

# Amending Standing Orders: Standing Order 23 – Public Petitions

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 recommends minor amendments requested by the Petitions Committee to Standing Order 23 – Public Petitions.

If agreed, the proposed changes will come into effect at the beginning of the Seventh Senedd in May 2026.

The Senedd is invited to approve the proposals to amend the Standing Orders as at Annex A. The amended Standing Orders, if approved, are at Annex B.



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## 1. Background

1. The Petitions Committee wrote to the Business Committee on 28 January 2026 to request that it consider proposing a number of amendments to Standing Order 23 – *Public Petitions* to the Senedd.
2. This followed consideration given by the Petitions Committee to the operation of the current petitions process and arrangements, as well as practice elsewhere, with a view to making recommendations in advance of the Seventh Senedd.
3. The proposed amendments relate to three aspects of Standing Order 23:
  - Standing Order 23.1 regarding the status of a petitions committee;
  - Standing Orders 23.4 – 23.10 concerning admissibility and action on a petition; and
  - Standing Orders 23.11 – 23.12 concerning closing petitions.
4. These proposals are outlined in more detail in the following section.
5. The Petitions Committee informed the Business Committee that it had also agreed to propose some minor updates to the Presiding Officer's Determination on the Proper Form of Petitions, and would be providing advice to the Llywydd separately on that matter.

## 2. Business Committee consideration

6. The Business Committee considered the Petitions Committee's proposed amendments to Standing Orders at its meetings held on 3 and 10 February 2026.

### **Status of the committee**

7. Standing Order 23.1 requires the functions set out in that Standing Order regarding public petitions to be assigned to "a committee or committees". It does not require a single dedicated petitions committee to be established.
8. The Petitions Committee noted the possibility for there to be pressure on the number of committees that could be established in future Seneddau, which could result in a future Business Committee proposing that the responsibility for handling petitions be included within the remit(s) of other committees. The

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Petitions Committee noted that it was “strongly of the view that it is important for petitioners to have a dedicated Petitions Committee they can directly engage with.” It noted that there can be instances where a dedicated committee is able to give more attention to a particular issue than a specialist policy committee, for example because of other scrutiny commitments.

**9.** The Petitions Committee therefore proposed a change to the wording of Standing Order 23.1 that would remove the option for a future Business Committee to propose distributing the function for handling petitions within the remit of multiple committees.

**10.** The Business Committee considered this recommendation in the context of the broader requirements upon its successor committees to ensure that the committees established by the Senedd fulfil a number of functions. In addition to petitions, these include:

- Public Accounts (Standing Order 18);
- Finance (Standing Orders 19 and 20);
- Constitutional and Legislative Affairs (Standing Order 21);
- Standards of Conduct (Standing Order 22); and
- Oversight of various external bodies such as the Wales Audit Office, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Electoral Commission.

**11.** Furthermore, under Standing Order 16 the Business Committee is required to propose the establishment of a committee structure which ensures, among other things, that every area of responsibility of the government and associated public bodies, and all matters related to ministerial functions and the legislative competence of the Senedd, is subject to the scrutiny of a committee or committees.

**12.** We observe that the practice of establishing a standalone Petitions Committee, which has been followed since the introduction of a formal petitioning process in 2007, is generally considered to have worked well. It has provided a direct route through which the public has been able to scrutinise decisions and propose changes to policy and the delivery of public services. We encourage our successor committee to continue with this practice when it proposes the establishment of a committee structure in the Seventh Senedd.

**13.** However, we have not agreed with the proposal made by the Petitions Committee to propose an amendment to Standing Order 23.1 at this time. This is

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on the basis that we do not wish to constrain the flexibility of the next Business Committee when it comes to make decisions on the committee structure that it wishes to propose in the next Senedd. In light of the scale of changes that may be required to working practices in the Seventh Senedd and beyond, it is our intention to provide our successor committee with flexibility to respond to those changes as required.

### **Explaining admissibility and action on a petition**

**14.** The Petitions Committee proposed amendments to Standing Orders 23.4 and 23.8 to more accurately reflect the current practice with regards to the relationship between the admissibility criteria for petitions and the signature threshold.

**15.** For a petition to be referred to the Petitions Committee for consideration it must conform with the admissibility criteria for the Senedd's petitions process and, once published, reach the threshold for signatures (at least 250 signatures).

**16.** The Petitions Committee noted that, historically, the signature threshold has been considered the final admissibility criteria. In current practice, however, a petition is described to a petitioner as being 'admissible' for publication and open for signatures when it has met the other criteria set out in Standing Orders 23.2 - 23.4 - i.e. it complies with the rules; is in proper form; is not offensive; and calls for action that is within the competence of the Senedd.

**17.** The Petitions Committee also proposed that Standing Order 23.7 be amended to refer to the publication of decisions regarding the admissibility of petitions as a 'record' of decisions as opposed to a 'register'. It proposes that this change be made for clarity and to reflect practice in other parts of the Standing Orders.

**18.** The Business Committee agreed to propose the requested changes to Standing Orders 23.4, 23.7 and 23.8 to the Senedd.

### **Closing petitions**

**19.** The Petitions Committee noted that petitioners can sometimes be confused by the difference between their petition being 'closed' for signatures, and being 'closed' by the Petitions Committee following its consideration by Members.

**20.** It has proposed an amendment to the wording in Standing Order 23.11 and the heading immediately preceding it to more clearly outline the stages of

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considering admissibility, referring a petition on for committee consideration, and deciding to close a petition that has been under consideration. The Petitions Committee considers that the changes will improve clarity for petitioners and better reflect established practice.

**21.** The Business Committee agreed to propose the requested amendment to Standing Order 23.11 and the preceding heading to the Senedd.

## **3. Decision**

**22.** On 10 February 2026, the Business Committee formally agreed to propose the amendments to Standing Order 23 contained within Annex A to the Senedd. The Senedd is invited to approve the proposed Standing Orders as at Annex B.

## Annex A: Proposed amendments to Standing Order 23 and explanatory notes

<b>STANDING ORDER 23 – Public Petitions</b>		
<b>Committee or Committees</b>		Retain heading
<b>23.1</b>	In proposing the remits of committees under Standing Order 16.2 or 16.3, the Business Committee must ensure that responsibility for the functions in Standing Order 23 is assigned to a committee or committees (referred to within Standing Order 23 as “a responsible committee”).	Retain Standing Order
<b>Form of Petitions</b>		Retain heading
<b>23.2</b>	A petition must clearly indicate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the name of the petitioner, who may be an individual person (other than a Member) resident in Wales, or a body corporate or an unincorporated association of persons with a base in Wales;</li> <li>(ii) an address of the petitioner to which all communications concerning the petition should be sent; and</li> <li>(iii) the names and addresses of any person supporting the petition.</li> </ul>	Retain Standing Order
<b>23.3</b>	The Presiding Officer must determine the proper form of petitions and must publish his or her determinations.	Retain Standing Order
<b>Admissibility of Petitions</b>		Retain heading

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<p><b>23.4</b></p>	<p>A petition is not admissible if it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) <del>contains fewer than 250 signatures</del> <u>[Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on 11 March 2026]</u>;</li> <li>(ii) fails to comply with Standing Order 23.2 or is otherwise not in proper form;</li> <li>(iii) contains language which is offensive;</li> <li>(iv) requests the Senedd to do anything which the Senedd clearly has no power to do; or</li> <li>(v) is the same as, or substantially similar to, a petition which was closed less than a year earlier.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Amend Standing Order</b></p> <p>The proposed amendment removes reference to the signature threshold for petitions from within the admissibility criteria, in order for it to become part of Standing Order 23.8 instead.</p>
<p><b>23.5</b></p>	<p><i>[Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on 8 March 2017]</i></p>	
<p><b>23.6</b></p>	<p>The Presiding Officer must consider and decide in a case of dispute whether a petition is admissible and must notify the petitioner, as soon as is reasonably practicable, of his or her decision and the reasons for it.</p>	<p><b>Retain Standing Order</b></p>
<p><b>23.7</b></p>	<p>The Presiding Officer must publish a <del>register</del> record of decisions made under Standing Order 23.6.</p>	<p><b>Amend Standing Order</b></p> <p>The proposed amendment updates reference to the nature of the list of decisions on petition admissibility published by the Presiding Officer, in order to better reflect existing practice.</p>
<p><b>Action on a Petition</b></p>		<p><b>Retain heading</b></p>
<p><b>23.8</b></p>	<p>If a petition is admissible, <u>and reaches the threshold for consideration</u>, the Presiding Officer must refer that petition to a responsible committee. <u>The threshold for consideration by a responsible committee is 250 signatures.</u></p>	<p><b>Amend Standing Order</b></p> <p>The proposed amendment adds reference to the signature threshold for petitions, for the purpose of clarifying that it is at the point at which a petition is referred to a committee for further</p>

		action that the signature threshold is a relevant consideration (as opposed to when determining admissibility).
<b>23.9</b>	The responsible committee must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) refer the petition to the government, any other committee of the Senedd or any other person or body for them to take such action as they consider appropriate;</li> <li>(ii) report to the Senedd; or</li> <li>(iii) take any other action which the committee considers appropriate.</li> </ul>	<b>Retain Standing Order</b>
<b>23.10</b>	The responsible committee must notify the petitioner of any action taken under Standing Order 23.9.	<b>Retain Standing Order</b>
<b>Closing <u>Consideration of</u> Petitions</b>		<b>Amend heading</b> The amendment seeks to distinguish between a petition having closed for signatures and being closed following consideration by a committee.
<b>23.11</b>	The responsible committee may close <u>consideration of</u> a petition at any time.	<b>Amend Standing Order</b> The amendment seeks to distinguish between a petition having closed for signatures and being closed following consideration by a committee.
<b>23.12</b>	When the responsible committee closes a petition, it must notify the petitioner that the petition is closed and of the reasons for closing it.	<b>Retain Standing Order</b>

## Annex B – Standing Order 23, as amended

### STANDING ORDER 23 – Public Petitions

#### Committee or Committees

23.1 In proposing the remits of committees under Standing Order 16.2 or 16.3, the Business Committee must ensure that responsibility for the functions in Standing Order 23 is assigned to a committee or committees (referred to within Standing Order 23 as “a responsible committee”).

#### Form of Petitions

23.2 A petition must clearly indicate:

- (i) the name of the petitioner, who may be an individual person (other than a Member) resident in Wales, or a body corporate or an unincorporated association of persons with a base in Wales;
- (ii) an address of the petitioner to which all communications concerning the petition should be sent; and
- (iii) the names and addresses of any person supporting the petition.

23.3 The Presiding Officer must determine the proper form of petitions and must publish his or her determinations.

#### Admissibility of Petitions

23.4 A petition is not admissible if it:

- (i) *[Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on 11 March 2026]*
- (ii) fails to comply with Standing Order 23.2 or is otherwise not in proper form;
- (iii) contains language which is offensive;
- (iv) requests the Senedd to do anything which the Senedd clearly has no power to do; or
- (v) is the same as, or substantially similar to, a petition which was closed less than a year earlier.

23.5 *[Standing Order removed by resolution in Plenary on 8 March 2017]*

23.6 The Presiding Officer must consider and decide in a case of dispute whether a petition is admissible and must notify the petitioner, as soon as is reasonably practicable, of his or her decision and the reasons for it.

23.7 The Presiding Officer must publish a record of decisions made under Standing Order 23.6.

## Action on a Petition

- 23.8 If a petition is admissible, and reaches the threshold for consideration, the Presiding Officer must refer that petition to a responsible committee. The threshold for consideration by the responsible committee is 250 signatures.
- 23.9 The responsible committee must:
- (i) refer the petition to the government, any other committee of the Senedd or any other person or body for them to take such action as they consider appropriate;
  - (ii) report to the Senedd; or
  - (iii) take any other action which the committee considers appropriate.
- 23.10 The responsible committee must notify the petitioner of any action taken under Standing Order 23.9.

## Closing Consideration of Petitions

- 23.11 The responsible committee may close consideration of a petition at any time.
- 23.12 When the responsible committee closes a petition, it must notify the petitioner that the petition is closed and of the reasons for closing it.