

Bethan Jenkins AM: I am writing in response to the proposals in the attached document. I would like to register my firm opposition to AMs receiving financial assistance for their accommodation in Wales if they reside outside Wales and require that support. I am especially opposed to your assessment of providing them with the outer area remuneration. For example, an AM could live in Bristol, and be closer to the Assembly than an AM who resides in Gower, who is defined under current arrangements as being in the intermediate zone that has been created.

I would not be opposed to an interim remuneration to aid an AM to move to Wales in due course, but I certainly would not like to set a precedent whereby AMs feel it acceptable to live outside the country they represent. Living outside of one's constituency or region is entirely different to living in a different country.

An interim support proposal would be a sensible compromise. The Members support team in the Assembly could aid with finding a flat or a suitable lodging for a given period of time as determined by yourself as an independent body, until the time at which they had settled in Wales fully, and did not need any additional support. They would then move to receive remuneration as per the system that exists currently.

With regards to the current system, I think it needs considering that many hotels in the Cardiff Region often book up months in advance if there is a big event such as graduation, or a big concert that people attend from across the UK. AMs in this situation cannot physically find anywhere to book in such circumstances. I wonder whether the Assembly would consider the potential of block booking a minimum number of rooms with an agreement of potential cancellation so that this does not happen, and so that AMs do not have to ring every hotel in Cardiff only to find that there is no space for them.

I look forward to your response,

Regards,

Bethan Jenkins AM