

WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (WALES) MEASURE

DATED 26.8.2010

INTRODUCTION

Welshpool Town Council has considered the above consultation and sets out below its responses to each subject raised.

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 stopping progress by community councils at County Council and Officer level.

Where Town and Community Councils can demonstrate that they are able to take on services professionally they should be allowed to do so by right not by County Council wishes.

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 uniform approach which is transparent to all Town and Community Councils.

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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 it is more likely that there would be an increase in candidates for election.

QUESTION FOUR

Does the Measure help ‘on the ground’.

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

In Wales County Councils cover larger areas (in most cases) than in England. 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 take on the role of ‘looking after their own town’.

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QUESTION FIVE

The role of the 'backbench' County Councillor.

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

The development of Town and Community Councils

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 representational role guidance should be issued requiring each Community Council to develop a Community Plan which should in turn be recognised by the County Councils.

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QUESTION SEVEN

Allowances for County Councillors

Reform the system for setting allowances for Councillors. (part 8 of the proposed Measure).

RESPONSE

There is a need for reform.

There is little evidence that the current scheme has altered the profile of Councils. *redundancy pay should be abolished and expenses limited strictly to that which has been actually spent evidenced by receipts.*

There should be equal pay for County Councillors whether they are on the board, the cabinet or a chair. This would avoid the scrapping that goes on for senior positions.

QUESTION EIGHT

WAG Guidance

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

Guidelines should be issued by the WAG on working relationships between County Councils and Town or Community Councils. A charter should be encouraged to set up a formal arrangement between the two levels of government.

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QUESTION NINE

Barriers to implementation

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 at officer level trying to protect their own positions ahead of what is best for the community involving giving service provision responsibility to local councils.

QUESTION TEN

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

RESPONSE

Town and Community Councils should not be seen as an easy option by County Councils to devolve services on the cheap. Budget support from County Councils and the Welsh Assembly will be needed to aid the running of some local services by local councils.

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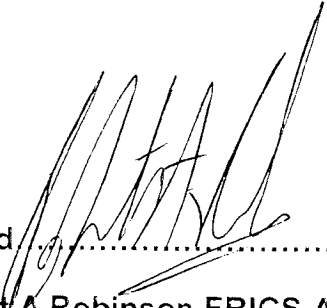
QUESTION ELEVEN

Are there any other matters that you wish to raise?

RESPONSE

The following additional matters are noted here:

- The representation of Town and Community Councils at Welsh Assembly level should be by recognised organisations such as One Voice Wales and the North Wales Association of Town and Larger Community Councils.
- Local Town and Community Council groupings should be run by the Community Councils themselves without having to be part of any larger organisation (ie One Voice Wales or the North Wales Association of Town and Larger Community Councils). Such grouping should be formally recognised by County Councils and deal with local issues. (a good example is the Montgomeryshire Local Council Forum.

Signed 

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Town Clerk

Welshpool Town Council