

Number: WG53582

Welsh Government Consultation – summary of response

Changes to local government elections rules in Wales

The draft Local Elections (Wales) (Amendment) Rules 2026 and the draft Representation of the People Act 1983 (Security Expenses Exclusion) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2026.

February 2026

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Overview

Summary of responses received from the consultation on the draft Local Elections (Wales) (Amendment) Rules 2026 and the draft Representation of the People Act 1983 (Security Expenses Exclusion) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2026 which took place between 20 October 2025 - 12 January 2026.

Action Required

This document is for information only.

Further information and related documents

Large print, Braille and alternative language versions of this document are available on request.

Contact details

For further information:

Elections Division
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: Etholiadau.Elections@gov.wales

Additional copies

This summary of response and copies of all the consultation documentation are published in electronic form only and can be accessed on the Welsh Government's website.

Link to the consultation documentation: [Consultation on the changes to local government elections rules in Wales](#)

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1. Introduction

1.1 The consultation on the draft Local Elections (Wales) (Amendment) Rules 2026 and the draft Representation of the People Act 1983 (Security Expenses Exclusion) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2026 was published on 20 October 2025 and closed on 12 January 2026.

The Local Elections (Wales) (Amendment) Rules 2026

1.2 The Local Elections (Wales) (Amendment) Rules 2026 (“the Amendment Rules”) amend the rules for the running of local government elections in Wales, the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rules 2021 and the Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021, together referred to as “the 2021 Rules”. Together, these two pieces of legislation provide how a poll is to be conducted in Wales in relation to local government elections.

1.3 The 2021 Rules were fully redrafted and modernised in 2021. Both sets of rules were amended in 2022, and the Principal Areas Rules were updated further in 2023 to enable elections to be conducted under the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system should any principal council adopt that system.

1.4 The Amendment Rules make only necessary and technical changes to the 2021 Rules to take account of changes to policy and other legislation.

1.5 The main policy changes effected by the Amendment Rules include amending wording in the prescribed forms required as a result of the Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Single Transferable Vote) (Wales) Rules 2023 (“the STV Rules”) and small improvements identified in the preparation of the STV Rules. Further changes made in the Senedd Cymru (Representation of the People) Order 2025 (“the Conduct Order”) are also taken account of in the Amendment Rules, such as accessibility provisions.

1.6 The changes are summarised as follows:

- Welsh language requirements
- Updating prescribed forms
- Accessibility equipment duty
- Joint descriptors
- Working digitally
- Use of schools and public rooms
- Filling casual vacancies in town and community councils: “six month rule” correction
- Corrections and minor amendments

Representation of the People Act 1983 (Security Expenses Exclusion) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2026

- 1.7 The Amendment Rules go together with the Representation of the People Act 1983 (Security Expenses Exclusion) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2026 (“the Exclusion Order”).
- 1.8 To bring local government elections in Wales in line with recent changes for Senedd elections, a separate piece of legislation is required to ensure consistency on campaign expenditure. This change requires an amendment to be made to paragraph 13A of Schedule 4A to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (“RPA 1983”). The amendment will ensure that candidates at local government elections will not, as part of their election expenses, have to account for reasonable expenses incurred in providing for their personal security and the protection of property.

2. Overview of responses

2.1 A total of 34 responses to the consultation were received via the online form, email and by post, from stakeholders and members of the public.

2.2 Stakeholders who responded to the consultation include statutory bodies such as the Electoral Commission and the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru

2.3 Three responses received contained inflammatory and offensive language and have therefore been discounted from the summary of responses. One response was a duplicate and has also been discounted.

2.4 The 30 remaining responses are set out by type below.

Table 1: The number of respondents by type across all survey formats:

Type of Respondent	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Member of the public	13	43.3%
Electoral administrator	7	23.3%
Statutory body/Representative body/Professional body or Association	3	10%
Third Sector	1	3.3%
Other	6	20%
Totals:	30	100%

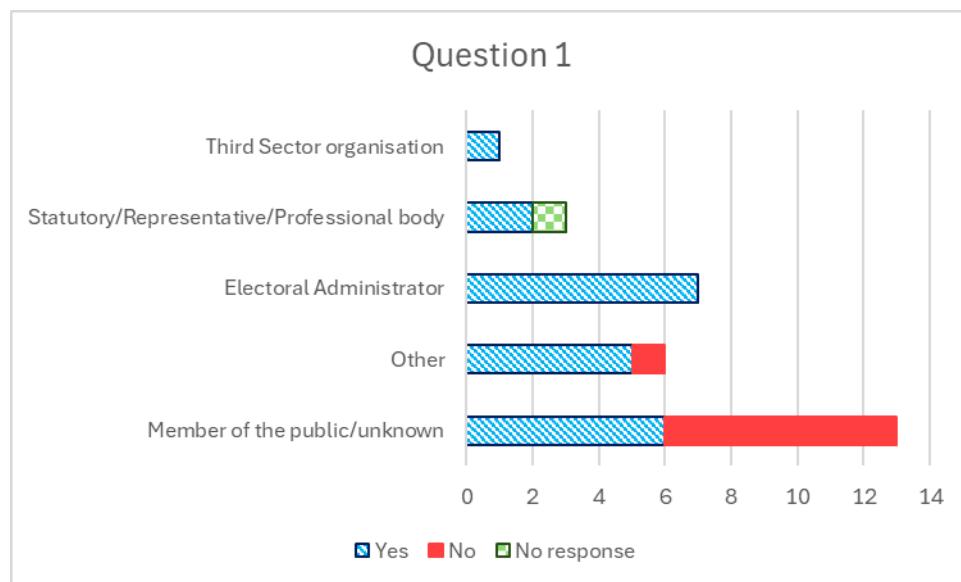
2.5 A summary of responses to the questions asked in the consultation is provided in Section 3.

2.6 Some responses did not answer specific questions but instead gave an overall response. These responses are accounted for under the relevant question where applicable, or in the summary of responses to the more general question (question 15).

2.7 Questions 12 and 13 of the consultation were used to gather views on the various areas of reform highlighted in the UK Government's strategy [Restoring trust in our democracy: Our strategy for modern and secure elections](#). While Welsh Government is very grateful for stakeholders taking the time to provide views on this matter, this document does not provide a detailed analysis or individual responses to comments received, as this falls outside the scope of the Amendment Rules. Further work will be undertaken by Welsh Government on this, and views gathered will inform that work as we continue to engage with the UK Government on their programme of electoral reform.

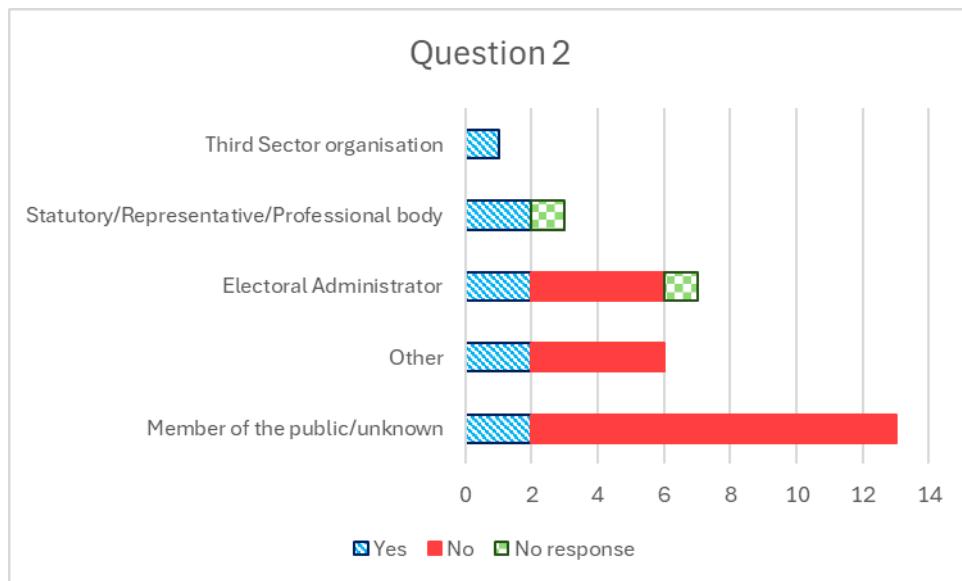
3. Summary of responses to Consultation Questions

Question 1 – Do you agree with the provisions in the draft Rules in relation to the Welsh language?



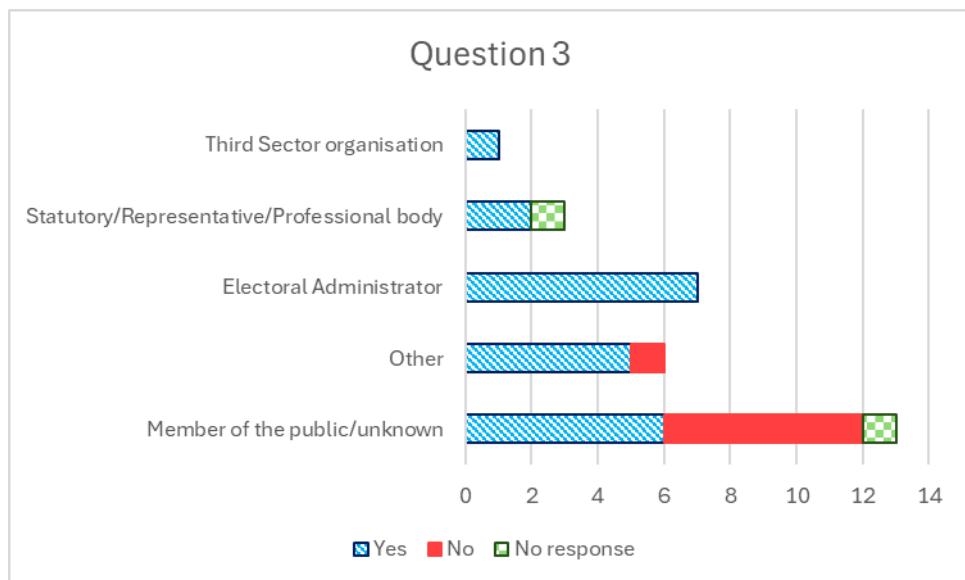
- 3.1 More than two thirds of the 29 respondents to this question agreed with the provisions related to the draft rules.
- 3.2 Comments provided by respondents acknowledged the importance of parity of the English and Welsh languages and emphasised the importance of the support of the Welsh Language Commissioner and translation services in providing the prescribed forms and other election materials received by voters.
- 3.3 One respondent requested a provision in the Amendment Rules that requires a Welsh name for every ward/electoral area in Wales. This falls outside the remit of the consultation, as any changes to names of electoral wards or constituencies would not form a part of this legislation. Furthermore, work on electoral reviews is the responsibility of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC). Electoral reviews of the 22 principal council began in May 2025, and any consideration of the names of wards would form part of that work.
- 3.4 Seven of the eight respondents who answered 'No' outlined beliefs that conflict with the status of Welsh as an official language of Wales that must be treated no less favourably than English. Discussions as to the legitimacy of Welsh as an official language of Wales falls outside the remit of this consultation.

Question 2 – Are there any amendments to the 2021 Rules you consider would assist in ensuring the prescribed forms are made available bilingually?



- 3.5 Of the 28 respondents to this question, 9 answered 'Yes'. Two respondents did not answer this question.
- 3.6 Comments received focused on the desirability of standardised prescribed forms. One comment put forward that the final version of the Amendment Rules should include bilingual digital templates to ensure parity of languages, to reduce duplication of work and the risk of variation between local authorities.
- 3.7 Comments received also articulated that templates should be produced by the Electoral Commission (EC) to standardise design formats and ensure greater accessibility. This would also reduce the administrative burden for Returning Officers (ROs).
- 3.8 The Welsh Government acknowledges that standardised templates could assist electoral administrators in ensuring that forms are bilingual and would reduce the burden on local authorities. However, the production of templates for prescribed forms falls outside the remit of the legislation. Welsh Government officials will continue to discuss the provision of standardised templates with the Electoral Commission, Association of Electoral Administrators and Electoral Management Board.

Question 3 – Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the prescribed forms in the 2021 Rules?



3.9 Of the 28 responses to this question, 21 answered 'Yes' to the question. One respondent did not answer this question.

3.10 Of those who agreed with the proposed amendments, one respondent welcomed the proposed amendments, noting that the statement of party membership in the nomination form had caused confusion for some candidates at the 2022 local government elections in Wales, some of whom failed to complete that section or completed it incorrectly.

3.11 One respondent commented that plain-language explanations should accompany each form to assist voters in understanding the contents. The legislation provides for some guidance to prescribed forms, using simple language where possible.

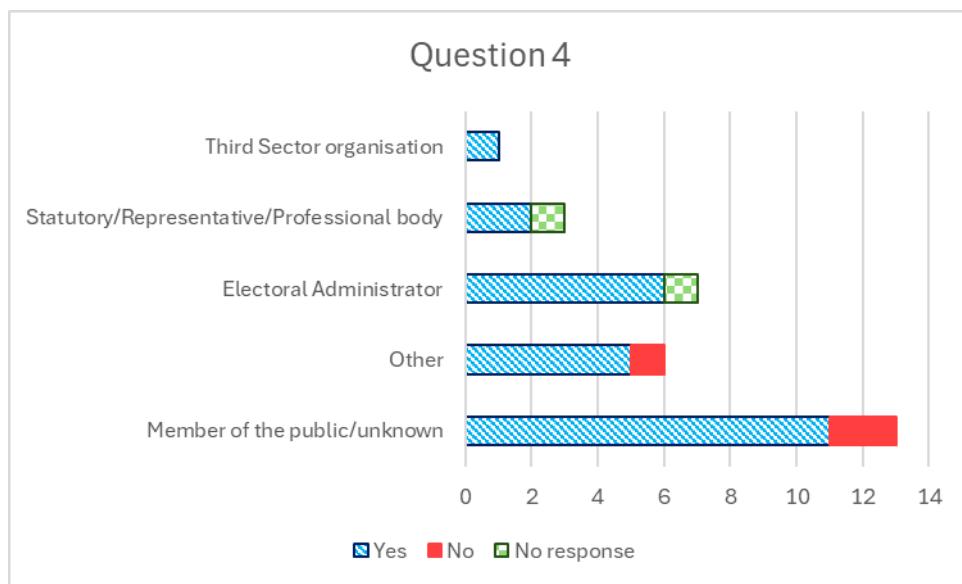
3.12 Further comments identified that the draft Rules do not explicitly require every form in the appendices to be issued in both Welsh and English. This was clearly set out in the consultation paper, as no specific amendments were included in the draft Amendment Rules subject to this consultation. The Amendment Rules are limited to making amendments to the forms that are prescribed in the 2021 Rules (provided as appendices in the 2021 Rules) and the 2021 Rules already require the appendices to be provided bilingually.

3.13 Seven respondents disagreed with the proposed amendments. Comments included concern that any extra costs could disadvantage independent candidates and concern around voter fraud on the text in ballot papers. Whilst these concerns are acknowledged, there are measures in place to prevent voter fraud, and the legislation provides for the text that is provided for on ballot papers.

3.14 Several comments were focused on issues outside the remit of this consultation, including the recent changes to Senedd elections.

3.15 Several responses from electoral administrators and statutory/representative bodies raised concerns over the commencement date of these provisions, as if there were to be any local government by-elections following the Senedd elections in 2026 there would be limited time for ROs and print suppliers to update forms. This concern is acknowledged and is addressed in further detail in the Welsh Government's response to question 15.

Question 4 – Do you agree with the new provision in the draft Rules to place a duty on returning officers to provide such equipment as is reasonable to provide for the purposes of making it easier for disabled people to vote?



3.16 Of the 28 responses to this question, 25 answered 'Yes'. One respondent did not answer this question.

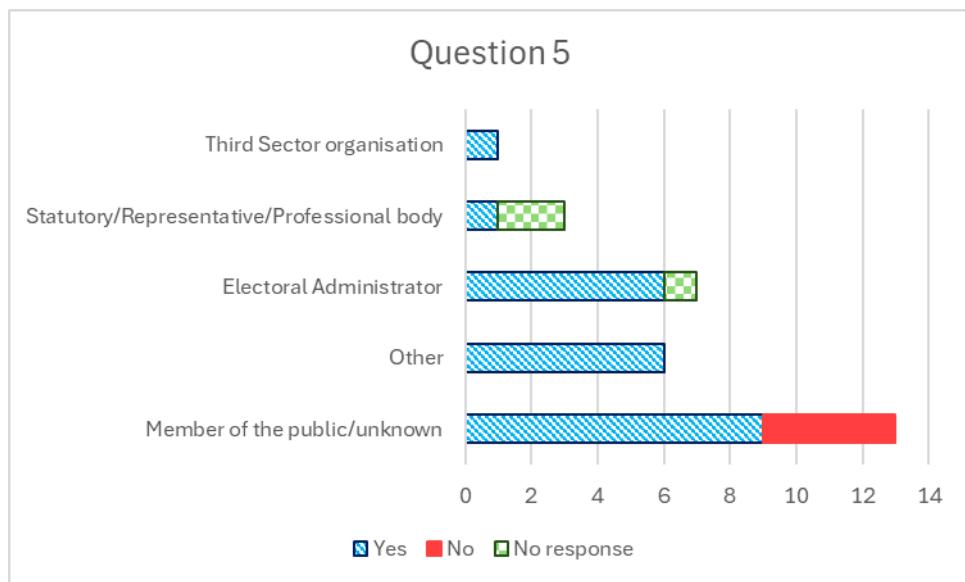
3.17 One respondent "strongly agreed" with the accessibility duty, and respondents acknowledged that the change would align local government elections in Wales with Senedd and UK elections.

3.18 Responses from statutory and representative bodies were in support of the new provision, commenting that it will make it easier for voters to understand the support they can expect at polling stations. In addition, it would give ROs flexibility to provide support in line with their knowledge of local circumstances.

3.19 Electoral administrators were generally in support of the provision, however, there was some concern over funding to support the accessibility duty. The Welsh Government will review the accessibility duty following the Senedd election in 2026, and further work may be undertaken in this area to support local authorities.

3.20 The three respondents who answered 'No' did not offer further comments, except one respondent who stated no change was necessary.

Question 5 – Do you agree with the new provision in the draft Rules to amend language around disabilities?



3.21 Of the 27 responses to this question, 23 answered 'Yes' and 4 answered 'No'.

3.22 Comments from respondents who answered 'Yes' to the question supported the updated language, in reflection of changes to the Conduct Order.

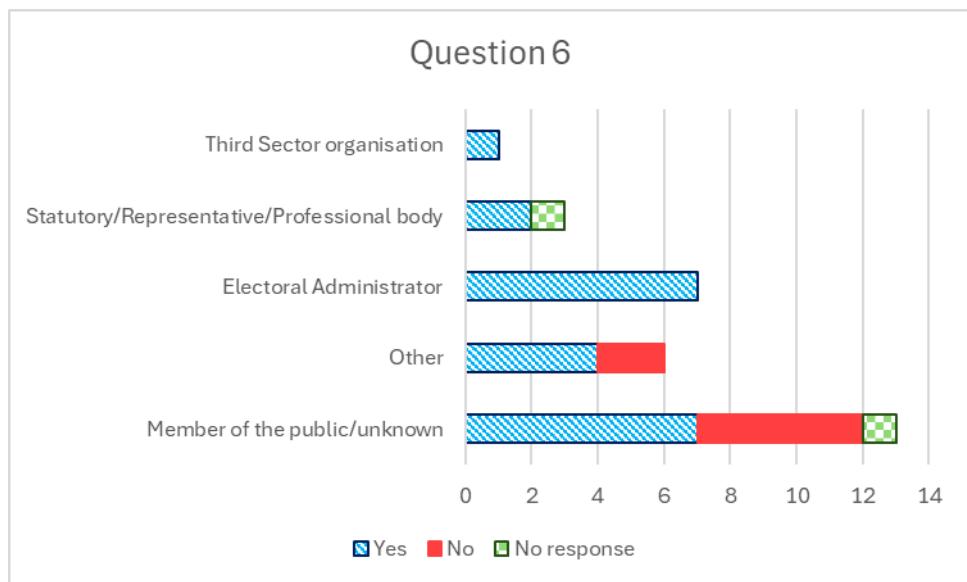
3.23 A respondent from the statutory and representative body category commented that the updated language provides clarity and reflects support that ROs are already providing.

3.24 However, there were concerns raised that the language used must not narrow who qualifies for support and support must be based on need, not medical diagnoses. The Welsh Government is committed to the social model of disability and it is the intention of the Amendment Rules, through the accessibility duty and updated language, to ensure that all voters who need support are able to access it. The Electoral Commission have produced guidance on accessibility, which sets out further guidance on this matter.

3.25 Another respondent emphasised that the revised terminology must be fully bilingual so that voters with disabilities can access information in Welsh and English.

3.26 The comments shared by respondents who answered 'No' referenced topics outside the remit of this consultation.

Question 6 – Do you agree with the provisions in the draft Rules to use joint descriptors?



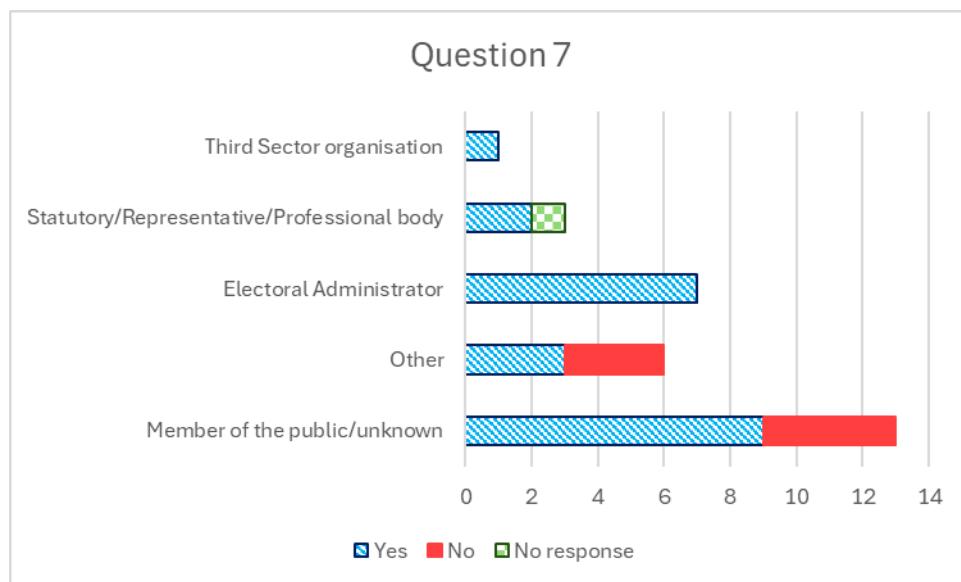
3.27 Of the 28 responses to this question, 21 answered 'Yes' and seven answered 'No'. One respondent did not answer this question.

3.28 Respondents who answered 'Yes' identified that these provisions bring local government elections in Wales in line with other elections in the UK and welcomed clearer instructions for candidates. Responses from the statutory and representative body category welcomed the changes, following confusion at the last local government election in Wales in 2022.

3.29 Other comments equated the provision to allow joint descriptors as simply an extension to the current rules that allow registered party names.

3.30 One respondent who answered 'No', warned that voters should not be misled into reading joint descriptors as indicators of coalitions and that independent candidates should not be disadvantaged by long, slogan-style descriptions. Whilst this is acknowledged, allowing the use of joint descriptors brings local government elections in Wales in line with the relevant rules for other UK elections.

Question 7 – Do you agree with the provisions in the draft Rules in relation to electronic working, which are in line with equivalent processes for Senedd elections?



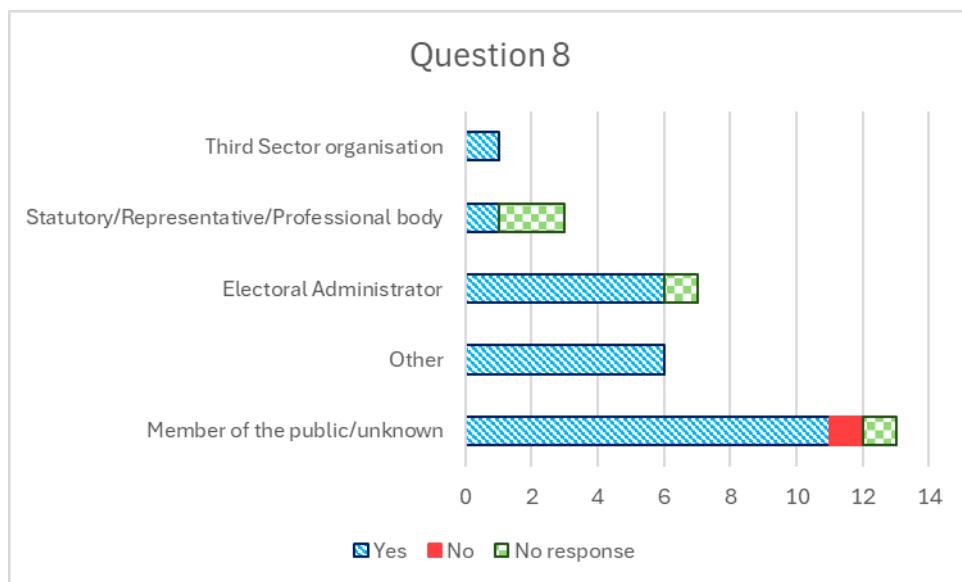
3.31 Of the 29 responses to this question, 22 answered 'Yes' and 7 answered 'No'.

3.32 The provisions were broadly welcomed on the basis of bringing local government elections into alignment with Senedd elections. Responses from electoral administrators and those in the statutory/representative body category were in broad support of the provisions.

3.33 One respondent commented that email addresses should not replace agents' addresses as contact information. The Amendment Rules will ensure that procedures for elections in Wales are consistent, and the legislation only replicates changes to the Conduct Order. No policy change is taking place.

3.34 Respondents also shared concerns that digital options could disadvantage those who can only, or choose to, use paper systems, and modernising systems must not lead to disadvantage for those choosing paper systems. Whilst these concerns are acknowledged, the legislation only replicates equivalent electronic processes for Senedd elections, and the use of paper is still provided for. Those not choosing to work electronically will not be disadvantaged.

Question 8 – Do you agree with the provisions in the draft Rules in relation to the use of rooms, to bring this in line with equivalent provision for Senedd elections?

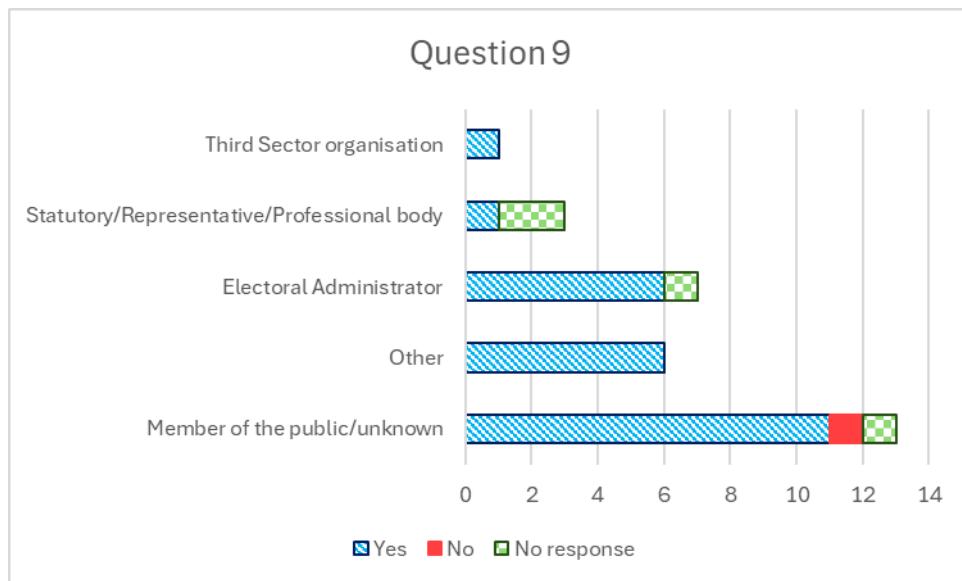


3.35 Of the 26 responses to this question, 25 answered 'Yes' and one answered 'No'. The respondent who answered 'No' provided no further explanation as to why they disagreed with this provision.

3.36 Broadly, those respondents in the electoral community supported the provision, commenting that this was in line with provisions for Senedd elections.

3.37 Respondents also commented that this provision would support local engagement with candidates and comments also noted that this provision helps ROs secure suitable, accessible venues for voters.

Question 9 – Do you agree with the corrections and minor amendments in the draft Rules, to reflect changes elsewhere such as through the Conduct Order?



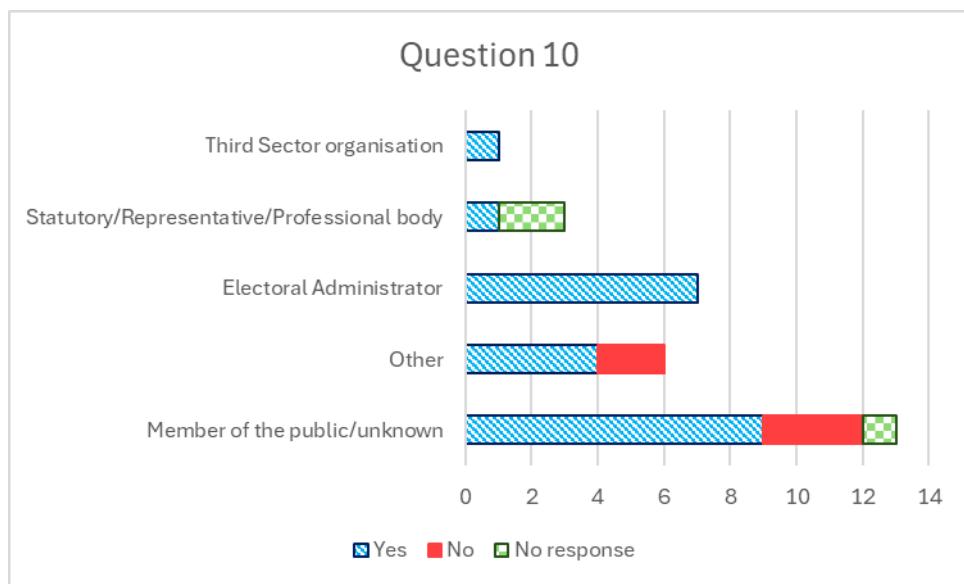
3.38 Of the 26 responses to this question, 25 answered 'Yes' and one answered 'No'.

3.39 Respondents in support of these corrections commented that they improved clarity and legal consistency with the Senedd elections.

3.40 Further comments provided broadly welcomed the changes removing ambiguities and promoting consistency for ROs across Senedd and local government elections, stating that this will reduce risk of confusion for those administering elections.

3.41 A number of comments were received that fall outside the remit of the consultation.

Question 10 – Do you agree with the principle of correcting the six-month period, so that the process for town and community councils replicates that for principal councils?



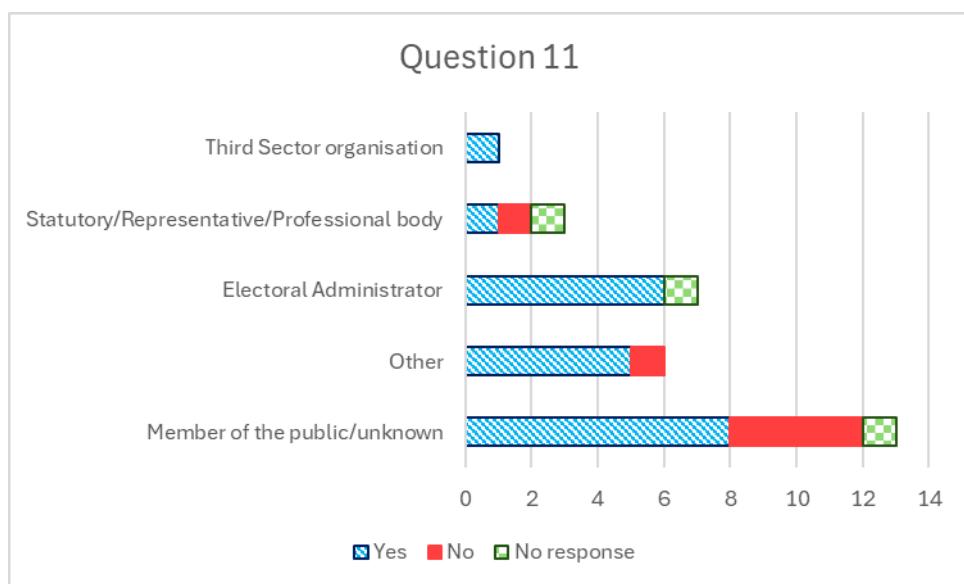
3.42 Of the 27 responses to this question, 22 respondents answered 'Yes' and 5 answered 'No'.

3.43 Respondents who answered 'Yes' cited the value of consistency for ROs, clerks, candidates and the public. One electoral administrator commented that this practical position should be adopted.

3.44 One respondent in support further pointed to the cost of by-elections and the disproportionate cost to fill a seat on a community or town council via a by-election.

3.45 Some comments received referred to topics outside the remit of this consultation, including that community and county council elections should follow the same electoral system as the Senedd. This is outside the scope of the legislation.

Question 11 – Do you agree with the principle of aligning the security-cost exemption from campaign spending limits for candidates at local government elections?



3.46 Of the 27 responses to this question, 21 answered 'Yes' and 6 answered 'No'.

3.47 Respondents who answered 'Yes' provided comments that referenced the value of parity for candidates standing in other elections and cited the value of safety processes in encouraging a diverse range of candidates.

3.48 Some respondents supported the security-cost exemption 'in principle' and raised concerns over misuse and the need for candidates to have access to basic personal safety support. The concerns over misuse of this exemption is acknowledged, however, bringing local government elections in Wales in line with Senedd and reserved elections is important for consistency and to avoid confusion amongst candidates and administrators. Welsh Government will keep this under review, and if further changes are needed in the future to safeguard against misuse, this will be considered.

3.49 Respondents also noted the need for appropriate financial oversight. Whilst this concern is acknowledged, financial oversight of candidate spending falls outside the scope of this consultation.

3.50 Electoral administrators and those from statutory and representative bodies did not provide further comments in relation to this question, as the issue did not impact them or they were in general support.

Question 12 – What are your views on the potential reforms set out in the UK Government’s strategy paper for reserved elections?

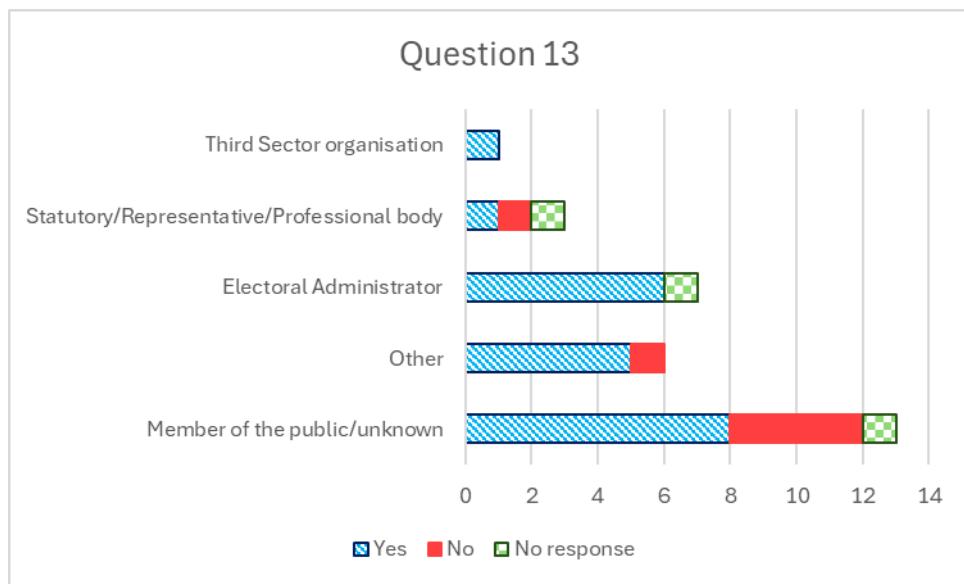
3.51 This question received a total of 15 responses. Many respondents did not engage with the question or provide further comments.

3.52 As set out in the introduction to this document, question 12 has been used to gather views on the various areas of reform highlighted in the UK Government’s strategy [Restoring trust in our democracy: Our strategy for modern and secure elections.](#)

3.53 Of those who responded, comments were in general support of the UK proposals, however, they also noted that whether the reforms were appropriate for Wales would need to be examined further.

3.54 Whilst Welsh Government is very grateful for stakeholders taking the time to provide views on this matter, this document does not provide a detailed analysis or individual responses to comments received, as this falls outside the scope of the Amendment Rules. Further work will be undertaken by Welsh Government on this, and views gathered will inform that work as we continue to engage with the UK Government on their programme of electoral reform.

Question 13 – Do the current forms serve their intended purpose effectively?



3.55 Of the 28 responses to this question, 21 answered 'Yes' that the current forms are effective and six respondents answered 'No'.

3.56 As set out in the introduction to this document, question 13 has been used to gather views on the various areas of reform proposed by the UK Government, which includes a proposal to review election documentation ('forms'), including those issued by ROs to electors, such as poll cards.

3.57 An electoral administrator commented that to ensure consistency across devolved and reserved polls, a similar review of election documentation in Wales should be undertaken.

3.58 Whilst Welsh Government is very grateful for stakeholders taking the time to provide views on this matter, this document does not provide a detailed analysis or individual responses to comments received, as this falls outside the scope of the Amendment Rules. Further work will be undertaken by Welsh Government on this, and views gathered will inform that work as we continue to engage with the UK Government on their programme of electoral reform.

Question 14 – In your opinion, could the draft Rules and draft Order be formulated or changed so as to:

- have positive effects or more positive effects on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English; or
- mitigate any negative effect on using the Welsh language and on not treating the Welsh language less favourably than English.

3.59 We received 18 comments in response to this question. One third of responses (6) focused on topics outside the remit of the consultation; primarily disagreeing with the status of the Welsh language as an official language of Wales.

3.60 A further 7 responses supported changes to local government elections that would ensure Welsh and English were afforded equal priority.

3.61 One respondent called on the Welsh Government to liaise with the Welsh Language Commissioner and other stakeholders to produce a bilingual template for electoral forms normally produced and used by ROs. Whilst this comment is acknowledged, this falls outside the scope of the legislation and will not be considered further in relation to this consultation. Further work on the Welsh Language in elections will be undertaken in the future.

Question 15 – We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please report them.

- 3.62 Responses to this question related to a range of issues, including proportional representation methodology and other topics outside of the remit of the consultation.
- 3.63 Several respondents called for Welsh Government to work more closely with the UK, Scottish and Northern Irish governments to ensure closer harmonisation and sharing of best practice for national, devolved and local elections, in areas such as the future development of poll cards. This is acknowledged, and the Welsh Government continues to work closely with colleagues across government to align work wherever possible.
- 3.64 A number of responses from electoral administrators and statutory and representative bodies raised concern on the coming into force date of the Amendment Rules, which could cause increased pressure on ROs and administrators should local government by-elections take place shortly after the Senedd elections in 2026. This concern is acknowledged, and the Welsh Government have taken this into account and amended the legislation accordingly.
- 3.65 The Amendment Rules will come into force in March 2026, however, they will not take effect until the next ordinary local government elections in May 2027. Any by-elections that take place prior to that date will be conducted in line with the 2021 Rules as unamended.
- 3.66 This timescale will allow the Electoral Commission and electoral administrators sufficient time to update relevant procedures, guidance and forms.
- 3.67 One respondent submitted a response to the consultation with comments related only to the Elections Information Platform (EIP), which falls outside the remit of the consultation. The response will be considered further by Welsh Government and responded to separately.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 Following the consultation, the Welsh Government intends to lay the Amendment Rules and Exclusion Order before the Senedd in February 2026. It is intended that they will be made in March 2026, following approval of the Senedd.
- 4.2 The Welsh Government values all the views expressed in response to this consultation which will help ensure the final Amendment Rules and Exclusion Order are fit for purpose. We will continue to work closely with our stakeholders around the implementation of the legislation ahead of the 2027 local government elections.
- 4.3 Any changes to the legislation will be set out in the Explanatory Memorandum which will be published at the same time as the Orders.