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## **Legislation Committee No 3**

### **Proposed Local Government (Wales) Measure**

**Response from North Wales Association of Town and Larger Community Councils**

## **The Local Government (Wales) Measure**

### **Question one**

**‘Is there a need for a proposed Measure to deliver the stated objectives of strengthening the structures and working of local government in Wales at all levels and ensuring that local Councils reach out to engage with all sectors of the communities they serve?’**

### **Response**

**There is a need for such a Measure as there are clear conflicts of interest in the provision of services delivered locally.**

**Often County Councils are stopping progress by community councils due to stances taken at County Councillor and County Officer level.<sup>7</sup>**

**Where Town and Community Councils, individually wish to, and they can demonstrate that they are able to take on services professionally, they should be allowed to do so by right .**

**Town and Community Councils should be able to work in partnership with County Councils or other Community Councils either individually or collectively.**

**Town and Community Councils need to make the choice of how much they wish to manage the service delivery in their area.**

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### **Question two**

**“How will the proposed Measure change what organisations do currently and what impact will any such changes have?”**

## **Response**

**The Measure could give a varied approach which is transparent and accountable to all Town and Community Councils.**

**To have a real impact through the Measure the general principle of Charters and Agreements between Principle and Community Councils is supported.**

**Any Agreement or Charter between County Councils and Town or Community Councils should be meaningful and Local Councils must feel that they are a real part of it.**

## **Question three**

**‘ Are the sections of the proposed Measure appropriate in terms of achieving the stated objectives?’  
Broaden and increase participation in local government by permitting steps which will help remove barriers and disincentives to standing for election to local councils. (parts 1 and 2 of the proposed Measure).**

## **Response**

**The candidates for Town and Community Councils come forward where it is perceived that something could be achieved.**

**A lively and active Community Council usually attracts persons to stand for election. If Town and Community Councils were empowered to do more and were taken more notice of (and seen to be) it is more likely that there would be an increase in candidates for election.**

**The membership felt that the following observations were worthy of recording (with particular reference to the topic in this question)**

***Often there is lack of information or advertising of where a Town or Community Council is based, how to contact them and about what they are doing.***

***Often the web site is the only means of getting information, this means those who are not in the age of the computer are missed. The population of Mid and North Wales is aging and many are not computer literate.***

***A survey of candidates who have stood for election would serve little purpose; the survey results need to come from those who were not interested in standing seeking an idea of why not.***

***There could be a need to harness local talent for specific projects outside of elected members which could help the Councils to be more inclusive.***

***Cost should not be a barrier to serving as a local Councillor.***

***Getting time off work, for meetings, is often an issue with the employee sometimes missing out with the resultant effect on salary/wages and pension etc.***

***The average age of Local Councils is possibly due to a cultural change, many people are no longer prepared in today's society to 'do something for nothing'.***

## **Question four**

**Will the Measure enable the review and improvement of the government?**

**Structures introduced through the Local Government Act 2000 so that they better suit the circumstances of local government in Wales. (Parts 3 and 4 of the proposed Measure).**

## **Response**

**A County Council can not due to geographical areas take on a detailed responsibility for individual towns.**

**It is therefore imperative that Town and Community Councils, who wish to, take on the role of 'looking after their own town'.**

**The 'looking after their own town' does not just mean by way of service provision but by the County Council consulting on all matters affecting the Town through the Town or Community Council.**

**For example: If section 106 money is allocated to art in a town the Town and Community Council should be involved, not ignored and the principle authority implement without consultation.**

## **Question five**

**Will the Measure enhance the role of non-executive (backbench) local authority councillors in the scrutiny of local services. (parts 5-6 of the proposed Measure).**

## **Response**

**Any enhancement of the influence of 'backbench' County Councillors is to be welcomed.**

## **Question six**

**Does the Measure develop and strengthen the role of community councils in Wales, including enabling them to deliver a wider range of services and actions locally as well as to increase the effectiveness of their representational role and their ability to work in partnership with other bodies. (part 7 of the proposed Measure).**

## **Response**

**The Town and Community Councils should be able to take over services once they have demonstrated that they are able to do.**

**A benchmark for this could be a Quality Council award.**

**To increase the effectiveness of their representative role guidance should be issued requiring each Community Council to develop a Community Plan which should in turn be recognised by the County Council and principle authorities.**

## **Question seven**

**Does the Measure reform the system for setting allowances for Councillors? (part 8 of the proposed Measure).**

## **Response**

**The response given here relates to Town and Community Councils. a vote was taken at the meeting where this Measure was discussed which was as follows:**

*Should some form of payment be made to Town or Community Councillors?*

**NO**

*Should Town or Community Councillors be paid a fixed payment?*

**NO**

*Should Town or Community Councillors be paid proper and reasonable expenses?*

**YES**

## **Question eight**

**Should the Measure allow the Welsh Ministers to issue statutory guidance on collaboration between local authorities, and between them and other bodies? (part 9 of the proposed Measures).**

## **Response**

**Statutory guidelines should be issued by the WAG on working relationships between County Councils and Town or Community Councils.**

**An agreement or charter should be encouraged to set up a formal arrangement between the two levels of government.**

**Any guidance should include financial matters.**

## **Question nine**

**What are the potential barriers to implementing the provisions of the proposed Measure (if any) and does the proposed Measure take account of them?**

## **Response**

**The Measure may address this issue but the Council feels that problems may occur with reluctant officers trying to protect their own positions ahead of what is best for the community involving giving service provision responsibility to local councils.**

**The above statement would apply equally to consultation with Town and Community Councils being required where a proposal affects that community.**

**The County Councils do not give enough credence to the Town and Community Councils views, often putting them in the same pot as an individual representation.**

**Any provision of services by Town and Community Councils needs to be sustainable and also economic.**

## **Question ten**

**What are the financial implications of the proposed Measure for organisations, if any?**

## **Answer**

**Budget support from County Councils and the Welsh Assembly will be needed to aid the running of some local services by local councils.**

**Any devolved services should be fully funded.**

**Any Town or Community Council will need to make an assessment of which services it can run taking into account the following:**

**Level of reserves to cover any emergencies.**

**Ensuring sustainability.**

**The economics of such activity.**

**What if the service taken over does not work out?**

## **6.00 Other observations**

**6.01 The following additional matters are noted here:**

- **The representation of Town and Community Councils at Welsh Assembly level should be carried out via One Voice Wales and organisations like the**

North Wales Association of Town and Larger Community Councils.  
Perhaps on an area by area basis.

- Local Town and Community Council local forums and groupings should be run by the Community Councils themselves. They should not have to be part of any larger organisation (ie One Voice Wales or the North Wales Association) to be heard on local issues.  
Such grouping should be formally recognised by County Councils and deal with local issues.