



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill**

DATE **24 November 2015**

BY **Leighton Andrews, Minister for Public Services**

Today I published the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill for consultation.

The proposals contained within the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill will complete the programme of Local Authority mergers and set out a new and reformed legislative framework for Local Authority democracy, accountability, performance and elements of finance. It will also establish a statutory Public Services Staff Commission.

Our vision for Local Government based on activist Councils, engaged in delivering modern, accessible, high quality public services with and for their local communities, was set out in the Reforming Local Government White Paper: Power to Local People, published in February.

We recognise this vision, and our ambition for world class public services, can only be realised through a world class public service workforce with the right skills and support to deliver them. The dedication and excellence of the public service workforce is instrumental to transformation.

Proposals for a Public Services Staff Commission to develop and disseminate good practice in workforce arrangements across public services were set out in the White Paper published in October 2014. Our non-statutory Public Services Staff Commission has been operating since September 2015 using the Workforce Partnership Council as its primary reference point. We are committed to continuing our strong model of social partnership through the Workforce Partnership Council as we take forward our programme of reform. Unlike in England, we have retained and strengthened a 'Two-Tier Code' to protect public sector workers affected by outsourcing from contractors seeking to bring in new workers with worse terms and conditions.

The overwhelming majority of consultation responses to that White Paper were in favour of putting the Commission on a statutory footing. The Draft Bill includes such provision.

The Draft Bill has been shaped by the hundreds of responses received in relation to the consultations on both these White Papers.

In June 2015 I announced the Welsh Government's preference for the future configuration of Local Authorities in Wales. Two maps were published which show the preference for the future structure in South, Mid and West Wales with two options (two or three Local Authorities) in North Wales. Today marks the start of formal consultation on our proposals for the configuration of Local Authorities.

This consultation provides the public, Local Authorities and others with the opportunity to comment on the proposals, presenting the next Welsh Government with the opportunity to make an early decision on how it wishes to proceed, with the benefit of a developed legislative proposition, assisted by a full understanding of the views of stakeholders.

A draft Explanatory Memorandum including a draft Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), plus other impact assessments have been published alongside the Draft Bill. In preparing the RIA, consultation has taken place with key stakeholders, technical experts, academics, the Welsh Local Government Association and senior Local Authority officers.

The RIA shows that overall, the estimated net savings to Local Authorities over ten years would be between £529m and £650m. This is the same order of savings as those estimated by CIPFA in 'The Transitional Costs, Benefits and Risks of Local Government Reorganisation', published in late 2014.

I shall be making an oral statement in Plenary this afternoon and I look forward to Members' comments on the Draft Bill over the coming months.