Bill	Originally, a Member had six months after being granted leave to proceed to introduce a Bill. This was extended to nine months in 2011, and to 13 months in 2016.

² With the exception of a government Bill that the Senedd has agreed under Standing Order 26.95 to treat as a government emergency Bill.

³ Under Part 3 of the Government of Wales Act 2006, laws made by the Assembly were known as Measures. During their consideration by the Assembly, such proposals were known as proposed Measures. Under Part 4 of the 2006 Act, proposals are known as Bills and the laws made by the Senedd are known as Acts. For simplicity, in this report 'Member Bill' should be read to mean 'Member proposed Measure' where appropriate.

Issue	Changes
Pre-ballot and leave to proceed information requirements	Originally, a pre-ballot proposal had to include details of support received and consultation undertaken. In 2016, this requirement was removed, and replaced with a requirement for a leave to proceed motion to be accompanied by an EM outlining the proposed Bill title and policy objectives, details of support received and an initial cost assessment.
Taxes	In 2016, a new Standing Order was added to provide that Member Bills may not seek to amend existing taxes or introduce new taxes.

Consideration that did not lead to proposals for change

8. In 2016, the Fifth Senedd Business Committee considered proposing the removal of the requirement to table a pre-ballot proposal (i.e. moving to a name-only ballot) and an associated increase in the deadline for tabling a leave to proceed motion. It decided to retain the current proposal-based system.⁴

Consultation responses

9. Issues raised by consultation respondents⁵ included:

- Mixed views on the effectiveness or otherwise of the current procedure, and whether it provides sufficient opportunities for Members to bring forward proposals, for cross-party collaboration, or for citizen engagement.
- Proposals for adjusting the current procedural model or adopting alternative procedural models, highlighting the trade-offs between the extent of barriers to entry, the availability of parliamentary time, and the availability of resources.
- Emphasis of the level and complexity of work required from the Member in charge of a Member Bill, and concern that awareness of this among Members may vary.

⁴ Business Committee, [Proposed amendments to Standing Order 26](#), November 2016

⁵ Responses are available on the Business Committee's [consultation page](#).

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- Views on the sources and levels of resource and support, including from Senedd Commission services, the Determination on Members' pay and allowances, the Welsh Government and external stakeholders.
- Views on the scope and breadth of Member Bills, and the links between breadth, resourcing and likelihood of securing political support.
- Emphasis of the vital role of the Welsh Government.
- Agreement on the importance of effective training, induction and guidance, especially if the increase in the number of Members leads to a higher proportion of Members who have been elected for the first time.

Member Bill objectives and outcomes

10. Members' motivations for bringing forward Member Bill proposals vary, as do the outcomes their proposals achieve. In the Senedd, like other legislatures, the chances of changing the law are fairly low. When interviewed about their experiences, Members of the Senedd and other legislatures and Senedd Commission officials identified a range of objectives for Member Bills other than changing the law, including agenda-setting, seeking government commitments, and bringing profile to issues or communities.⁶

11. The public visibility of outcomes other than changing the law can be limited. However, the Members who were interviewed were generally able to identify tangible outcomes arising from their proposals. This is reflected in debates on leave to proceed proposals and on Stage 1 general principles motions for Senedd Member Bills since 2011, which indicate that proposals that have not directly changed the law have nevertheless frequently given rise to government commitments or policy recommendations from Senedd committees that might not have been made in the absence of the Member proposal/Bill.

12. Since 2007, 26 Member Bill ballots have been held, from which 25 proposals have been selected. Annex 3 provides an overview of the progress of the resulting proposals through the Member Bill procedure. In summary:

⁶ Business Committee, *Issues raised by Members and officials with experience of Member Bills*, June 2025

- To date, five (20 per cent) of the Member Bills resulting from the 25 proposals selected in Member Bill ballots have been passed at Stage 4, and four⁷ (16 per cent) have received Royal Assent.⁸ If the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill currently before the Senedd is passed at Stage 4 and receives Royal Assent this will increase to six (24 per cent) and five (20 per cent) respectively.
- Expressed as a percentage of the 12 Member Bills that have been introduced, this equates to 42 per cent having been passed by the Senedd so far, and 33 per cent having received Royal Assent. If the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill passes and receives Royal Assent this will increase to 50 per cent having been passed and 42 per cent having received Royal Assent.

Practice and procedure in other legislatures

13. It is common for legislatures to have procedures enabling non-government Members to introduce Bills. But, there is considerable variation in how such procedures operate. Dr Larissa Peixoto Gomes, research fellow at the University of Edinburgh, described ballots as “a rare method of Bill proposal” internationally.⁹

14. Evidence from Dr Daniel Gover, senior lecturer in British politics at Queen Mary University of London,¹⁰ highlighted the trade-offs between factors such as the procedural hurdles that Members must navigate to introduce a Bill and guide it through the scrutiny procedures, the availability and allocation of parliamentary time, and the availability of parliamentary resources. Dr Gover discussed the importance of the function the legislature intends the Member Bill procedure to serve when considering how to balance these factors:

“In systems where some bills are introduced with little realistic prospect of parliamentary time, it is usually accepted that

⁷ The Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill was passed, but subsequently referred to the Supreme Court which found that the Assembly did not have the legislative competence to enact the Bill in its present form. The Bill had not been approved by the end of the Fourth Assembly, and therefore fell in accordance with Standing Order 26.77.

⁸ Under Part 3 of the Government of Wales Act 2006, a proposed Measure required Royal Approval to become law. Under Part 4 of the 2006 Act, a Bill requires Royal Assent to become law. For simplicity, in this report ‘Royal Assent’ should be read to mean ‘Royal Approval’ where appropriate.

⁹ PBMB11 Dr Larissa Peixoto Gomes, research fellow

¹⁰ PBMB14 Dr Daniel Gover, senior lecturer in British politics at Queen Mary University of London

these serve purposes such as agenda setting, signalling and campaigning rather than direct enactment [...]. Where there is little chance of genuinely independent non-government bills being passed into law (as opposed to government handouts), it may likewise be argued that significant policy and drafting resources are unnecessary. If, however, the intention is to promote the passage of bills that are genuinely independent of the executive, have policy significance, are competently drafted, and are subjected to proper scrutiny, this will inevitably require greater parliamentary time and resources. This would in turn need to be considered against the wider demands on the chamber, most notably for the scrutiny of government action and legislation.”¹¹

15. Consideration of procedures and practices in a range of legislatures¹² identified a number of key differences:

- The types and levels of ‘barriers to entry’ to the process (for example the use of ballots for various purposes, tests of political support or government intent to legislate, consultation requirements, limits on Bill numbers or constraints on parliamentary time).
- The availability of parliamentary time for Member Bills, and the way in which such time is allocated to individual Bills.
- The types of explanatory materials required or expected to accompany Member Bills (including the extent to which any requirements applicable to Member Bills reflect or differ from those applicable to government Bills in the relevant legislature).
- The parliamentary support services and resources available to Members.

16. This variation limits the extent to which meaningful comparison of Member Bill enactment rates across legislatures can be undertaken. Nevertheless, Table 2 shows the enactment rates for the Senedd Member Bills that have been introduced compared with data on enactment rates in other legislatures

¹¹ PBMB14, Dr Daniel Gover, senior lecturer in British politics at Queen Mary University of London.

¹² Including analysis of information shared with officials by legislatures in the UK and internationally (including legislatures in the UK, Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Ghana, India, Ireland, Jersey and Pakistan), and supplementary research primarily focusing on legislatures in the UK.

provided by Dr Gover. While caution must be exercised in drawing any firm conclusions—not least because the timeframes for the data vary, and the overall number of Senedd Member Bills is low compared with other legislatures—the enactment rate in the Senedd is towards the higher end of the scale.

Table 2 Member Bill enactment rates (adapted from evidence provided by Dr Gover)

Legislature	Timeframe	Bills that have become Acts
Australian Parliament	1903 to 2025	24 (around 3%)
French National Assembly	2022 to 2024	60 out of 1,438 (4%)
UK Parliament	2010 to 2024	110 out of 2,516 (4%)
Canadian Parliament	2021 to 2025	24 out of 316 (8%)
New Zealand Parliament	2017 to 2020	16 out of 56 (29%)
Senedd (current)	2007 to 2026	4 out of 12 (33%)
Scottish Parliament	1999 to 2021	31 out of 76 (41%)
Senedd (potential)¹³	2007 to 2026	5 out of 12 (42%)

3. Support and resourcing for Member Bills

Background

17. Under current arrangements, Members who are selected in ballots and granted leave to proceed are allocated an integrated Bill team, which includes the support of clerks, researchers, lawyers, translators, and communication and engagement officials.

18. Indications from the experience of the Sixth Senedd are that, within planned resources, it would be extremely difficult in a 96-Member Senedd elected for four-year terms to maintain the level of support currently provided to Members by Commission staff, whichever procedural model was adopted.

¹³ 'Potential' figures for the Senedd indicate the situation if the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill is passed and receives Royal Assent.

The Business Committee's consideration

19. Decisions on the support and resourcing available from Commission services to Members who are selected in ballots and/or granted leave to introduce a Member Bill will be a matter for the Commission in the Seventh Senedd.

20. However, the Business Committee acknowledged that its review of Member Bills was taking place in the context of an expectation that the support and resourcing model in the Seventh Senedd is likely to be significantly different to what has been provided previously. Differences might include, for example:

- The balance between what Members will have to resource or undertake themselves from within their offices or by working with external stakeholders, and what will be done on their behalf by Commission services.
- At which points within the process Members will be able to access Commission services, and for what range of activities.
- The extent to which Members will be able to access specialists within Commission services.

4. The Business Committee's consideration

Initial consideration

21. On 26 June and 9 July 2025, the Business Committee discussed the Senedd's Member Bill procedures, taking into account the evidence gathered during spring 2025; the experience of, and outcomes from, the Senedd's existing procedures; and analysis of equivalent procedures in legislatures in the UK and internationally.

22. Following discussion of the purpose and overall aims of the Member Bill procedure, the Business Committee:

- Acknowledged that Members of the Senedd have generally sought to introduce Bills that are capable of being enacted and implemented, and that, while the barriers to entry are high, Member Bills are guaranteed parliamentary time and the support available from Commission services is relatively extensive.

- Agreed that, as a matter of principle, Member Bills should continue to be subject to the same scrutiny procedures as any other Bill introduced in accordance with Standing Order 26.
- Identified three potential procedural models for further consideration.

Potential procedural models

23. On 9 October 2025, the Business Committee considered three potential procedural models in greater detail:

- i. A model based on the Scottish Parliament's procedures, in which any non-government Member could table a draft proposal for the purposes of consultation, and subsequently gain the right to introduce a Bill if they secured sufficient cross-party support for their final proposal.
- ii. A name-only ballot model, in which Members would no longer have to table a proposal in order to enter the ballot, and in which greater certainty would be provided about the number and timing of Member Bill opportunities.
- iii. A combination model, incorporating both a name-only ballot, and a mechanism by which a Member who was not selected in a ballot could secure the right to introduce a Bill by demonstrating sufficient political support for their proposal.

24. Following consultation with political groups, the Business Committee agreed on 16 October 2025 to propose a name-only ballot model for use in the Seventh Senedd. It agreed that the benefits would include:

- Scope to regulate the number and flow of Member Bills throughout a Senedd term to manage the impact of Member Bills on the Senedd's legislative capacity.
- The process would be broadly familiar to returning Members and support staff, the Senedd Commission, the Welsh Government, and stakeholders.
- Members entering ballots would be able to begin initial policy work after being selected, reducing the potential for 'wasted work' or unduly raising stakeholder expectations.

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- A model which included greater certainty about the timing of ballots and the potential number of opportunities in each Senedd would increase predictability, and enable Members, the Commission, the Welsh Government and stakeholders to plan more effectively.

Name-only ballot procedure

Proposed Standing Order changes

25. On 26 November 2025, the Business Committee considered and reached preliminary decisions on detailed proposals for the design of a name-only ballot procedure.

26. On 29 January 2026 the Business Committee formally agreed to propose changes to Standing Order 26 (as outlined in Annexes 1 and 2) to give effect to its proposed name-only ballot Member Bill procedure. Annex 4 outlines indicative timescales associated with the Business Committee's proposals.

Number of ballots and number of Members to be selected

27. While developing its proposals, the Business Committee sought to balance:

- Providing more opportunities for Member Bills.
- Managing the impact of Member Bills on the Senedd's scrutiny capacity.
- Responding positively to feedback from consultation respondents that greater certainty about the timing of ballots and the number of Member Bill opportunities would be beneficial.

28. The Business Committee concluded that a model which included two ballots, to be held at specified intervals and each drawing multiple Members, would increase predictability and certainty compared either to the current arrangements, or to a model in which a larger number of ballots were held, each drawing a single Member. Such a model could provide opportunities for Members selected in the second ballot (and those seeking to engage with or support them) to learn from the experience of those selected in the first.

29. The Business Committee also considered proposing a single ballot early in a Senedd to select all potential Member Bill opportunities. This could allow more time to be available to each Member within the overall process, but the Business Committee decided against this model on the basis that it could result in:

- Newly-elected Members feeling pressured to engage with the Member Bill process before they were ready to do so.

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- A risk that a large number of Member Bills could overwhelm Senedd business at the leave to proceed stage and/or the Senedd's scrutiny capacity after any Member Bills were introduced.

30. Reflecting on the move to four-year terms, and the potential for unforeseen circumstances to arise, the Business Committee agreed to propose a model which provides for no more than two ballots, each drawing no more than three Members, resulting in a maximum of six potential Member Bills per Senedd.¹⁴ Within these limits, the Presiding Officer will continue to have discretion, when establishing the ballot timetable, to specify the number of ballots and the number of Members to be selected.

Timing of ballots

31. Standing Order 26.87 currently provides that ballots are held “from time to time” at the Presiding Officer’s discretion.

32. The Business Committee considered how Standing Orders could be framed to provide greater certainty about the timing of ballots, while avoiding being unnecessarily prescriptive and ensuring that there is sufficient flexibility to respond to exceptional circumstances or unforeseen events.¹⁵

33. The Business Committee agreed to propose that:

- The Presiding Officer should be required to establish and publish a timetable for the Member Bill ballots to be held in that Senedd.
- To ensure there is certainty early in the Senedd about when Member Bill opportunities will be available, the timetable must be published ‘as soon as reasonably practicable’ after a Senedd election.
- To provide flexibility to respond to unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, the Presiding Officer may subsequently make such changes to the timetable as he or she considers appropriate.

¹⁴ It is possible that fewer than six Member Bills would be introduced. For example if the Presiding Officer determined that fewer than two ballots would be held or that fewer than three Members should be selected from any ballot; if fewer Members enter a ballot than are due to be selected in that ballot; if the Senedd votes against a leave to proceed motion; or if a Member who has been granted leave to proceed chooses not to introduce a Bill.

¹⁵ For example, Seneddau elected at extraordinary general elections may be expected to last from just over six months to four years and six months. In a Senedd that is expected to be significantly shorter than four years, the Presiding Officer might decide that it is appropriate to hold fewer or no ballots, or for any ballots that are held to select fewer Members.

- The timetable may include no more than two ballots, each drawing no more than three Members. If the Presiding Officer considers that exceptional circumstances apply, the timetable may provide that no ballots are to be held.

34. When establishing the timetable, the Presiding Officer will need to have regard to a range of factors, including, for example the anticipated duration of the Senedd; the wider legislative programme; the Senedd's scrutiny capacity; whether it could reasonably be expected that any Bill introduced by a Member selected in a ballot could be introduced and passed within the time remaining in the Senedd after the date of the ballot; and the capacity available within Commission services. The Business Committee considered whether any particular factors should be specified in Standing Orders as matters to which the Presiding Officer should be required to have regard. On the basis that it is difficult to predict which factors may be most relevant in any particular circumstance, it agreed that it would be prudent to leave these matters to the Presiding Officer's discretion.

Deadline for tabling a leave to proceed motion

35. Standing Order 26.91 currently provides that a Member who is selected in a ballot may, within 25 working days of the date of the ballot, table a motion seeking the Senedd's agreement to introduce a Bill. This includes working days in non-sitting weeks. The Business Committee considered whether this deadline would remain appropriate in a name-only ballot model.

36. The Business Committee acknowledged that, as Members will no longer be required to table pre-ballot proposals, they may not have decided on a potential proposal before being selected. Before being in a position to table a leave to proceed motion, a Member will need to develop a proposal (for example by undertaking any preliminary consultation or engagement, and/or taking advice on any potential legislative competence issues or issues relating to the UK Internal Market Act 2020), and prepare appropriate supporting information to accompany the leave to proceed motion.

37. The Business Committee also noted that, under the current procedures, the deadline for tabling a leave to proceed motion and EM can fall in a non-sitting week; this can have the effect of requiring some Members to table their motions significantly before the motion is likely to be debated.

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38. The Business Committee agreed to propose that the deadline for tabling a leave to proceed motion should be within 60 working days (excluding working days in non-sitting weeks) of the date of the ballot.

Deadline for debating a leave to proceed motion

39. Standing Order 26.92 currently provides that time must be made available for a motion tabled under Standing Order 26.91 to be debated within 35 working days of the date of the ballot (excluding working days in non-sitting weeks). This effectively provides a minimum of two sitting weeks after the deadline for tabling a leave to proceed motion for the Business Committee to schedule time for a debate.

40. The Business Committee agreed that it was appropriate for Standing Orders to continue to provide a deadline within which time must be available to debate leave to proceed motions. The deadline guarantees that a Member who tables a leave to proceed motion will have the opportunity for their proposal to be debated, and assists in managing the flow of Member Bills through the process.

41. The Business Committee considered whether a two sitting week minimum period would remain appropriate in a model in which up to three Members could be selected in each ballot. In reaching a view, the Business Committee noted that the deadline for introducing a Bill, if leave to proceed is granted, is calculated on the basis of the date on which leave to proceed is granted i.e. if debates on leave to proceed motions take place in successive weeks, the deadlines for introducing any resultant Bills will also fall in successive weeks.

42. The Business Committee agreed to propose that the deadline for making time available to debate leave to proceed motions should be extended to within 80 working days (excluding working days in non-sitting weeks) of the date of the ballot. This was on the basis that it would give the Seventh Senedd Business Committee greater flexibility to manage the impact of multiple Members being selected in each ballot on plenary business and the Senedd's legislative scrutiny capacity, while still guaranteeing that time will be made available for motions to be debated.

EMs accompanying leave to proceed motions

43. Standing Orders currently require a leave to proceed motion to be accompanied by a Standing Order 26.91A EM setting out:

- The proposed title of the Bill.

- The proposed policy objectives of the Bill.
- Details of any support received for the Bill, including details of any consultation carried out.
- An initial assessment of any costs and/or savings arising from the Bill.

44. The Business Committee noted that Members of the Senedd who were interviewed about their experiences of Member Bills were generally content that this information gives the Senedd a sufficient basis on which to take decisions.¹⁶ It agreed not to propose any changes to the information requirements.

45. The Business Committee considered the use of the term 'explanatory memorandum' to describe the information required to accompany a leave to proceed motion. To minimise the risk of confusion between this document and the Standing Order 26.6 EM required when a Bill is introduced, the Business Committee agreed to propose that the leave to proceed document be described instead as an 'explanatory statement'.

Implications if a proposal is denied leave to proceed

46. Standing Order 26.94 currently provides that if a motion seeking leave to proceed is not agreed, then, for a period of six months, no Member may enter a ballot with a proposal that has substantially the same policy objectives as the Bill that was referred to in the motion that was not agreed. The purpose of the restriction is to avoid a situation in which the Senedd is asked within a short period to reconsider a proposal that it has already rejected.

47. In the proposed name-only ballot model, Members will no longer be required to table pre-ballot proposals. The Business Committee considered whether to propose the removal of Standing Order 26.94, or to propose amending it to place restrictions on the tabling or debating of a motion under Standing Order 26.91 if a motion proposing a Bill with substantially similar policy objectives had been rejected in the previous six months.

48. The Business Committee agreed to propose the removal of Standing Order 26.94, on the basis that:

¹⁶ Business Committee, *Issues raised by Members and officials with experience of Member Bills*, June 2025

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- It is unlikely that, if two Members selected in the same ballot had chosen to develop proposals with substantially the same policy objectives, they would not become aware of this prior to the deadline for tabling leave to proceed motions. In this case, each Member could avoid any restriction by amending their proposals to the extent that they were no longer 'substantially' the same.
- There is already provision in the [Guidance on the proper conduct of Senedd business](#) that enables the Table Office, subject to the overriding discretion of the Presiding Officer, to refuse to accept motions that bring into question the proper conduct of Senedd business. Specific provision in respect of the tabling of Standing Order 26.91 motions would duplicate this.
- Within a two-ballot model, it is likely that the six-month period after the leave to proceed debates arising from the first ballot would have expired before the deadline for tabling leave to proceed motions arising from the second ballot.

49. The Business Committee agreed that its successor in the Seventh Senedd may wish to monitor the operation of the leave to proceed procedures so that it can, if necessary, revisit whether any restrictions are required.

Deadline for introducing a Bill following leave to proceed

50. Senedd Members and officials who were interviewed about their experiences of Member Bills had mixed views about the 13-month deadline; some found that it provided focus, while others suggested it was inadequate or too inflexible.¹⁷ The Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd suggested that consideration be given to the deadline, including the potential for mechanisms to enable the deadline to be extended in certain circumstances.¹⁸

51. The Business Committee concluded that a deadline assists in managing the impact of Member Bills on the Senedd's scrutiny capacity and Commission services. Within a two-ballot model, it will also ensure that all Members, regardless of the ballot in which they are selected, have the same time available to them, and help to regulate the flow of Member Bills throughout a Senedd.

¹⁷ Business Committee, [Issues raised by Members and officials with experience of Member Bills](#), June 2025

¹⁸ [PBMB09 Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd](#)

52. The Business Committee agreed:

- That 13 months remains an appropriate period for the development and introduction of a Member Bill.
- That a 13-month period can be accommodated within a two-ballot model operating within a four-year Senedd (see indicative timescales in Annex 4).

53. A Member's leave to introduce a Member Bill expires at the end of 13 calendar months following the Senedd's agreement to a motion under Standing Order 26.91. There is currently no mechanism by which the 13-month deadline can be extended. In addition, because Bills can only be introduced on working days in sitting weeks, the actual time available to a Member can be reduced by up to eight weeks if the 13 months ends during a recess period.

54. The Business Committee agreed to propose two extension mechanisms:

- An **automatic mechanism** to provide that, if the 13-month period does not end on a working day in a sitting week, the deadline for introducing the Bill is extended to the last working day in the first sitting week after the 13 months ends. While this could result in some Members having up to nine weeks of additional time (if their deadline fell in the first week of a summer recess), it would avoid a situation in which some Members would have up to eight weeks less than the full 13 months (if their deadline fell in the last week of a summer recess).
- A **discretionary mechanism** to provide that a Member who had been granted leave to introduce a Bill could, before the end of the 13-month period, propose by motion that the Senedd agreed to extend the deadline to a date specified by the Member in the motion. This would balance flexibility (for example in circumstances where final political negotiations were required, or where a Member's illness for a period had prevented them from progressing their Bill) with the opportunity for the Senedd to determine whether it was satisfied that the extension requested by the Member was appropriate (taking into account, for example, the circumstances of the specific Bill, the time remaining in the Senedd and the wider legislative programme).

5. Other issues

Member's Legislative Proposal debates

Background

55. In the Fifth Senedd, Member's Legislative Proposal ("MLP") debates were introduced to allow Members to table and debate 'take note' motions proposing any type of legislation (Bills, subordinate legislation, section 109 or 116C Orders etc). The procedure does not grant access to the Member Bill process. The basis for MLP debates is the Guidance on the proper conduct of Senedd Business issued by the Presiding Officer; there is no requirement in Standing Orders for such debates to be held.

56. The Business Committee heard suggestions, including from Members who participated in a drop-in session,¹⁹ that the purpose of MLP debates is not well understood, and Members and stakeholders can be frustrated that a positive vote on the 'take note' motion does not result in legislative action.

The Business Committee's consideration

57. On 26 November 2025, the Business Committee considered its views on MLP debates in the context of its intention to propose a name-only ballot procedure for Member Bills.

58. The Business Committee acknowledged that there is potential for confusion about MLP debates, and what they can achieve. However, Business Managers noted that MLP debates are valued as an opportunity for Members to test and explore ideas for legislation—which can assist in developing or changing political thinking around an issue—and provide opportunities for plenary business to be proposed and led by individual backbench Members.

59. The Business Committee agreed to ask the Llywydd to consider amending guidance to provide greater flexibility for the Seventh Senedd Business Committee to decide if and when to schedule time for MLP debates, and to clarify the role and purpose of such debates.

¹⁹ Business Committee, [Issues raised during Member drop-in session](#), June 2025

Member participation in committee scrutiny

Background

60. Current practice in the Senedd is for committee members who are the Members in charge of a Bill, or who otherwise have a close connection to a Bill that could reasonably be considered to conflict with their scrutiny role, to be advised to voluntarily recuse themselves from participation in committee consideration of that Bill (except as members of a Committee of the Whole Senedd). This has included, for example, committee members who were, at a relevant time:

- The Member in charge of a Member Bill.
- Members of the Senedd Commission, during the scrutiny of a Commission Bill.
- Members who had been members of the Welsh Government shortly before the introduction of a government Bill, but who had subsequently left the government.
- Designated Members for the purposes of the Co-operation Agreement.
- Members of committees tasked with producing reports for the purposes of forming the basis of policy instructions for government Bills relating to Senedd reform.

61. There is no formal procedural restriction on such Members participating as committee members or substitutes in the scrutiny of the relevant Bill. The [guide to the Member Bill process](#) highlights the usual practice in respect of Member Bills. Advice in respect of other potential conflicts is provided to Members on a case-by-case basis.

62. In the Scottish Parliament, Standing Orders include formal restrictions on the participation in committee business (other than a Committee of the Whole Parliament) relating to a Bill by a committee member who is the Member in charge of a Bill, a member of a committee that has proposed a committee Bill, or a member of the Scottish Government (in respect of a government Bill).

The Business Committee's consideration

63. On 26 November 2025, the Business Committee considered the Scottish Parliament's procedures, and discussed whether similar procedures would be

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appropriate in a Senedd context. It noted that there are key differences between the procedural frameworks in the Scottish Parliament and the Senedd (in particular in relation to committee substitution arrangements) that would complicate the adoption of similar procedures in the Senedd. It also noted that while such procedures could formalise certain aspects of the current practice in the Senedd, they could not cover all circumstances in which it might be appropriate for a committee member to voluntarily recuse themselves from consideration of a Bill.

64. The Business Committee concluded that, while it did not wish to consider proposing any procedural change in this respect, the current practice of committee members with potential conflicts recusing themselves from committee consideration of a Bill should continue.

6. Decision

65. The Business Committee agreed on 29 January 2026 to propose changes to Standing Order 26. The Senedd is invited to approve the proposal to change the Standing Orders as at Annex 1.

Annex 1 Proposed Standing Orders 24 and 26 and explanatory notes

	Standing Order	Notes
Standing Order 24 – Definition of Member in Charge of Legislation		
Member Bills		Retain subheading
24.15	The Member in charge of a Member Bill is: (i) the Member who has had agreement to introduce a Bill under Standing Order 26.91; (ii) another Member authorised by the Member under Standing Order 24.15(i), by means of a statement to that effect laid by that Member; or (iii) if no such authorisation is made, any Member authorised by the Senedd	Retain Standing Order
Standing Order 26 – Acts of the Senedd		
Form and Introduction of Bills		Retain subheading
26.1	Subject to Standing Orders 26.81 26.80 to 26.94A 26.94, a Bill may be introduced on a working day in a sitting week	Amend Standing Order The proposed changes would update the cross-references for the range of Standing Orders that apply only to non-government Bills to reflect the removal of Standing Order 26.80 in 2017, and the insertion of Standing Order 26.94A in 2016.

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	Standing Order	Notes
Fall, Rejection or Withdrawal of Bills		Retain subheading
26.78	Approval to introduce a Bill in accordance with Standing Order 26.91 ceases at dissolution.	Retain Standing Order
Member Bills		Retain subheading
26.85	Standing Orders 26.87 26.86 to 26.94A 26.94 apply only to Member Bills.	Amend Standing Order The proposed changes would update the cross-references for the range of Standing Orders that apply only to Member Bills to reflect the removal of Standing Order 26.86 in 2011, and the insertion of Standing Order 26.94A in 2016.
26.86	[Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on 16 November 2011]	
26.87	The Presiding Officer must, <u>as soon as reasonably practicable after a Senedd election, establish and publish a timetable specifying:</u> <u>(i) the number of ballots to be held to select the names of Members, from time to time hold a ballot to determine the name of a Member, other than a members of the government, who may seek agreement to introduce a Bill, and</u> <u>(ii) the number of names of Members to be selected in each ballot.</u>	Amend Standing Order The changes to the Standing Order would replace the complete discretion the Presiding Officer currently has over the timing and number of ballots with a requirement for the Presiding Officer to establish and publish a timetable for the ballots to be held in that Senedd. To ensure there is certainty early in a Senedd about the Member Bill

	Standing Order	Notes
		opportunities that will be available, the timetable must be published as soon as reasonably practicable after a Senedd election.
26.87A	<u>The Presiding Officer may make such subsequent changes to the timetable as he or she considers appropriate.</u>	New Standing Order The new Standing Order would complement the changes to Standing Order 26.87. It would provide flexibility for the timetable to be changed should circumstances require it.
26.87B	<u>The timetable must not include more than two ballots, and must not specify that any ballot is to select the names of more than three Members. If, in the view of the Presiding Officer, exceptional circumstances apply, the timetable may provide that no ballots are to be held.</u>	New Standing Order The new Standing Order would specify the maximum number of ballots that may be included in the timetable, and the maximum number of Members each ballot may select. Subject to these maximums, the Presiding Officer would have discretion, when establishing the timetable, over the number of ballots and the number of Members to be selected. This includes, if the Presiding Officer considers that exceptional circumstances apply, determining that no ballots are to be held in that Senedd.

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Standing Order 26: Member Bills

	Standing Order	Notes
26.88	The Presiding Officer must include in the ballot the names of all those Members who have applied to be included and who have tabled the pre-ballot information required by Standing Order 26.90.	Amend Standing Order The proposed change would remove the reference to the provision of pre-ballot information, which will no longer be required for a name-only ballot.
26.89	No Member who has previously <u>been selected in a</u> won the ballot in that Senedd may so apply.	Amend Standing Order The proposed change would remove the reference to a Member 'winning' the ballot. As more than one Member would be selected, the Standing Order needs to reflect that all Members who have been selected in a ballot are ineligible to apply to be included in a subsequent ballot.
26.90	The required pre-ballot information is: (i) the proposed title of the Bill; and (ii) the proposed policy objectives of the Bill.	Remove Standing Order Criteria for pre-ballot information are no longer required, as Members will not have to table pre-ballot information to enter a name-only ballot.
26.91	A Member who is successful in a ballot may within 60 ²⁵ working days of the date of the ballot <u>(not counting working days in a non-sitting week)</u> table a motion seeking the Senedd's agreement to introduce a Bill.	Amend Standing Order The proposed change would increase the time period within which a Member who is successful in a ballot may table a motion seeking the

	Standing Order	Notes
		<p>Senedd's agreement to introduce a Bill.</p> <p>It would also provide that only working days in sitting weeks are counted; this would mean the deadline for tabling a motion cannot fall within a recess period, thereby avoiding a situation in which the time available to the Member is artificially shortened.</p>
26.91A	<p>The motion must be accompanied by an Explanatory statement <u>Memorandum</u> setting out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the proposed title of the Bill; (ii) the proposed policy objectives of the Bill; (iii) details of any support received for the Bill, including details of any consultation carried out; and (iv) an initial assessment of any costs and/or savings arising from the Bill. 	<p>Amend Standing Order</p> <p>The proposed change would provide that the document that must accompany the motion tabled under Standing Order 26.91 is to be called an explanatory statement rather than an explanatory memorandum. The aim is to avoid any confusion between this document, and the explanatory memorandum that the Member must lay under Standing Order 26.6 if they introduce a Bill.</p>
26.91B	<p>The proposed title and policy objectives set out under Standing Order 26.91A(i) and (ii) must be broadly consistent with those provided under Standing Order 26.90. The reasons for any changes must be set out in the Explanatory Memorandum under Standing Order 26.91A.</p>	<p>Remove Standing Order</p> <p>Members will not have to table pre-ballot information to enter a name-only ballot, so Standing Order 26.91B is no longer required.</p>

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Standing Order 26: Member Bills

	Standing Order	Notes
26.92	Time must be made available for a motion tabled under Standing Order 26.91 to be debated within 80 ³⁵ working days of the date of the ballot (not counting working days in a non-sitting week).	Amend Standing Order The proposed change would increase the time period within which time must be made available for a motion tabled under Standing Order 26.91 to be debated. This complements the increase in the deadline for tabling such a motion, while also helping to manage the impact of such debates on plenary business by extending by two sitting weeks the window within which time is to be made available for motions to be debated.
26.93	If a motion under Standing Order 26.91 is agreed to, then the Member who has had agreement to introduce a Bill may within thirteen months of the motion being agreed introduce a Bill to give effect to the proposed policy objectives set out in the Explanatory statement ^{Memorandum} outlined in Standing Order 26.91A.	Amend Standing Order The proposed change reflects the proposed change to Standing Order 26.91A to change the description of the document accompanying a motion under Standing Order 26.91 from an explanatory memorandum to an explanatory statement.
26.93A	<u>If the period of thirteen months does not end on a working day in a sitting week, the deadline for introducing the Bill is extended to the last working day in the first sitting week after the thirteen months ends.</u>	New Standing Order The new Standing Order would avoid a situation in which the Member is not able to make full use of the 13 months because it ends during a recess period. It provides that, if the 13

	Standing Order	Notes
		months ends on a day that is not a working day in a sitting week, the period during which the Member may introduce a Bill is automatically extended to the end of the first sitting week after the day on which the 13 month period expires.
26.93B	<u>Before the end of the thirteen months (as extended in accordance with Standing Order 26.93A if relevant), the Member who has had agreement to introduce a Bill may by motion propose that the Senedd agrees to extend the deadline for the introduction of the Bill to a date specified in the motion.</u>	New Standing Order The new Standing Order would enable a Member who has been granted leave to introduce a Bill to seek the Senedd's agreement to extend the 13 month period to a specified date. If the motion proposed by the Member is not agreed, the deadline would remain at 13 months of the date on which leave to proceed was granted.
26.94	If a motion under Standing Order 26.91 is disagreed to, then no Member may enter any ballot held under Standing Order 26.87 for a period of six months after the motion has been disagreed to if the policy objectives of the Bill which he or she seeks agreement to introduce are substantially the same as those of the Bill referred to in the motion which has been disagreed to.	Remove Standing Order As Members will no longer be required to table proposals for the purposes of entering a ballot, Standing Order 26.94 is no longer required.
26.94A	Member Bills may not seek to amend existing taxes, or introduce new taxes.	Retain Standing Order

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Annex 2 Standing Orders as amended

STANDING ORDER 24 – Definition of Member in Charge of Legislation

Member Bills

24.15 The Member in charge of a Member Bill is:

- (i) the Member who has had agreement to introduce a Bill under Standing Order 26.91;
- (ii) another Member authorised by the Member under Standing Order 24.15(i), by means of a statement to that effect laid by that Member; or
- (iii) if no such authorisation is made, any Member authorised by the Senedd.

STANDING ORDER 26 – Acts of the Senedd

Form and Introduction of Bills

26.1 Subject to Standing Orders 26.81 to 26.94A, a Bill may be introduced on a working day in a sitting week.

Fall, Rejection or Withdrawal of Bills

26.78 Approval to introduce a Bill in accordance with Standing Order 26.91 ceases at dissolution.

Member Bills

26.85 Standing Orders 26.87 to 26.94A apply only to Member Bills.

26.86 [Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on 16 November 2011]

26.87 The Presiding Officer must, as soon as reasonably practicable after a Senedd election, establish and publish a timetable specifying:

- (i) the number of ballots to be held to select the names of Members, other than members of the government, who may seek agreement to introduce a Bill, and
- (ii) the number of names of Members to be selected in each ballot.

Amending Standing Orders:

Standing Order 26: Member Bills

- 26.87A The Presiding Officer may make such subsequent changes to the timetable as he or she considers appropriate.
- 26.87B The timetable must not include more than two ballots, and must not specify that any ballot is to select the names of more than three Members. If, in the view of the Presiding Officer, exceptional circumstances apply, the timetable may provide that no ballots are to be held.
- 26.88 The Presiding Officer must include in the ballot the names of all those Members who have applied to be included.
- 26.89 No Member who has previously been selected in a ballot in that Senedd may so apply.
- 26.90 [Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on DATE]
- 26.91 A Member who is successful in a ballot may within 60 working days of the date of the ballot (not counting working days in a non-sitting week) table a motion seeking the Senedd's agreement to introduce a Bill.
- 26.91A The motion must be accompanied by an explanatory statement setting out:
- (i) the proposed title of the Bill;
 - (ii) the proposed policy objectives of the Bill;
 - (iii) details of any support received for the Bill, including details of any consultation carried out; and
 - (iv) an initial assessment of any costs and/or savings arising from the Bill.
- 26.91B [Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on DATE]
- 26.92 Time must be made available for a motion tabled under Standing Order 26.91 to be debated within 80 working days of the date of the ballot (not counting days in a non-sitting week).
- 26.93 If a motion under Standing Order 26.91 is agreed to, then the Member who has had agreement to introduce a Bill may within thirteen months of the motion being agreed introduce a Bill to give effect to the proposed policy objectives set out in the explanatory statement outlined in Standing Order 26.91A.
- 26.93A If the period of thirteen months does not end on a working day in a sitting week, the deadline for introducing the Bill is extended to the last working day in the first sitting week after the thirteen months ends.

- 26.93B Before the end of the thirteen months (as extended in accordance with Standing Order 26.93A if relevant), the Member who has had agreement to introduce a Bill may by motion propose that the Senedd agrees to extend the deadline for the introduction of the Bill to a date specified in the motion.
- 26.94 [Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on DATE]
- 26.94A Member Bills may not seek to amend existing taxes, or introduce new taxes.

Annex 3 Member Bill ballots 2007 to 2026

The tables below provide overviews of the Member Bill ballots held and the progress of the resulting proposals and Bills through the Member Bill procedure.

Table 3 Member Bill ballots 2007 to 2026: Bills passing each milestone as a percentage of proposals selected²⁰

	Third Assembly	Fourth Assembly	Fifth Senedd	Sixth Senedd	Total
Duration	4 years	5 years	5 years	5 years	19 years
Ballots held	11	8	3	4	26
Proposals selected	9 ²¹	9 ²²	3	4	25
Leave to proceed agreed	4 (44%)	6 (67%)	1 (33%)	4 (100%)	15 (60%)
Bills introduced	3 (33%)	5 (56%)	1 (33%)	3 (75%)	12 (48%)
Stage 1 motions agreed	2 (22%)	3 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	6 (24%)
Stage 4 motions agreed	2 (22%)	3 (33%)	0 (0%)	Current: 0 (0%) Potential: 1 (25%)	Current: 5 (20%) Potential: 6 (24%)
Royal Assent received	2 (22%)	2 (22%) ²³	0 (0%)	Current: 0 (0%) Potential: 1 (25%)	Current: 4 (16%) Potential: 5 (20%)

²⁰ 'Potential' figures indicate the situation if the British Sign Language (Wales) Bill passes and receives Royal Assent. Figures exclude a Member proposed Measure that received Royal Approval in the Third Assembly following the Member's selection in a Legislative Competence Order ballot and subsequent exercise of the right that granted them to introduce a proposed Measure.

²¹ No proposals were entered into two of the ballots that were held.

²² Two proposals were selected in one of the ballots that was held.

²³ The Recovery of Medical Costs for Asbestos Diseases (Wales) Bill was passed, but subsequently referred to the Supreme Court which found that the Assembly did not have the legislative competence to enact the Bill in its present form. The Bill had not been approved by the end of the Fourth Assembly, and therefore fell in accordance with Standing Order 26.77.

Table 4 Member Bill ballots 2007 to 2026: Bills passing each milestone as a percentage of Bills introduced²⁴

	Third Assembly	Fourth Assembly	Fifth Senedd	Sixth Senedd	Total
Duration	4 years	5 years	5 years	5 years	19 years
Bills introduced	3	5	1	3	12
Stage 1 motions agreed	2 (67%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	6 (50%)
Stage 4 motions agreed	2 (67%)	3 (60%)	0 (0%)	Current: 0 (0%) Potential: 1 (33%)	Current: 5 (42%) Potential: 6 (50%)
Royal Assent received	2 (67%)	2 (40%) ²⁵	0 (0%)	Current: 0 (0%) Potential: 1 (33%)	Current: 4 (33%) Potential: 5 (42%)

²⁴ See footnote 20.

²⁵ See footnote 23.

Annex 4 Indicative timescales

The table below outlines indicative timescales in the Seventh Senedd for the name-only ballot Member Bill procedure proposed by the Business Committee.

The timing of ballots will be a matter for the Presiding Officer. For the purpose of the indicative timescales it is assumed that one ballot will be held in the autumn of the election year, and the second in the autumn of the following year. It is also assumed that recesses in the Seventh Senedd will follow established patterns.

	Ballot 1		Ballot 2	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Date of ballot	Monday 5 October 2026	Friday 6 November 2026	Monday 13 September 2027	Friday 22 October 2027
Deadline for tabling motion²⁶	Monday 25 January 2027	Friday 26 February 2027	Monday 13 December 2027	Friday 11 February 2028
Deadline for time to be available for debate²⁷	Monday 1 March 2027	Friday 16 April 2027	Monday 31 January 2028	Friday 17 March 2028
Deadline for introducing a Bill²⁸	Saturday 1 April 2028 (extended automatically to Friday 7 April 2028)	Tuesday 16 May 2028	Wednesday 28 February 2029	Tuesday 17 April 2029
Estimated Stage 4 debate	January/ February 2029	February/ March 2029	December 2029	January 2030

²⁶ 60th working day (excluding working days in non-sitting weeks) after the day of the ballot.

²⁷ 80th working day (excluding working days in non-sitting weeks) after the day of the ballot.

²⁸ Dates shown are 13 calendar months from the deadline for debating leave to proceed motions after each ballot. The actual deadline dates would be calculated on the basis of the date on which each proposal received leave to proceed. In line with the Business Committee's proposals, a deadline that falls on a day that is not a working day in a sitting week is automatically extended to the last working day in the next sitting week.