

**Powys County Council Response to Consultation on the
 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill**

Para No.	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>Powys County: Council Response</u>
1.	<u>Elections</u>	
1.1	Extend right to vote to 16 & 17 year olds	The proposal is supported.
1.2	Extend the right to vote citizens from any country who are lawfully resident in Wales irrespective of nationality	The Council was unable to achieve a consensus on this proposal.
1.3	Allow councils to choose their own voting system, either the current first past the post system or Single Transferable Vote	The Council is opposed to the proposal and support the WLGA's view. It is considered that there should be a common electoral system across all authorities to avoid complexity and voter confusion.
1.4	Change of electoral cycle for principal councils from four years to five years	The proposal is supported.
2.	<u>Electoral Registrations</u>	
2.1	Gives power to ERO to add individuals to the electoral register using data sharing without applications from individuals	The proposal is supported as it reduces the burden on officers and should reduce costs.
3.	<u>Candidates for Elections</u>	
3.1	Amend the eligibility criteria for candidates at local government elections to allow a citizen of any country to stand for election	The Council was unable to achieve a consensus on this proposal.
3.2	Allow council officers and employees, other than those holding politically restricted posts, will be entitled to stand for election to their own council. They will only be required to resign their paid employment with the council if they are elected.	The proposal is supported but it is suggested that it would be helpful if an up to date list of "politically restricted posts" were to be published.

3.3	Disqualify individuals, from standing for election, or holding office as a member of a principal council or community council in Wales, if they are subject to a the notification requirements of, or an order under, the Sexual Offences Act 2003	The proposal is supported.
3.4	Disqualify individuals from standing for election, or holding office as a member of a principal council or community council in Wales, if they are subject to a the notification requirements of, or an order under, the Sexual Offences Act 2003	The proposal is supported.
4.	<u>General Power of ComQetence</u>	The Council supports the WLGA response and agrees that the use of the power could be constrained if the legal provisions required consideration of all existing Acts before the power could be utilised as this would create too much risk for Local Authorities.
5.	<u>Promoting Access To Local Government</u>	
5.1	Duty to encourage local people to participate in local government	The proposal is supported.
5.2	New Duty for councils to prepare a 'Participation Strategy' with 'the aim of making it easier for members of the public to understand how local government functions; how it makes decisions; and how local people can follow proceedings, input their views, and have them taken into account'	The Council supports the WLGA response and would be opposed the imposition on Principal Authorities to discharge to the duty on behalf of other autonomous" connected authorities" such as community councils and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The imposition of the new duty must be properly funded by Welsh Government.
5.3	Repeal of community polls and introduction of a duty to make a petition scheme to include e-petitions	The Council is opposed to this recommendation and further consideration needs to be given to the GDPR implication of e-petitions.
5.4	Duty on councils to publish an electronic and postal address where councillors can be contacted by their electorate.	This proposal is supported provided that provision to allow a general council office address (where appropriate) is retained.

5.5	Requirement for local authorities to electronically broadcast all meetings which are open to the public as they take place, and to make the broadcast available electronically for a reasonable period after the meeting.	<p>Whilst the Council supports the Welsh Government's ambitions, the webcasting of all public council meetings can only be achieved at substantial additional cost. Powys County Council, like many other authorities only has the capacity to webcast from its Council Chamber. Many of its committee meetings which are open to the public are held in other venues and some are held in other towns throughout the county. Accordingly, the new duty to webcast all public meetings could only be achieved at substantial cost to equip other meeting rooms.</p> <p>In addition, the increased hours of webcasting will result in a substantial increase in the cost of a contract with our webcast supplier. Currently, the Council pays £14125 pa for 50 hours of webcasting for Full Council and cabinet only. There are an additional 12 committees/ panels which are open to the public and these around 85 meetings a year which would be 251 hours of additional webcasting at an estimated additional cost of £71,000 pa.</p> <p>If the proposal proceeds, it is essential that the additional capital and revenues costs of the additional webcasting are fully funded by Welsh Government.</p> <p>Provision needs to be made allow meetings to continue in the event of webcasting being disrupted or unavailable for technical reasons.</p>
5.6	Requirement for provisions to allow remote attendance at meetings.	Whilst the ambition is supported, the Council is not convinced that the technology exists to ensure full participation at remote venues especially the recording of individual Member votes. It is anticipated that any requirement for webcasting of such meetings will add to the cost and complexity of such arrangements.

		Powys County Council has offered to trial new technology to allow remote attendance of meetings.
5.7	Amend law to allow electronic publication of Notices	The proposal is supported.
6.	Community Councils	
6.1	Requirement to require public participation at Community Council Meetings	The Council believes that public participation at such meetings should remain in the discretion of each Town and Community Council.
6.2	Requirement for Community Councils to publish an Annual Report setting out priorities, activities and achievements	The Council supports the proposal but wishes to stress the additional resource implications which will need to be addressed by Welsh Government.
7	<u>Local Authority Executives, Members, Officers And Committees</u>	
7.1	Appointment of Chief Executives (rather than a head of paid service) with specific duties and specified chief executive performance management by Leader with report to Full Council	The proposal is supported.
7.2	Ability to appointment of unpaid assistants to cabinets and allowing job-sharing leaders or cabinet members	The proposal is supported provided that the current restrictions on the payment for Job Shared posts is removed.
7.3	Update family absence provisions in line with those available to employees	The proposal is supported.
7.4	Duty on leaders of political groups to take steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their groups. The Standards Committee to monitor compliance of group leaders and arrange for adequate training of group leaders	The proposal is supported. It is hoped that the new duty will result in higher standards of conduct with less complaints to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
7.5	Duty on Standards Committee to make an annual report to Full Council on conduct matters	The proposal is supported.
7.6	Scrutiny committees to be given sufficient notice of key decisions to allow more effective scrutiny	The proposal is supported as a matter of good practice.

8	<p><u>Collaborative Working B</u> <u>PrinciQal Councils Via CJC's</u></p>	<p>Mandation of the footprint is opposed. The Council are more than happy to work with Ceredigion where considered appropriate, a recent example of this would of course be the work on the Mid Wales Growth Deal. However, we would also want to retain complete flexibility to work with others as and when required. Furthermore we seek reassurance that the proposed CJC footprint would not be a barrier to successfully achieving such cross border working with partners other than Ceredigion in the future as we have 17 Local Authorities on our borders.</p> <p>The position is borne out by the cross border working arrangements for the four areas identified as being the first to be considered for CJC's:</p> <p>Educational improvement- PCC currently work with 6 authorities within ERW.</p> <p>Transport planning - PCC work with Ceredigion and Gwynedd to consider transport planning across Mid Wales and into South Gwynedd (Meirionydd)</p> <p>Economic Development- PCC works across all its 13 boundaries where appropriate as economic activity simply does not recognise our administrative boundaries. As an example we are currently working as Joint Venture partners with NPTCBC and Welsh Government on the Global Centre of Rail Excellence project in Ystradgynlais.</p> <p>Planning - PCC whilst having its own LOP we work closely with the BBNPA in the south and neighbouring authorities on the their LDPs.</p>
9.	<p><u>Performance And Governance Of Princioal Councils</u></p>	
9.1	<p>New streamlined performance framework for local government</p>	<p>The WLGA's response is supported, and the Council welcomes ongoing discussion</p>

9.2	<p>Requirement for Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to conduct an annual self assessment of the above duty, - to publish a report of this assessment - to commission an independent Panel Assessment of its performance once per municipal term. 	The WLGA's response is supported, and the Council welcomes ongoing discussion.
10.	<u>Governance And Audit Committees</u>	
10.1	Rename Audit Committees as Governance and Audit Committees	The proposal is supported.
10.2	Requirement for one third of members must be lay members	
10.3	Requirement for chair to be a lay member	
10.4	Governance and Audit Committees will be responsible for reviewing the Independent Panel Assessment of its performance and the Council's draft response	
10.5	Requirement for Governance and Audit Committees to review and assess the Council's ability to handle complaints effectively	
11.	<u>Mergers And Restructuring Of Princiole Areas</u>	The WLGA's response is supported.