

Review of the Rules for the Operation of Cross-Party Groups

April 2023

The Standards of Conduct Committee (“the Committee”) created the Rules for the Operation of Cross-Party Groups (“the Rules”) in 2013. The Committee agreed to consider the Rules and Cross-Party Groups more generally as part of its inquiry into Lobbying.



1. Chair's foreword

Cross-Party Groups (CPGs) are a valuable part of the democratic process and provide a forum for Members of the Senedd (Members) from different political groups to consider shared interests in subject areas relevant to the Senedd.

The last review of the rules on CPGs was undertaken by the Fourth Senedd's Standards of Conduct Committee in 2013. Having been in place for almost a decade it seemed timely to review the rules alongside the inquiry into Lobbying given the crossover in the subject area.

The Committee found that the rules have been working well, but needed to take account of changes over the last ten years such as the Senedd becoming an official parliament and the COVID-19 pandemic. We have agreed to return to these rules at the end of this Senedd to ensure they remain fit for purpose for any changes arising from Senedd reform. As part of our inquiry we undertook a consultation and considered CPG arrangements in other UK Parliaments. The changes agreed by the Committee bring the rules up to date, whilst ensuring proportionality and providing clarity for those involved.

Finally, I would like to thank all of those who contributed to this inquiry for taking the time to provide us with valuable evidence, and ensure that we have been able to make necessary changes to the Rules for the operation of CPGs.

Vikki Howells MS
Chair, Standards of Conduct Committee

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2. Introduction

This report outlines the Committee’s approach to the inquiry into Cross-Party Groups (CPGs), taking into account the responses to the consultation as well as the results of an internal review of the Rules.

Each section highlights an area which was raised as part of the consultation responses, the consideration of these by the Committee and the Committee’s conclusions. The draft revised rules which are the conclusion of this work are set out in two annexes, showing a tracked version and a clean version.

Background

- 1.** The Fourth Assembly’s Standards of Conduct Committee completed an inquiry into lobbying in 2013. As part of this, it reviewed the arrangements for CPGs and drew up the current Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups. These were agreed by resolution in Plenary in June 2013 and replaced the ‘Presiding Officer’s Guidelines on the Formation of Cross-Party Groups’ which were created in March 2004.
- 2.** The Committee has taken ownership of the Rules and committed to reviewing them as part of its Forward Work Programme for the Sixth Senedd.
- 3.** As was the case in 2013, this review is taking place as part of a Committee inquiry into lobbying, due to the cross-over in the subject matter. The Committee agreed to consider whether the rules provide sufficient guidance; are clear, accessible and transparent for key stakeholders; and remain fit for purpose during the Sixth Senedd.
- 4.** CPGs may be set up by Members of the Senedd (“Members”) in respect of any subject area relevant to the Senedd. A group must include Members from three political party groups represented within the Senedd. CPGs are not established by the Senedd, or governed by its Standing Orders, and do not form an official part of Senedd business. However, the Senedd does play a role in recognising and registering CPGs which allows access to certain resources.
- 5.** Whilst CPGs have no formal role in policy development, they are widely recognised as a valuable part of the democratic process.

6. The Committee issued a consultation on lobbying which ran between 13 May and 23 June 2022, including one question on CPGs:

What is your understanding about the role that Cross-Party Groups play in relation to lobbying in the Senedd, and do you have any comments / concerns?

7. A majority of the responses to the consultation answered this question and their views were taken into account in this inquiry. Those responses that covered CPGs are listed in Annex A and the full set of those consultation responses can be found on the Committee webpage.

8. The Committee also issued a consultation on CPGs specifically which ran between 11 July and 2 September 2022. The Committee received six responses, which it considered at its meeting on 10 October 2022. The full list of respondents is at Annex A and the full set of consultation responses can be found on the Committee webpage.

9. The Committee asked officials for further information on a number of topics and discussed again at its meetings of 12 December 2022, 16 January 2023 and 13 February 2023.

10. This report sets out the Standards of Conduct Committee changes to the rules for CPGs.

3. Public consultation

6. A public consultation ran between 11 July and 2 September 2022 and specifically invited views on the following:

- What are your views on the arrangements for Cross-Party Groups in the Senedd?
- Have you got any concerns or encountered any problems with the arrangements? If so what?
- Do the current rules reflect the functions and responsibilities of Cross-Party Groups, as you understand them?
- Are there any further steps that could be taken to increase transparency for cross-party-groups? If so, what?

7. Six responses were received, five from third sector organisations and one from the Labour group. Plaid Cymru and several third sector organisations also submitted views on CPGs as part of the Lobbying consultation.

8. There were 70 CPGs in operation at the time of the Lobbying and CPG consultations, however only one CPG responded directly.

Consultation responses

9. Generally, respondents were positive about the role and value of CPGs. Several responses referred to a 'lack of clarity' and the need for 'more consistency' in arrangements. It was also noted that 'current rules should be enforced more consistently'.

10. Respondents were also broadly content with the current arrangements for CPGs. It was felt that arrangements appear to be robust, continue to strike the right balance between transparency and practicality, and that CPGs are a valuable forum for sharing expert insight with opportunities for cross-sector debate on key issues.

Consultation themes

Virtual/Hybrid meetings

- 11.** Prior to the pandemic, CPG meetings were held in-person usually on the Senedd estate. During the pandemic, several requests were received from various CPGs regarding the option to conduct meetings virtually. All Senedd business during that period was being conducted either virtually or hybrid, and therefore CPGs were permitted to conduct meetings in the same format.
- 12.** The Labour group commented on the ‘huge benefits to meeting virtually over recent years’ highlighting that ‘this ensures higher participation, reduces the need to travel, and provides more flexible meeting slots’.
- 13.** However, the Labour group did raise a concern that virtual meetings may ‘pose a challenge’ in terms of ensuring translation facilities at meetings.

Consideration by the Committee

- 14.** At its meeting of 10 October 2022, the Committee noted that the current rules do not include any guidance on the format of meetings, and agreed that they should be updated to formalise the ability for CPGs to be held in virtual and hybrid meeting formats.
- 15.** The Committee also noted that translation facilities are available for all formats of CPG meeting, including virtual meetings.

Conclusion 1. The Committee agreed to update the rules to formalise the ability for Cross-Party Groups to be held in virtual and hybrid meeting formats.

CPG Membership and Member requirements

- 16.** The rules require that a CPG must include Members from at least three political party groups represented within the Senedd. CPGs may also include individuals from outside the Senedd at the discretion of the Group. The political structure of the Sixth Senedd only includes three political groups.
- 17.** The Labour Group suggested that the rules should be reformed to reduce the requirement of Members to two political parties. They also suggested that this should include independent Members or Members who represent another political party which does not meet the Senedd’s threshold for forming an official political group.

18. ColegauCymru noted that the requirement of Members to form a CPG, did not stipulate the specific number of Members that should be present at meetings. It suggested that the ‘Senedd should explore how to more strongly encourage MS attendance to ensure that meetings are genuinely cross-party’.

19. ColegauCymru referred to Scotland where groups must be attended by at least two Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) who are registered members of the group. They suggested that by introducing a limit to the number of groups a Member can join would ‘lessen Members’ workloads’ and ‘ensure their commitment to CPGs’.

20. They suggested that ‘to increase transparency and ensure CPGs are respectful of the democratic process’, clarity should be provided within the rules on the requirement for Members to attend a CPG.

Consideration by the Committee

21. At its meeting on 10 October 2022, the Committee considered the threshold of Members and current structure of the Senedd in relation to forming a CPG. The Committee noted that although there is only one Liberal Democrat Member in the Sixth Senedd, and they are not considered a group for Standing Order purposes, they have been considered as a group for the purposes of forming a CPG.

22. The Committee agreed that the CPG membership requirement of three political party groups should be changed to three political parties to facilitate Members who represent a political party which does not meet the Senedd’s threshold for forming a political group.

23. The Committee also considered whether the rules should specify that a minimum number of Members should be present at each CPG meeting, as is the case for example in Scotland.

24. The Committee agreed, at its meeting on 12 December 2022, that the rules should introduce a requirement for at least one Member of the Senedd to be present throughout all CPG meetings. The additional information provided to the Committee (below) highlighted that at least one Member had been present at all CPG meetings that had taken place in the Sixth Senedd to that date.

Numbers of Members in attendance	Number of meetings
1	24
2	34
3	36
4	28
5	21
6	14
7	10
8	2
9	3
12	2
Not listed ¹	3
Grand Total	177

25. The Committee further agreed to review the requirement for Member attendance prior to the end of the Sixth Senedd if Senedd reform increases the number of Members.

Conclusion 2. The Committee agreed that the CPG membership requirement of three political party groups should be changed to three political parties to facilitate Members who represent a political party which does not meet the Senedd's threshold for forming a political group.

Conclusion 3. The Committee agreed to introduce a requirement in the rules for at least one Member of the Senedd to be present throughout all CPG meetings.

¹ Three sets of minutes from the early part of this Senedd did not list the attendees. Table Office have since introduced checks to ensure that this information is included in all CPG minutes before they are published.

Conclusion 4. The Committee agreed to review the requirement for at least one Member of the Senedd to be present throughout all CPG meetings before the end of the Sixth Senedd.

Financial Rules

26. In their consultation response, the Labour group noted that ‘In terms of the financial rules, the fact that CPGs are not considered to be a formal part of our work as Members can also cause some issues’. This rule means that any travel or other CPG related expenditure by Members cannot be claimed from their allowances. As a result, Members may be deterred from fully engaging in some of the work of CPGs, such as travel to an external visit arranged by the group which might involve substantial travel or an overnight stay.

27. The Committee wrote to the Chief Executive and Clerk (Chief Executive) of the Senedd on 14 October 2022 to ask for clarity around the rules on what Members can claim in relation to CPGs.

28. The response from the Chief Executive received on 23 November 2022 stated that:

“The Remuneration Board decides on the purposes for which it provides allowances from which Members may claim, and how those are described. It is for individual Members to decide how to discharge their duties, and they are able to make claims in line with the Determination where that applies. It is my view that the current wording of the Determination is such that the fact that a particular activity may fall under the auspices of a CPG is incidental to the question of whether or not the claim can be made. It may be that the subject of the CPG is one that has particular relevance to the Member’s constituency or region, or the CPG might involve matters that are (or may legitimately be) debated by the Senedd. It is for each Member to exercise a judgement as to whether the CPG activity constitutes a necessary part of their duties, in which case a claim could be admissible...”

In the reporting of your current inquiry, the Committee may wish to make clear that the provisions set out in the Rules and Guidance on Use of Senedd Resources set out the permitted use of resources from Senedd Commission operational

budgets, they do not prohibit admissible claims from being made from allowances provided in the Determination where Members are undertaking activities to deliver their duties"

29. The Chief Executive also noted that the interpretation provided in her response could be shared with the Remuneration Board.

Consideration by the Committee

30. The Committee noted the response at its meeting on 28 November 2022 and agreed to add clarity to the rules by removing the following line from the section relating to 'Financial Rules': *'There will be no Senedd budget to cover the running costs of Cross-Party Groups'*. The Committee further agreed to include reference to Members being able to claim in accordance with the Rules and Guidance on Use of Senedd Resources.

31. Further to this, the Chair wrote to the Chief Executive on 7 December 2022 to note the Committee's appreciation of the clarification around claims relating to CPGs and agreed with the suggestion to share the advice with the Remuneration Board.

Conclusion 5. The Committee noted the Chief Executive's clarification of the rules around claiming for expenses, and agreed to update the rules accordingly.

Promotion/Accessibility and publishing information

32. Several respondents felt that more needs to be done to ensure that CPG meetings are well advertised and easy to find on the Senedd's website. It was suggested that different ways of promoting CPGs are required to 'improve transparency and engage a wider audience'.

33. Respondents generally felt that:

- the Senedd's CPG website lacked detail and information for each group, with a lack of consistency on the details provided on the overall aim of each CPG;
- the Senedd should consider how Members could be encouraged to participate in CPG's to ensure that 'meetings are genuinely cross-party';
- more needs to be done to ensure that CPG meetings are 'well advertised', 'open to all' and to 'find ways to include smaller

organisations so that they are not perceived by some to be closed and invite-only'; and

- information such as minutes/annual reports and meeting dates need to be more accessible and published in a timely manner.

34. In their responses to the Lobbying consultation, PAC, Camlas, ERS Cymru and the WCVA raised general concerns regarding transparency and accessibility and Age Cymru noted the difficulties that Members could encounter in attendance at meetings given the number of CPGs that are available.

35. Deryn stated that financial reports paint an incomplete picture as they do not cover time given by the secretariat, who is often a lobbyist. The PRCA noted the requirement to include in an annual reports details of lobbyists and voluntary or charitable organisations and that this should be widened to include all in-house lobbyists.

Consideration by the Committee

36. The Committee noted at its meeting on 10 October 2022 that historically there have been a number of issues regarding timely publication of minutes and annual reports. Senedd Commission officials advised the Committee that work had been completed in this area during summer 2022 to update and publish relevant documentation, and that an expedited process was now in place for publishing this documentation.

37. The Committee agreed that there would be merit in publishing all CPG meetings to one calendar on the Senedd's website to address the concerns raised about accessibility of information, and asked officials to investigate that possibility.

38. The Committee noted that the proposal to use Senedd resources other than CPG pages to promote group meetings would involve a fundamental change to the rules around CPGs and their access to Senedd resources, and agreed that this would not be pursued as part of the inquiry.

Conclusion 6. The Committee agreed that all Cross-Party Group meetings should be published to one calendar on the Senedd's website.

Autonomy for Secretariats

39. During the consultation, the WCVA suggested that it would ‘be useful if CPG Secretariats...were given a little more autonomy from CPG Chairs’. It was noted that all arrangements for CPGs ‘must be made through the Chair’s office’ and whilst in many cases this ‘works acceptably, it can be cumbersome and take a long time to make decisions, and reply to Secretariats with permission to go ahead with the next stage of organisation’.

40. The Committee requested additional information regarding CPG Secretariat arrangements across the other UK legislatures to further inform their consideration on this matter.

Consideration by the Committee

41. At its meeting on 12 December 2022, the Committee considered arrangements across the other UK legislatures, and the potential risks and benefits of allowing greater autonomy for Secretariats. Members noted that the Senedd’s rules in this regard were consistent with those elsewhere and, bearing in mind the importance of maintaining Chairs’ responsibility for the running of groups, agreed that the Senedd should maintain the status quo.

42. The Committee agreed that an update to CPG membership could be completed by emailing relevant Senedd officials rather than completing an amended registration form as had been previously stated in the rules.

Conclusion 7. The Committee concluded that the Chair is ultimately accountable, and that it is for the Chair, their staff and the secretariat to develop effective working relationships to minimise delay in decision-making.

Conclusion 8. The Committee agreed that updates to Cross-Party Group membership could be completed by emailing officials.

Additional amendments to the Rules

43. As part of the review of the CPG rules, Senedd Commission officials also completed an internal review with relevant departments. As a result of this, further changes were identified to bring the rules up to date with current ways of working, and to remove references to policies that no longer exist.

44. Officials also created a summary sheet of the Rules as a quick guide for those involved with CPGs. This will sit in front of the Rules, and is included at Annex B.

45. A tracked version of the CPG rules showing the changes made is at Annex C, and a clean version of the rules is at Annex D.

Annex A List of written evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All Consultation responses and additional written information can be viewed on the [Committee's website](#).

Reference	Organisation
	Cross-Party Group consultation respondents
SOC-CPG-01	Kaleidoscope
SOC-CPG-02	Welsh Labour Group
SOC-CPG-03	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
SOC-CPG-04	Cross Party Group on Hospices and Palliative Care
SOC-CPG-05	Colegau Cymru
SOC-CPG-06	Age Cymru
	Lobbying consultation respondents
SOC-LOB-03	Institution of Civil Engineers
SOC-LOB-04	Plaid Cymru Group
SOC-LOB-07	Electoral Reform Society Cymru
SOC-LOB-08	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
SOC-LOB-09	Colegau Cymru
SOC-LOB-11	Deryn
SOC-LOB-12	Public Affairs Cymru
SOC-LOB-13	Camlas
SOC-LOB-14	Public Relations and Communications Association
SOC-LOB-16	UNISON
SOC-LOB-17	Chartered Institute of Public Relations

Annex B – Summary of the Rules

Cross-Party Group Rules –summary

Cross-Party Groups are groups of Members of the Senedd (MSs) and interested stakeholders formed to consider and discuss shared interests on particular subjects. They are not established by the Senedd itself, nor governed by its Standing Orders, and do not form an official part of Senedd business. The Senedd plays a role in recognising and registering Cross-Party Groups which allows access to certain resources within the Senedd. In order to register and maintain this status, groups are subject to the ‘Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups’.

This document is intended as a quick guide to the rules, but you should also refer to the full rules and ensure you comply with them.:

To establish a Cross-Party Group you need:

- an MS as Chair;
- MS representatives from three different parties;
- to hold an inaugural Annual General Meeting (AGM) where you elect the Chair and Secretary to the Group; and
- to complete the paper work and return it to officials. This must include a list of all the members of the Cross-Party Group.

In holding a meeting of a Cross-Party Group you need to:

- submit a notification of the meeting/agenda to the delegated Senedd official in advance of the meeting;
- produce Minutes of each meeting within four weeks of the meeting and provide them to the delegated Senedd official; and
- ensure at least one MS is present at each meeting.

Cross Party Groups must:

- hold an AGM every twelve months;

- file an annual report and financial return within 6 weeks of the AGM; and
- ensure the rules around registration of interests and lobbying are complied with.

Information on Cross-Party Group compliance with these rules is collated annually and presented to the Standards Committee. Failure to comply with any aspect of these rules could ultimately lead to the deregistration of the group.

A failure to comply with the rules could also lead to a complaint about the Chair being made to the Commissioner for Standards.

Annex C: Revised rules – tracked version

1. Introduction

Cross-Party Groups are widely recognised as a valuable part of the democratic process. It is equally important that there is openness and transparency in the way that Cgroups operate.

~~The Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups replace the 'Presiding Officers' Guidelines on the Formation of Cross-Party Groups', which were made on 10 March 2004.~~

~~All existing Senedd Cross-Party Groups are subject to these new Rules from the date on which they come into effect.~~

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.

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 by the Senedd and have access to the resources set out below.

2. Definition and Status

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.

~~Cross-Party Groups are not formal Senedd groupings and are not, therefore, bound by any of the Senedd's Standing Orders. They have no formal role in policy development.~~

~~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 do not, nor do they 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 for Wales logo or branding).~~



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).

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

A Cross-Party Group must include Members from at least three political ~~party groups~~ parties represented within the Senedd. At least one Member belonging to the Group must be present throughout all Cross-Party Group meetings.

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

Each Cross-Party Group ~~should~~ must elect a Chair and a Secretary.

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 ~~S~~staff, or an individual from outside the Senedd. ~~However, in the case of the group appointing a Secretary who is not a n Member of the Senedd, that person must not act without the prior~~ 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.

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, ~~using the registration form at annex A.~~ by contacting the relevant Senedd Commission Officials. Information on office holders will be published on the Senedd's website.

5. Registration

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 ~~signed~~ by the Group's Chair and list ~~the membership~~ all the members of the group (section 3 sets out the Membership requirements), ~~which must include at least two other Members of the Senedd from two other parties within the Senedd, and names of all Members of the group who are not Members of the Senedd.~~

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.

~~For the purposes of holding an Annual General Meeting, existing Senedd Cross-Party Groups will be expected to hold an AGM within 12 months of the date of these rules coming into effect. Groups registered after this date will be expected to hold an AGM within 12 months of registration.~~

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

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

7. Recording Changes

The Chair of the group is responsible for notifying Senedd Commission officials of any changes to group details, including changes to office holders, ~~by submitting an amended registration form.~~ Changes should be notified within four weeks of it coming into effect, ~~and will be published on the relevant Cross-Party Groups' section of the Senedd's website.~~ 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

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.

Within six weeks of an 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).

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

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.

~~Cross-Party Groups do not take precedence over formal Senedd business and so will have access to the Senedd's accommodation facilities only subject to availability.~~

~~Senedd Building room bookings for Cross-Party Group meetings must be made by the Chair of the Group. That Member of the Senedd will also be responsible for all meeting arrangements including meeting and escorting external members of the Group within the Senedd Building.~~

~~Cross-Party Groups do not have access to any of the Senedd Commission staffing services such as committee services, with the exception of Welsh to English simultaneous interpretation at meetings held on the Senedd Estate. This may be provided if requested by the Chair of the Cross-Party Group.~~

~~Cross-Party Groups must respect the limitations on the use of Senedd facilities and resources. Members may make reasonable use of the Senedd's telephone, fax, photocopying, IT facilities and Senedd stationery in pursuit of Cross-Party~~

~~business or in order to fulfil the requirements of these rules, e.g. to provide information for publication on the Senedd's website. The Chair of the Cross-Party Group will be responsible for ensuring that the group complies with the rules on use of Senedd facilities and resources. Outside organisations and individuals associated with Cross-Party Groups are not entitled to use the Senedd's resources.~~

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

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 ~~Annual General Meeting~~ AGM, and the annual financial statement.

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.

Senedd Access Fund

~~The Access Fund has been established to ensure that Members of the Senedd have the necessary support to engage with constituents with diverse needs, and provide additional support to disabled Members and disabled support staff.~~

~~The Access Fund may not be used for the provision of text translation into the Senedd's official languages or Welsh to English interpretation for Member-sponsored events which are organised by external bodies.~~

~~If the Chair of a Cross-Party Group considers that the CPG needs support to allow it to engage with constituents with diverse needs, for example to interpret a language that is not an official language of the Senedd, and this support cannot be provided from within the group's own membership, then they may wish to submit a business case to Members' Business Support for access to the Fund. Full guidance on the Access Fund can be found on the Members' Intranet. In submitting a business case for financial support the Chair should give~~

~~consideration to the status of Cross-Party Groups, which do not constitute formal Senedd proceedings.~~

11. Additional Support

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

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.

~~The Chair of the Group should provide details of meeting times and venues to the designated Senedd Commission officials in order for these to be published on the Cross-Party Groups section of the website.~~

13. Financial Rules and Registering Interests

~~There will be no Senedd budget to cover the running costs of Cross-Party Groups, Wwith the exception of provisions under sections ~~8-10~~ 9-11 above, the members of the group must meet any other such costs themselves.~~

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.

~~In particular Section 5 of the Annex to Standing Order 2 sets out the registrable interests. This includes; "(iv) gifts, hospitality, material benefits or advantage above a value specified in any resolution of the Senedd..." and "(v) any~~

remuneration or other material benefit which a Member [...] receives from any public or private company or other body which has tendered for, is tendering for, or has, a contract with the Senedd."

The Senedd resolved on 10 May 2006 that the specified financial values above which gifts, hospitality and any other benefits must be registered/declared is 0.5 per cent of the basic gross annual Senedd salary for a Member of the Senedd.

A Member of the Senedd who takes part in Senedd proceedings without having complied with the rules on registration of interests commits a criminal offence under section 36 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.

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), ~~the~~ 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).

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. Lobbying for reward and recognition is defined in Standing Orders as advocating or initiating "any cause or matter on behalf of any body or individual in any proceedings of the Senedd, or "urging any other Member to advocate or initiate any cause or matter in any such proceedings, in return for any payment or benefit in kind, direct or indirect, which the Member, or to the Member's knowledge his or her spouse, has received or expects to receive."

8. Annual General Meeting and Annual Report and Financial Statement

The Chair of the Cross-Party Group must call an AGM of the group 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 holder(s) have already been appointed at a recent meeting.

~~The first meeting of the group will be its inaugural AGM. After each subsequent AGM the Chair of the Cross-Party Group must, within six weeks, 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).~~

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

14. Minutes of Meetings

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.

~~The m~~Minutes will be published on the relevant Cross-Party Groups' section of the Senedd's website.

15. Compliance with the Rules

~~While all Members of the Senedd who are members of a Cross-Party Group have a responsibility to ensure that the group conducts itself properly, [t]he 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.

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).

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.

~~Any 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 will be handled by the Standards Commissioner for Standards and Standards of Conduct Committee 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.

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.

Annex D – Clean Rules for the operation of Cross-Party Groups

1. Introduction

1.1 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.

1.2 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.

1.3 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

2.1 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.

2.2 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).

2.3 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

3.1 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.

3.2 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

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

4.2 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.

4.3 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

5.1 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).

5.2 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

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

7. Recording Changes

7.1 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

8.1 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.

8.2 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).

8.3 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

9.1 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.

9.2 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.

9.3 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

10.1 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.

10.2 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

11.1 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

12.1 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

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

13.2 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.

13.3 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

14.1 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.

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

15. Compliance with the Rules

15.1 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,

15.2 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).

15.3 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.

15.4 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.

15.5 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.