

## AMBLESTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL CYNGOR CYMUNED TREAMLOD

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31<sup>st</sup> January 2013

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee  
Legislation Office  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Dear Sirs

### **Consultation on the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill**

This is the evidence submitted by Ambleston Community Council in response to this consultation, Ann Jones AM's letter dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012 refers. We confine our evidence to Sections 53 – 55 in Part 5 of the Bill, i.e. the Sections requiring community councils to set up websites and to give public notices electronically and to put copies of our minutes on a website.

The Council is totally opposed to these proposals and request that these Sections be removed from the Bill in their entirety.

These proposals are opposed because for small rural community councils such as Ambleston Community Council these requirements are too onerous and are not proportionate to the activities of these councils. This community council meets once a month for ten months of the year. It has one part-time Clerk and a total precept of £2,200.00 per annum and is fairly typical of the small rural community councils within Wales.

Also a website is totally unnecessary. The Pembrokeshire County Council has an excellent website which gives the names of all town and community councils Clerks within the county, and also their addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Admittedly the names and details of our Councillors are not shown on the County Council website, however if any local resident wishes to have this information, which is known to the majority of our 260 residents on the electoral roll, then all they have to do is to telephone me or to e-mail me. The Pembrokeshire County Council website is updated on a regular basis.

I have been Clerk to the Community Council for twenty-six years and in that time I have not received any requests for copies of the minutes of any of our meetings. If any such request should be received then I would be able to provide a copy or copies by hard copy or by e-mail.

The cost of maintaining an up-to-date website would be totally disproportionate to our Community Council in terms of both time and money and in the end these costs would have to be borne by the Council Tax and Income Tax payers i.e. the members of the public. We were informed yesterday by Mr Frank Cuthbert, Head of Scrutiny, Democracy & Participation Team, Welsh Government, that £1.25 million additional funding had been released by the Minister for Local Government and Communities to support local democracy and public engagement so this gives some indication of the high costs involved. This funding will probably be welcomed by those community councils who perhaps were already contemplating setting up websites of their own. Many of the larger Town and Community Councils already have websites but to make it a legal requirement for all community councils to have to set up websites is unnecessary and wrong.

One Voice Wales has kindly forwarded to us a copy of their response to you and we generally agree with their comments. We cannot expect One Voice Wales to object to these demands because they represent most of the Town and Community Councils in Wales, both large and small and those with and those without websites. However in their reply to Question 13 they have drawn to your attention some of the problems and difficulties involved.

Yours faithfully

Margaret A Griffiths  
Clerk