

# Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups

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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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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.** Cross-Party Groups are widely recognised as a valuable part of the democratic process and it is important there is openness and transparency in the way that Groups operate.
- 2.** The 'Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups' were agreed by Senedd resolution in June 2013 and updated by the Standards of Conduct Committee on 2 May 2023.
- 3.** All Cross-Party Groups are subject to the 'Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups', and must be adhered to for a group to be recognised/registered by the Senedd (i.e. has a status) and have access to the resources set out below.

## **2. Definition and Status**

- 4.** The purpose of Cross-Party Groups is to provide a forum for Members of the Senedd from different political parties to meet in order to consider and discuss shared interests in particular subjects.
- 5.** Cross-Party Groups are not formal Senedd groupings and are not, therefore, part of Senedd proceedings, nor are they subject to the Senedd's Standing Orders. They do not have any of the powers of a Senedd Committee (e.g. they cannot summon witnesses or Ministers to attend meetings or to provide documentation, and they cannot use the Senedd's logo or branding).
- 6.** Cross-Party Groups may be set up by Members in respect of any subject area relevant to the Senedd, but should not attempt to replicate the functional areas covered by Senedd committees. They have no formal role in Senedd proceedings in relation to policy development.

## **3. Membership**

- 7.** A Cross-Party Group must include Members from at least three political parties represented within the Senedd. At least one Member belonging to the group must be present throughout all Cross-Party Group meetings.
- 8.** Cross-Party Groups may also include members from outside the Senedd. Membership of individuals from outside the Senedd is at the discretion of the Group.

## **4. Election of Office Holders**

- 9.** Each Cross-Party Group must elect a Chair and a Secretary.

**10.** The Chair of the Group must be a Member of the Senedd. The Group's Secretary may be a Member of the Senedd, a Member's support staff, or an individual from outside the Senedd. The Secretary must only act where they have the approval of the Chair of the Group, and all notices, correspondence, documentation and other arrangements relating to the activities of the Group must be issued in the name of the Chair.

**11.** A Cross-Party Group must normally meet to elect its office-holders. It is expected that office-holders will initially be elected at an inaugural annual general meeting (AGM). However, office-holders may also be elected at other meetings of the group. Following any election of an office-holder, the Chair of the group should notify the change within four weeks, by contacting the relevant Senedd Commission Officials. Information on office holders will be published on the Senedd's website.

## **5. Registration**

**12.** Following the holding of an inaugural AGM (see section 8) or election of office-holders by another means, Cross-Party Groups should register using the appropriate registration form. The form must be submitted by the Group's Chair and list the all the members of the group (section 3 sets out the Membership requirements).

**13.** The details on the registration form will be published by Senedd Commission officials on the relevant Cross-Party Group's section of the Senedd's website.

## **6. Re-registration of Cross-Party Groups after a Period of Dissolution**

**14.** Groups must re-register at the start of each new Senedd following an election.

## **7. Recording Changes**

**15.** The Chair of the group is responsible for notifying Senedd Commission officials of any changes to group details, including changes to office holders, within four weeks of it coming into effect. The relevant Cross-Party Group section of the Senedd's website will be updated accordingly.

## **8. Annual General Meeting and Annual Report and Financial Statement**

**16.** The first meeting of a Cross-Party Group will be its inaugural AGM. Groups must then have an AGM every 12 months, at which the group must nominate and vote for office holders (see 'Election of Office Holders' section above). The election of office holders must take place formally at the AGM even if office holders have already been appointed at a recent meeting.

**17.** Within six weeks of an AGM (other than the inaugural AGM), groups must issue an Annual Report and Financial Statement. This report must include:

- the membership of the group and names of its office-holders;
- the number of times the group has met since the last AGM, who attended, and a summary of the issues discussed;
- all professional lobbyists, and voluntary or charitable organisations with whom the group has met during the preceding year; and
- an Annual Financial Statement setting out the group's expenses, benefits and hospitality received. The statement must include a breakdown of costs of all goods and services provided, and benefits received, and the names of the provider(s).

**18.** The Annual Report and Financial Statement must be published on the 'Cross-Party Groups' section of the Senedd's website.

## Holding Meetings

### 9. Use of Senedd Facilities and Resources

**19.** The Chair of the Cross-Party Group will be responsible for ensuring that the group complies with the [Rules and Guidance on the use of Senedd Resources](#). This includes room bookings and associated meeting arrangements (such as escorting external members) and the provision of Welsh to English simultaneous translation.

**20.** Cross-Party Groups do not have access to any of the Senedd Commission staffing services, with the exception of Welsh to English simultaneous interpretation. This may be provided if requested by the Chair of the Cross-Party Group.

**21.** Cross-Party Group meetings and AGMs can be conducted in person, or in virtual or hybrid format at the discretion of the group, and subject to each group making the necessary arrangements for such meetings to take place. Groups should refer to the [Senedd's ICT guidance on virtual meetings](#).

### 10. Provision of Information in the Official Languages of the Senedd

**22.** All information provided by the Senedd Commission about Cross-Party Groups that is required to be published on the Senedd's website under these rules, will be available in English and Welsh subject to the provisions of the Senedd (Official Languages) Act 2012 and related Senedd Commission Official Languages Scheme. This includes membership, meeting dates and venues, minutes of all meetings including the AGM, and the annual financial statement.

**23.** Arrangements for translating any Cross-Party Group documentation that is not required to be published on the Senedd's website must be made by the Cross-Party Group itself, if they wish for it to be published bilingually.

### 11. Additional Support

**24.** The provision for Additional Support to engage with constituents with additional needs are detailed in chapter 3A of the [Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances 2022-23](#), and [Members Business Support](#) (MBS) can provide additional advice on this.

## 12. Advance Notice of Meetings

**25.** It will normally be for the Chair of the Group to undertake publicising meeting times, venues etc including providing meeting times/venue to the designated Senedd Commission officials for publication on the Cross-Party Group website. If this is delegated to the group's Secretary, then that person must only act with the prior approval of the Chair of the Group, and all notices, correspondence, documentation and other arrangements relating to the activities of the Group must be issued in the name of the Chair.

## 13. Financial Rules and Registering Interests

**26.** With the exception of provisions under sections 9-11 above, the members of the group must meet any other such costs themselves.

**27.** Cross-Party Groups must bear in mind the integrity of the Senedd in considering the acceptance of any monies, gifts, hospitality etc. from outside bodies. In particular, individual Members are required to comply with the rules on the registration and declaration of financial interests in connection with any activity they undertake within, or on behalf of, Cross-Party Groups – as set out in Standing Order 2. Members are also reminded of the provisions of Standing Order 2.8, which prohibits lobbying for reward or recognition and which, under Section 36 of the Government of Wales Act is a criminal offence.

**28.** The Cross-Party Group's Annual Report should list all benefits received by the group as a whole, or its individual Members, from outside bodies. This includes any secretariat or other support or services provided to the group. This is in addition to the requirement for individual Members of Cross-Party Groups to register any monies, gifts, hospitality or other benefits from outside bodies in the Senedd's Register of Interests (in accordance with Standing Order 2),

## 14. Minutes of Meetings

**29.** The Chair of the Cross-Party Group will be responsible for ensuring that the minutes of every meeting of the group are provided to the designated Senedd Commission officials within four weeks of the meeting taking place. The minutes must include:

- details of where the meeting was held;
- who attended the meeting, including the names and titles of group office-holders such as the Chair and Secretary, group members and external visitors or guests; and



- a brief description of the issues discussed.

**30.** Minutes will be published on the relevant Cross-Party Groups' section of the Senedd's website.

## **15. Compliance with the Rules**

**31.** The Chair of the Group, as signatory of the registration form, will be held primarily responsible for ensuring that the group complies with the rules, but all Members of the Senedd who are members of a Cross-Party Group also have a responsibility to ensure that the group conducts itself properly,

**32.** Failure to comply with, or contravention of the rules on Cross-Party Groups covering registration, election of office-holders, holding of AGMs or provision of information required by the rules, could lead to withdrawal of recognition of the group on the authority of the Presiding Officer (the group would be de-registered and all details removed from the Senedd's website).

**33.** Any Member who has a concern about the interpretation of the rules should consult the Senedd Commission officials responsible for handling registration of Cross-Party Groups in the first instance.

**34.** Complaints concerning personal standards of conduct, the proper use of Senedd resources and/or the proper registration of interests in accordance with Standing Order 2, in relation to a Member's involvement in Cross-Party Group activity, should be made to the Commissioner for Standards in accordance with the Senedd's Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against Members of the Senedd. This may lead to sanctions being imposed on an individual Member.

**35.** The Standards of Conduct Committee may from time to time consider a paper from the Commission officials dealing with the registration of information about the activities of a Cross-Party Group and, if necessary make recommendations to the Presiding Officer concerning compliance with these rules.