

CTC 14

Ymgynghoriad ar rôl, Ilywodraethiant ac atebolrwydd y sector cynghorau tref a chymuned

Consultation on the role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Tref Abergele

Response from: Abergele Town Council

It was considered that some of the questions did not have enough clarity to be able to provide a definitive answer.

The role and value of Town Councils

The answer to this question would depend on the interpretation of value, if the question is asking is the Town Council value for money, or is the question value as a whole, as the answer would depend on how the question is to be interpreted.

There is an issue with the County Councils not having the funding to continue with non-statutory functions and looking to Town & Community Councils to take on these services.

The tax payers' view of what the role of Town Councils to be should be considered and the value will bring more scrutiny to the sector if Councils are responsible for providing services previously carried out by the County Council

The smaller Council's role in the Community is very different from the larger Council's and it is a concern that they would be lost if absorbed into a larger Council

Whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape

The sector is governed by the regulations by Government and difficult to say if the sector does not know what the role will be in a more streamlined system. Does the Government view the sector doing something different? What do Councils want to provide? Not sure if the landscape need to evolve to provide more services as the sector is currently fit for purpose, as it is for local representation at a local level. The sector needs to remain small to be connected with the Community. Merging small councils together to create a larger area is not easily done and can be detrimental to residents. It is not the role of the Town Council to carry out County work. Their role is to champion community groups and what the Town residents desire, such as keeping the town clean, a Christmas display etc. How important would these matters be in a larger landscape? The size allows the Council to go into granular detail and could lose its identity if merged into a larger area.

Is this a cost cutting exercise and should the Council be looking at other priorities?

Governance and scrutiny arrangements and its impact on accountability and transparency

Open and transparency is key and Councils are not open and transparent enough. Communications could be more open. Code of Conduct and Safeguarding training should be mandatory for Councils. Public Services are all going through transformation. Concern that some Councillors are elected unopposed or co-opted, although co-option is a good way of filling vacancies and then they can stand for election at the end of the term. Attracting Councillors that take the role seriously is vital.

Scope of digital and new technology to improve decision-making, service provision and participation in local democratic processes

All remote meetings and working from home is not always the best option for staff or the Council. Due to the size of the Town Council Abergele are able to embrace technology more than a smaller Council. Hybrid is good for meetings and is the best option. The Council is fortunate to have a good team and is considered way ahead of the challenges that some other Councils experience.

How new powers and responsibilities for this tier of government are utilised to support communities

The new powers can free up officer time as this is the power of first resort rather than having to look for another piece of legislation and the ability to defer to an officer to make the Council more streamlined.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of Abergele Town Council