

Ymgynghoriad ar rôl, llywodraethiant ac atebolwydd y sector cyngorau tref a chymuned

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

Ymateb gan: Sian Meredudd

Response from: Sian Meredudd

Answers to Senate Consultation

- 1) **Town and Community Councils** are the closest layer of democracy to the people. The Councillors are not volunteers they are politicians and responsible to their constituents whom they meet everyday. Their own lives are bound up in the community and **they know what the community wants.**
- 2) **Town and Community Councils** have evolved since their creation 50 years ago and will **continue to evolve** as circumstance demand. As the County Councils fail to deliver non-statutory service such as grass cutting, libraries and sports halls it will be left to T&C Councils to provide what they can with the help of 3rd sector bodies and will possibly be able to do **this cheaper and more to local requirements** than the larger and more distant Authority.
- 3) By Governance I presume is meant Organisation. **Each Council has a Clerk** who should be trained by the Clerks' Association (in smaller Councils this may not be so) and is the **kingpin of the organisation**. He or she takes instruction from **the Councillors who are a corporate body** and must vote on items of expenditure and so on – he/she cannot take instruction from one Councillor unless that individual has been given delegated powers. Each Council has policies to which it must adhere which are individual but based on those from One Voice Wales our umbrella body. And all new Councillors should take training in the **Code of Conduct** – One Voice Wales has 25 training webinars. Councils and Councillors are bound in a **web of regulations** to control them
- 4) **Computers and IT technology** have made keeping records and handling accounts **much easier** and most Clerks have found this of benefit. Each Council should have a website and keep it up to date. Where there are difficulties One Voice Wales has now an Officer to help those Councils who haven't managed to get au fait with the modern technology – if they need funding I think the Government should provide. There may be difficulties too with **online meetings** which can be useful saving money and in bad weather conditions and also allowing the public to sit in but these problems can be overcome with patience. There may be reluctance when people are unused to using remote.
- 5) As mentioned above some **services can be cheaper** when accessed locally and perhaps more staff will be needed to superintend the contractors/employees. A larger Council might provide services at a cost to smaller area – might even provide IT help or support items such as football pitches which can be used by

both communities. As this co-operation between larger and smaller Councils or between smaller Councils has not yet come about we cannot say how useful it would be. Perhaps with smaller Councils one well trained Clerk could serve several or combined meetings could help but each Council needs to be itself

- 6) Councillors have training in the Code of Conduct at the beginning of their work and One Voice Wales has 25 Training Webinars. There is a web of rules and policies to control the actions of Councils and Councillors and OneVoice Wales is available to give advice when needed. The Computer and its programmes have made things like keeping track of expenditure much easier and for those who use Social Media the actions and future plans of the Council can be made known to the Community. All Councils are expected to have a website and newspaper reports of meetings. If smaller Councils cannot afford or are unable to access these professional help should be made available. But each Council has its own ambience and culture - to ignore this or bury it in a large combination of Councils would lose the very thing that makes the Town and Community set-up so valuable a part of our democracy