



The Voice of Community and Town Councils in Wales

**Review of Community and Town Council Sector in Wales**

**Response to the Independent Review Panel**

**March 2018**

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. One Voice Wales</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. About Community and Town Councils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Community and Town Councils – a wider role</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>5. The Context of One Voice Wales response</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. One Voice Wales Response to the Panel’s Questions</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>7. What should community and town councils be responsible for?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>8. How should they operate?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>9. What’s standing in heir way to deliver for the local community?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>10.How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>11.Final Comments</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>12.Appendices</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>13.Appendix 1 Consultation events and attendees</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>14.Appendix 2 Capacity and Capability Framework 2016 -2023</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>15.Appendix 3 Bodmin Place Shaping Forum Terms of Reference</b>	<b>48</b>

# ONE VOICE WALES

## Review of Community and Town Council Sector in Wales

### Response to the Independent Review Panel

#### 1. Introduction

This paper represents the formal response of One Voice Wales to the consultation invitation by the Independent Review Panel. It reflects:

- a) The views of member councils of One Voice Wales across Wales, individually and collectively recorded via:
  - discussions in preparation for this response via eight consultation events held across Wales (details of the venues and attendee's are shown in **Appendix 1**)
  - an on-line survey of members of One Voice Wales (to ensure those that were unable to attend the consultation workshops held above had the opportunity to provide comments/ and to allow any further comments for those who attended the eight events to submit further thoughts)
- b) The expert comments based on the experience of members of the One Voice Wales staffing team who were tasked with preparing the response;
- c) A literature review of documents relating to the community and town councils sector reflecting on what has been achieved, the challenges facing the sector in moving forward and the opportunities and actions that can help to mold a positive direction of travel for the sector for the future.

The National Executive Committee of One Voice Wales has considered the draft response and the present paper has been endorsed as the agreed, collective view of One Voice Wales and its member councils.

#### 2. One Voice Wales

One Voice Wales is the national representative organisation for Community and Town Councils throughout Wales. It currently has over 600 councils in membership representing some 82% of all community and town councils in Wales.

Community and Town Councils can and do play a vital role in creating and sustaining a strong sense of community. One Voice Wales believes that community and town councils, as the first tier of government in Wales, are well-placed to ensure the sustainability of community development actions supported by other sectors. One Voice Wales is also mindful of the importance of the Welsh Government's vision for

community involvement in developing public services in Wales. Through promoting local developments, working alongside partners based in or supporting the community, the increased interaction between individuals in the community can engender a positive outlook and feeling of well-being. As the individual communities of Wales develop in this way they will make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of Wales. For this reason the vision subscribed to by One Voice Wales is:

*“Working with local councils in Wales to shape the places communities want to live in”*

One Voice Wales aims to support Community and Town Councils in achieving this vision and has adopted the following Mission Statement to guide its work:

*“To represent the interests of Community and Town Councils; raise awareness and understanding of this primary tier of government; and work collaboratively with our partners to ensure the sector contributes fully to the goal of developing dynamic and sustainable communities in Wales.”*

One Voice Wales is committed to working collaboratively with its partner organisations, including member councils, the Welsh Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Society of Local Council Clerks. Over the last five years One Voice Wales has increasingly worked with a range of other national and regional organisations and supports the organisations objective of being a collaborative networked body representing the interests of the community and town council sector in Wales.

One Voice Wales view is that we need more local democracy with more empowered people and places. The Independent Panel Review of Community and Town Councils provides an opportunity for politicians of all parties to support our most local, an increasingly important, level of governance. A chance to demonstrate their commitment to citizen-led action, which protects local assets and services and delivers responsive services based on local priorities – all of which improves lives and enhances communities.

This response to the Independent Panel Review sets out our positive offer to Government and creates a new vision of how better services could be delivered with local people. It outlines how we can help the next Government realise its ambitions for community empowerment, co-production and devolution.

This response also should enable the Independent Review Panel to make recommendations to Government across a range of policy ideas that has the ability to unlock the power and potential of communities by helping community and town councils flourish in pursuing better lives for their residents. Our vision is to improve the quality of life for local communities through having vibrant, dynamic and effective community and town councils.

One Voice Wales wants to work with Government to turn this vision into a reality. We agree with SOLACE's<sup>1</sup> (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) principles for public services reform:

- ✓ **LOCAL SOLUTIONS** have been proven to work most effectively in improving outcomes for communities, achieving greater efficiency and reducing costs.
- ✓ **INTEGRATION** has the potential to improve outcomes, transform services and deliver significant financial savings. It is the long-term priority of local councils across all service areas, and should be for the wider public services.
- ✓ **ACCOUNTABILITY** has to be re-invented in the light of pan-public sector whole-place approaches, and it needs to be comprehensible to the public.
- ✓ **A NEW CONTRACT WITH COMMUNITIES** is needed to restore trust and build a more sustainable, adaptive relationship between local state and citizen.

### 3. About Community and Town Councils

There are 735 Community and Town Councils in Wales, representing this tier of government closest to the people. They cover approximately 94% of the land area and 70% of the population of Wales. Community and Town Councils are the most local part of our democracy and play an integral role in the functioning of communities in Wales. They provide our neighbourhoods, villages and towns with a democratic voice and a structure for taking action – real people power at grassroots level.

Community and Town Councils are local authorities constituted under the 1972 Local Government Act and range from those serving our smallest rural communities to larger urban councils with populations of tens of thousands. The services delivered by local councils are similarly varied but each seeks to serve its community within its own specific context. Currently this includes undertaking activities such as carrying out community appraisals, developing new or additional services, supporting local voluntary organisations, providing community facilities and influencing those decisions of other organisations that may affect the community.

The communities they serve range from small rural settlements to large towns and their budgets vary accordingly. However, what they all have in common is serving their communities and acting to improve the quality of life in their locality. This is achieved through exercising a range of statutory powers and duties – and much more. Community and Town Councils are responsible to their local electorates for delivering a wide range of services and for the provision and upkeep of local amenities.

Each Council is made up of elected members, or in some cases co-opted members. In Wales there are approximately 8,000 Community and Town Councillors, who represent

---

<sup>1</sup> **OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS** : An alternative manifesto (Graeme McDonald© The Solace Group 2014)

the interests of the community they serve as a whole. They are recognised as having a role in providing the voice of the citizen in the development and delivery of public services in Wales.

#### **4. Community and Town Councils – a wider role**

Community and Town Councillors are committed to their communities and are an under-valued Wales-wide resource. Through their representative body, One Voice Wales, closer connections need to be made with Welsh Government departments.

In the future there will be an increased expectation on Community and Town Councils' resources by Unitary Authorities, and current arrangements for partnership working between both tiers of local government need to be further enhanced and reflected in joint Charter arrangements that establish a firm foundation for effective working

There is a need to support and build the capacity and skills of community groups to work in partnership with Community and Town Councils as well as raising the general awareness of the powers and responsibilities of this tier of local government. This has already been recognised by Welsh Government and One Voice Wales has worked with government officials to develop a Capacity and Capability Framework for the Community and Town Council sector. (**Appendix 2** provides details of this programme)

Any place-based approach by Welsh Government and its delivery partners should explicitly take account of the role of Community and Town councils and connect them to the local infrastructure and development plans so that they can enhance the effectiveness of locally based approaches and help sustain the continuing benefit of local interventions.

The connections between the local and the national tiers of government require review to ensure that national and

regional approaches can be better understood and effectively sustained at the local level and provide inter-connectivity with the future Public Service Board arrangements.

#### **5. The Context of One Voice Wales response**

Before responding to the Panel's four specific questions, we consider it appropriate to preface our comments through reflecting upon current issues which we believe provide a context for our responses.

- The current financial climate

A review undertaken in 2017 on behalf of Wales Public Services 2025 estimates about 56p in every pound spent by ministers on public services could go to health and social services within four years, leaving less money for council-run activities. Consequently, unitary authorities here will need to look hard at new ways of working and at the social impacts of alternative approaches to coping with cuts – and this will inevitably impact on how community and town councils operate in the future.

These conditions provide an opportunity for community and town councils to set out how they see themselves operating in the future for the benefit of their communities and creating a visible identity for themselves within the communities they serve.

However there are some givens:

- Community and Town Councillors are committed to their communities and have been an under-valued Wales-wide resource. The clearest autonomous model of democratic community governance is the community or town council.
- Public agencies need to be more responsive to local needs and closer engagement with Community and Town Councils can assist in creating a greater awareness and understanding of local needs and requirements.
- Community and Town Councils will be expected to take on more responsibilities and this implies a greater need for enhanced relationships with the Unitary Authorities.
- The Well Being of Future Generations Act will mean increased and different duties for Unitary Authorities and Community and Town Councils which will likely create need for policy and strategy to be informed by local knowledge and evidence-based policy making.
- In terms of the introduction of a sustainability duty for the sector, there will be a need for resources to be made available to pump-prime the key strategic activities that will be required to undertake robust community planning and engagement with local electors.
- A fundamental rebalancing of power in favour of local councils and communities will take time to embed itself, and attitudes and capabilities will need time to catch up.
- They also have considerable potential in suburban and inner-city neighbourhoods particularly in the areas of south east Wales where their visibility is least in Wales.
- First tier authorities should be encouraged to collaborate both formally and informally, to foster a culture of joint working and to minimize the risks posed by small councils competing for resources.
- Recognizing the recent Public Sector funding reductions and the resulting austerity / retrenchment within the Welsh Public sector exemplified by:
  - A growing acknowledgement of the need for more effective cross sector working within the Welsh public service – e.g. between Public Service Boards and Community and Town Councils

- A constant “drip feed” of cuts in the levels and quality of many services provided by the principal authorities without the necessary heads up for community and town councils to actively plan to support the retain of pressured services within their areas.
  - A growing expectation from principal authorities that certain services, activities and assets will be transferred to Community and Town Councils without recognizing that community and town councils do not necessarily have the capacity or capability to take on more activity in the immediate term. Community and town councils will require a period to grow their capacity and capability including establishing an electoral mandate to potentially tax local people more to enable assets or services to be retained.
  - The growing opportunity for Community and Town Councils to expand their roles through positive response to such potential transfers to sustain the level and quality of services at the most local level subject to the points raised above.
  - The apparent mixed picture in terms of situations where services and assets have been transferred to community groups who are not best equipped in terms of resources or expertise to manage them – examples abound where poorly managed transfers have resulted in the recipient organizations unable to apply for grants as lease periods are too short for funding bodies to consider grant provision.
  - A view that the financial constraints and restrictions on growth in levels of precept etc. are not so severe or constrained for the Community and Town Community Councils
- Welsh Government statements and active involvement of the sector suggest a new confidence and belief in the “grass roots” contribution of Community and Town Councils:
    - In terms of the potential role they can play in Alternative Delivery Models of service provision within communities as exemplified in the ‘Is the Feeling Mutual?’ report March 2016 commissioned by a former Local Government Minister where community and town councils were identified as having a significant role to play in sustaining local services in the future with partner organisations such as housing associations and the Third Sector.
    - In terms of their fundamental contribution to democratic processes
    - In terms of their key contribution to and influencing role in relation to a well-informed understanding of service requirements at the most local levels, their specification and the setting of standards for purposes of commissioning / providing / planning those services and facilities
    - Increasing involvement by One Voice Wales in Welsh Government Advisory Boards including National Assets Working Group in particular the work on Community Asset Transfers and the People and Community Working Group on Sustaining Our Communities.

- Local Government re-organisation
  - One Voice Wales member councils believe the current review to be, potentially, a significant contribution towards the inevitable reorganization of local government and related public services within Wales.
  - Any review **must** take into account all three public sector levels as well as other public bodies:
    - **Welsh Government and its administration.** Consideration is currently being given to increasing the number of A.M's at the Assembly. We believe that in reviewing the number of A.M's, consideration must be given to the changing nature of certain local government services – **for example**, Local Management of Schools, the regionalization of advisory / improvement services and the whole standards issue might suggest that the role of Education services within the Unitary authorities is being diminished and could eventually become little more than a “pay and rations” service. Perhaps it is now time to consider the transfer of Education from local authorities to become the direct responsibility of the Welsh Government. We could offer similar arguments for other services, however our point is simply that any forthcoming review of local government must address the issue of potential transfer, upwards of key services of strategic importance to Wales must form part of that review.
    - **The Unitary Authorities** – with the recent release of the Green Paper on Local Government re-organisation and the potential for fewer Unitary Authorities within Wales there is potential for decisions taken during this process to reduce or stop services being provided at the second tier of local government to have significant impacts on the future roles of community and town councils...these are unknowns at the present time but given recent financial impacts on non statutory services e.g. recently Gwynedd Council has stated is going to stop funding of 40 youth facilities in their area because of budgetary pressures there is a likelihood that the community and town council sector will have to consider taking on more of this activity in future.
    - **Community and Town Councils**
    - **Other public bodies** – Health Services, Community Health Councils and potentially, other agencies
  - We are concerned that any reorganization reviews should not, as in 1974 and 1996 and the more recent Health Service reforms, be seemingly preoccupied with “lines on the map” to the detriment of the fundamental organisation and provision of effective services. We believe strongly that the emphasis must be on “Who does what” in terms of the various tiers and groupings of organisations **prior** to any considerations of geographical areas. **Importantly, to do this, the current roles and responsibilities of community and town councils must be determined first.**
  - We recognize the inevitability of change and development in the public sector and the need for agility and responsiveness to new circumstances and

- opportunities. Notwithstanding there appears on time to have been a “confusion” of initiative based developments – e.g. Spacial Plan areas / city region developments / enterprise zones which are not reflective of the “joined up thinking” approach necessary to achieve effectiveness within and between public services and sectors. Interestingly there has been recent recognition that there needs to be a more defined role for towns within city region areas and that they need a reason to exist and a new purpose as politicians decide how to spend a £1.2bn south Wales economy boost. There has been a recognition that towns need to be ‘vibrant economies’. Current leader of Cardiff City Council Huw Thomas considers that any regional deal needs towns to be a “foundational economy in their own right”.
- Despite the sound principles which underpinned the Making / Delivering the Connections agenda being sound, in practice, from our limited observation, it has not worked successfully once cascaded to the level of practical application i.e. the community and town council level. Indeed this important work carried out in 2006 appears to have largely been forgotten and One Voice Wales considers that re-visiting this work which puts citizens at the centre of public service thinking provides opportunities to re-invigorate the lines of communication and co-operation between community and town councils and their Unitary Authority counterparts. One Voice Wales members consider that community and town councils as empowered bodies of local governance operating alongside unitary authorities would be far better than the status quo of fundamental tensions between two competing visions of what is needed within local communities.
  - Our comments on a potential countrywide and cross sector reorganization hopefully convey our view of the necessity for a structured and comprehensive review to underpin such reorganization.

- **Developments in the Community and Town Council Sector**

- In our observation, over time, there has been a development in the level of professionalism within our sector, both in terms of our paid officials, the professionalism of elected members and the standing and influence of the national bodies which represent our sector, both within Wales and UK-wide.
- The requirement for the so-called “larger” first tier councils to be involved with such developments as the “Well Being of Future Generations” legislation could in our view be a requirement for all community and town subject to adequate resources to support the transition from the current position and clear guidelines on joint delivery of activities across community and town council boundaries.
- The confidence and preparedness of town and community councils to take on important activities such as Place Planning
- Austerity and retrenchment is already impacting heavily on those we serve. As other public service access points are closing down or having their services reduced dramatically One Voice Wales members we are experiencing an increase in the extent to which local people turn to the

- Community and Town Councils as a more convenient and effective conduit to secure action / responses from other organisations. Naturally this is impacting on the resources of community and town councils as they are having to face up to challenges previously beyond their remit and this is often compounded by the lack of advanced notification of closure or reduction of service by other public bodies. Clearly a **framework for asset and service transition** would benefit those with a vested interest to communicate more effectively and enable change to be managed more effectively between public bodies.
- As a consequence of the above community and town councils are increasingly being asked to provide opportunities / solutions for organizations leaving local communities to undertake outreach surgeries – it is anticipated that this direction of travel will increase should financial austerity continue into the future.
  - The current proposals of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) could have a positive impact in terms of attracting a wider range of individuals to the role of local councillor. It is important to note that the Independent Remuneration Panel is of the view that **Community and Town Councillors are not volunteers** because further to the democratic process they have accepted formal responsibilities and they all face some degree of liability, in respect of the Council functions they are running. Over the last three years the IRP have recognized and taken on board the growing role and responsibilities that come with being a community and town councillor and reduced the barriers to entry that may have previously turned away local electors considering local office.

## **Recent research on the Community and Town Council Sector**

In the context of local government reform, a review of the community and town council sector was commissioned in 2017 by Welsh Government to understand the responsibilities and challenges faced by the community and town council sector.

The research sought to understand:

- which services and assets are being managed
- the sources of funding and income councils have to deliver their services and the nature of the current workforce, including the clerk and their role
- the extent and quality of training undertaken related to either delivering services or asset management
- the nature of partnerships councils have with other organisations
- the sources of support they draw upon

Interestingly the key findings from the survey mirror the views of One Voice Wales member council's feedback as part of the consultation undertaken via workshops in November and December and the online survey undertaken in January /February 2018 and outline a recommended way forward for the sector. The Welsh Government research findings are set out below:

## Key findings

- Survey results indicate an increase in services delivered and assets managed over time
- Councils report they are increasingly being expected to take on services that require more specialised knowledge.
- Councils desired more two way dialogue with their principal authority with regard to transfers.
- Over half of clerks surveyed work 10 hours a week or less
- There were small increases in clerks undertaking training, but that the quality and value of their training was seen by some to be limited.
- Data show an increase in levels of partnership working.
- There was a need expressed for more guidance on how to take on services and assets
- A slight increase in the number of charters and service level agreements was reported.
- Councils displayed some awareness of their use of statutory powers
- Councillors and clerks expressed a clear desire to be involved in the implementation of the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in their council.
- Informal networks with other councils were evident and viewed positively
- Councils remained concerned about the low levels of understanding amongst the public about the sector and their role
- Opinion in councils was divided as to the benefits of social media in encouraging greater community engagement. However as Table 1 sets out below there will be a need for community and town councils to embrace social media in the future.

Table 1: **Social media and communications**

In 2017, 90% of the UK households had internet access, an increase from 89% in 2016 and 57% in 2006. The use of the internet for social networking accounted to 66% of total internet activities in 2017 and above 83% for people aged 16-44 (ONS, 2017). Given their prominence, the internet and social media in particular, are imperative and powerful tools for driving political, economic and social engagement and connecting with citizens at all levels of governance.

According to the latest BDO Social Media in the Local Government Survey in 2015, 100% of the respondent councils had a Twitter account, 90% had a Facebook account, 68% had a YouTube account and 38% an account on Instagram. Social media platforms are now the main channel for many members of the public wishing to communicate with public bodies and hold them to account. However, for local authorities in particular, social media is not only an essential means of strengthening democratic engagement, but of driving efficiency in a climate of significant budgetary reductions. Indeed, 71% of the respondents identified financial benefits from the use of social media. (Source Public Policy Exchange 2018)

The recommendations from Welsh Government Survey of Community and Town Councils are set out below:

- Consideration is given to whether the guidance currently available on the management of services and assets could be improved, better signposted or more tailored to the needs of the sector.
- There would be benefit in reviewing the processes for initiating asset and service transfer from principal councils, to better account for the capacities of community and town councils.
- Further discussion could take place around the types of training that would be most beneficial to councillors and clerks and how that training could be delivered most effectively.
- The sector as a whole should revisit the role of charters as a means of strengthening partnerships with principal authorities.
- Conduct further research with the sector around the degree to which councils understand and use specific powers.
- Facilitate opportunities for councils to properly consider the joint delivery of services or management of assets
- Explore the benefits of centrally co-ordinating tailored communications to the sector

**One Voice Wales would support the implementation of the above recommendations in the form of a sector work programme** as they address many of the problems identified in previous sections above – this would naturally require appropriate support and resources for implementation and require the collaboration of other public sector partners including Welsh Government and Unitary Authorities.

## 6. One Voice Wales Response to the Panel's Questions.

The following four sections provide answers to the four questions by the Independent Review Panel. The answers contain feedback obtained via eight consultation events held across Wales including: Caernarfon, Chirk, Howey near Llandrindod, St Clears, Henllys (Cwmbran), Pencoed, Gorseinon as well as with our National Executive Committee/Larger Councils Committees. This was supplemented by an on-line survey in January and February 2018 to enable those who could not attend the above had an opportunity to feed in their views. Additionally we have received individual member council responses for which we are very grateful and their thoughts and comments have been used to inform this consultation response document.

### a) WHAT SHOULD COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCILS BE RESPONSIBLE FOR?

**From the feedback One Voice Wales has received from its member councils it is a given that all the existing powers and duties should be retained** – so we do not intend to cover this ground in any great detail but would make the point that we recognise as a sector that use of these powers and duties varies considerably across Wales and **there is a need to organise the sector to increase the uniformity and consistency of the sector offering to the local electorates**. We have detailed below in Table 2 comments received which show the level of ambition across the sector and identify new areas of responsibility for community and town councils. However there is considerable desire within the sector to do more and sustain locally valued services within communities which may not have been within the remit of community and town councils historically and consequently to enable this to happen there is strong argument for additional powers to be made available to the community and town council sector. Some of these new powers are set out below:

- Through the Local Government Bill introduce measures to reform the laws governing the administration of Community and Town councils, which will include new powers to deliver local services.
- Enable community and town councils to have the power to trade as their Unitary Authority counterparts have to ensure a level playing field and enable to sustaining of valued local services.
- Amend the legislation to enable Community and Town Councils the ability to financially support the repair of church buildings.
- Promote use of the Power of Well Being and remove barriers to the use (e.g. expenditure limit) of this 'right to innovate'.
- Strengthen the role of Community and Town Councils in the planning system by coordinating policy to focus on places and supporting communities to shape the place they live in by putting 'Place Plans' on a statutory footing.

- Introduce a 'right to engage' which will help Community and Town Councils work more equitably and effectively with Unitary Authorities and other public services.

**Table 2: Future Area's of Responsibility for Community and Town Councils based on One Voice Wales member councils feedback**

- Developing business plans to support community themed projects bespoke to the community/ Place plans/ Community Emergency Planning
- All councils should be aware of potential partnerships e.g. with charities which could draw down funding
- Liaising and communicating with adjoining Community Councils
- All aspects of community development and community support services including community advocacy and the management of community facilities.
- Community renewable energy schemes.
- Waste recycling initiatives including local waste recycling sites.
- Delegation of non-statutory functions and services provided by principal authorities: environmental health matters associated with pest and rodent control; environmental enforcement; local biodiversity programmes; libraries; markets; museums; toilets; community transport schemes; car parks; registration of births, deaths and marriages; town centre cleansing services; day care centres
- Community assets including: Public cemeteries; management of green and other open spaces; parks and play areas; playing fields; footpaths; public lighting; public seating; allotments; war memorials.
- Ancillary support to local health and education initiatives including an element of support to local religious groups.
- Developing supplementary planning guidance to support the local development plan...more Community Council involvement in the LDP and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) as well as being party to section 106 agreements
- Encouraging Youth Councils, community education including developing classes and support and being more involved with secondary schools/ supporting food banks
- Community grants: providing grants to local organisations including encouraging and developing grass routes sports and recreation
- Social isolation: greater work with Social Care as identified by the work of Solva CC. Identifying members of the community at risk and having clear framework to work with Unitary Authority for resolution.
- Local civic events – Remembrance Sunday parades; Christmas lights.
- Support tourism and local heritage
- One stop shop and sign posting services to principal authority services including cashier facilities for accepting local payments for council tax and other fees.
- Arms length companies to produce income.

our local council sector in Wales is well placed to work up new ways of working and share improvement and developments to ensure sustainable local services for the

future. Councils in Wales are not starting from scratch; they can build on a lot of good work that has been going on over the last five years. But the pressures they face are real and growing. Local community councils could provide the most solid bottom-up framework for community governance because they can be independently grounded through democratic legitimacy and statute.

Community and town councils in Wales have a number of basic responsibilities in making the lives of local communities more comfortable. Essentially these powers fall within three main categories:

- representing the whole electorate within the community or town;
- delivering services to meet local needs;
- and striving to improve quality of life in the community or town

One Voice Wales agrees with the Young Foundation who argue that for the sake of innovation, confidence and clarity, make it clear that community and town councils have a principal purpose, for example, “to improve local liveability” (i.e. community safety, environment, activities and infrastructure et as set out in Table 2 above).

Here’s some thought on the potential future roles and responsibilities for community councils which has resonance with the feedback form our member councils to the Review questions and provides a direction of travel for the potential future purpose of the sector:

- **Being asset based leaders** - Identifying, utilising and optimising assets. Local councils can lead the development of asset strategies for their communities to ensure local resources are used to best effect.
- **Achieving fairness for everyone** – addressing the challenges of poverty. With increasing fuel prices local councils could co-ordinate schemes for such as oil purchasing consortiums.
- **Empowering local governance** – development of youth councils. By engaging young people and supporting their involvement in democracy local councils can enable new ideas and initiatives to meet the future needs of their communities.
- **Increasing resources for community benefit** – supporting the development of community renewables. One Voice Wales and Aberystwyth University research on this agenda identifies a ‘facilitator’ role for local councils in communities taking forward community renewable initiatives. This may include funding feasibility studies on energy options creating new local income streams for re-investment.
- **Enjoying locally relevant services** – services designed based on local needs using robust community engagement methods. Increasingly local councils are going to need to demonstrate effective use of precept to their communities – community plans or ‘place plans’ such as those developed by Borth Community Council will enhance local accountability and engagement.
- **Enriching social capital and well-being** – working with social entrepreneurs and social enterprises to jointly deliver services for communities, for example, youth drop-in centres.

- **Valuing local distinctiveness** – initiatives supporting local heritage and tourism. Kidwelly Town Council has designed a range of leaflets attracting visitors to local historic monuments.
- **Developing reliable infrastructure** – creating ‘One Stop Shop’ hubs such as the one being developed by the Penllyn Partnership by Bala Town Council and neighbouring community councils.
- **Enhancing environmental capacity** – embracing bio-diversity initiatives – Llandough Community Council has its own strategy - such as creating new allotments for community growing or community orchards that act not only as a food source but educational resource to local primary schools.
- **Supporting a dynamic local economy** – working with local businesses to support employment initiatives’ including apprenticeships and mentoring schemes

These thematic areas align with the work of the Carnegie Trust, who, over the last six years who have identified key areas of activity to improve local resilience within communities and details of which are set out in their recent publication ‘Supporting Local Places and Local People: Opportunities and Challenges for Welsh Towns’ (Rebekah Menzies 2017). Given Welsh Governments recent support for the Understanding Welsh Places programme we have made the assumption that the above document will have been presented as evidence to the Review Panel members however if not would direct them to this publication.

The drivers, synergies and justification for these thematic roles are set out below:

- The Welsh Government’s Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act – will force a re-think in public service delivery. In future, more collaboration and more innovation in the way services are delivered (as above for example)
- Financial Pressure – cuts force innovation. The Wales Wellbeing Bond and the Community Interest Fund in general provide an opportunity for co-production in designing and delivering services. New partnerships could emerge between Community and Town Councils, voluntary sector and unitary authorities
- Charters with unitary authorities (including a Local Councils/ County Councillor Member’s “Protocol” in Carmarthenshire). In best cases, these have resulted in a much healthier relationship between the two tiers – more respect and coherent partnership.
- A proportion of Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL) collected by principal authorities in Wales with up to 15% being devolved to local Councils. (One Voice Wales has published a guide for Councils in relation to the levy)

Although ‘Place Plans’ were not included in the Planning (Wales) Act there is still much interest in their development within the local council sector. Currently Planning Aid Wales are developing a toolkit on the delivery of Place Plans and One Voice Wales considers it critical that community and town councils are given a central role in their delivery so as to enable the joining up of democratic accountability with local service

planning and delivery. Additionally, in considering responsibilities going forward, we would express our concern about the introduction, through the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation, that the identification and prioritization of service needs and standards will move further away from the level of communities as identified in current and future structural groupings. The current information on Public Service Boards appears to reflect an expectation of a “macro” overview of requirements and priorities as the basis for service planning. This clearly needs addressing especially if there are fewer Unitary Authorities in the future.

However, any consideration of future responsibilities must be reflective of assurances as to financial and budgetary viability and to the availability of sufficient resources, including staff, to discharge services and activities effectively. There are opportunities to develop new forms of community and town council organization, for example, joint delivery partnerships that could enable resources to be better utilized going forward. One Voice Wales members consider the rationalization of councils via mergers would not be a step in the right direction rather that the sovereignty of existing councils be maintained. The unintended consequences of such a move towards mergers would be the reduction in the numbers of community and town councillor’s and thereby creating a net reduction in numbers of those providing resource to civic society in Wales...not to mention the increased democratic deficit of community and town councilors taking responsibility for ever larger electorates quite possibly beyond existing community boundaries.

The feedback received from member councils is that roles and responsibilities will vary from council area to area however this will be as a consequence of locally derived needs. Whilst the range of services may vary what is clear is that the process of determination, that is, the engagement with the community should be consistent and transparent across all community and town council areas. In reality the range of activities currently will be driven by the drive, motivations and priorities of individual councils – further work will be required to determine what local residents can expect as a minimum from their local community or town council.

The current reality is that many community based services will only be able to continue if Community and Town Councils are supported and encouraged to play a more active role in their local design and delivery. As a consequence one area that will need further consideration is that of concurrent functions between Unitary Authorities and community and town councils. One Voice Wales considers that much could be learnt from Cornwall County Council’s ‘A Framework for Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups to have an Increased Role in Service Delivery’ model document.

This framework takes into account, “concurrent functions” which are functions that both Cornwall Council and Town and Parish Councils have the legal power to deliver. In implementing this framework the shared aims are to:

- Continue to develop a ‘holistic’ long-term place based approach (as opposed to a short-term single service based approach) to local service delivery;

- maintain community access to services that might otherwise be at risk, particularly “concurrent functions”;
- increase satisfaction with services;
- provide greater local influence over services;
- where possible, maintain and enhance standards;
- enhance the role of local councils in their communities;
- generate greater community pride in local areas;
- promote engagement of local communities in local government; and
- achieve ‘value for money’.

There are a number of options as to how Town and Parish Councils and local Community Groups can be more involved which could be replicated within Wales as set out below:

***Option 1: Influencing and monitoring local service delivery:***

Towns and Parish Councils and local Community Groups may wish to influence, request changes to existing contracts held by Cornwall Council or input into requirements when new contracts are retendered. They can play a role in monitoring existing service delivery in their area.

***Option 2: Joint delivery / service enhancement:***

Town and Parish Councils and Community Groups may choose to enhance an existing service provided by Cornwall Council by funding work that exceeds the base level provided. They may also deliver additional services not provided by Cornwall Council. This could be through a separate contract or by extending an existing one.

***Option 3: Agency Agreements, Management Agreements, Licenses and Sponsorship***

Cornwall Council currently offers agency Agreements to Town and Parish Councils for 3 services. The agreement sets out basic standards and conditions (e.g. Health and Safety) and includes a lump sum based on the minimum level of service Cornwall Council would undertake. The Town and Parish Council may then choose to enhance this service locally.

***Option 4: Delegation of service delivery***

A Town and Parish council or local Community Group may wish to take on full responsibility for the delivery of a local service on behalf of Cornwall Council. Many of these services are non-statutory services. However some of the services are statutory duties of Cornwall Council.

***Option 5: Transfer of a service***

If Cornwall Council proposes to reduce or no longer provide a service, Town and Parish councils and local Community Groups will be consulted and offered the opportunity to take on delivery themselves. In exploring the available options the transfer of any related assets may be part of the discussions.

### ***Option 6: Exclusions***

Some services are not currently being considered for transfer. These are listed below and the reasons for each are briefly detailed however, in many of the examples used statute will prevent the transfer of the service. Despite this Town and Parish Councils may be able to influence and monitor the delivery of these services as outlined previously.

With regard to the above One Voice Wales members consider the concept of “competent authorities” to be relevant as regards any formal devolution of functions as set out above. There could be grounds for a straightforward assessment process in relation to any proposed devolved function to provide assurance that individual community and town councils have the necessary capability and capacity to discharge such matters effectively.

We have also seen greater interest in the community and town council sector from other national organizations, in particular Age Concern, who following a RoundTable event on Loneliness, thinks our sector could:

- Support older people and community groups to develop and deliver local solutions that counteract loneliness.
- Consider innovative ways to support community groups by encouraging the use of council facilities
- Work with communities across generations to foster informal structures that enable people to participate in society on their own terms.

Feedback from member councils resonate with the above as exemplified by the work of Solva Community Council on domiciliary care – again a role and responsibility that could be replicated by other community and town councils across Wales.

As a consequence of the introduction of a National Awards scheme by One Voice Wales the sector is better able to learn from itself and raise the improvement bar based on the examples set by other councils and implement new services. For example in 2017 the following councils were winners and provided case studies on the following:

Best Annual Report – Cwmbran Community Council

Best Environmental Project – Three Crosses Community Council

Best website – Higher Kinnerton

- Best Community Engagement – Borth Community Council (Community Emergency Planning)
- Best Tourism Initiative – Pembrey and Burry Port Town Council (Town in Bloom winners)
- Best Sustainability Initiative – Chepstow Town Council (Fairtrade)
- Best Youth Initiative – Pontardawe Town Council (Youth Councillors/Go Valley website)
- Best Local Service – Solva Community Council (domiciliary care services)
- Heritage project – Llangollen Town Council (Iron Bridge regeneration)

To re-iterate - having clarity of purpose will enable local people to engage more effectively and contribute to the functions of community and town councils in Wales...and having a flexible approach is largely right as the offering will vary from place to place. But for it to succeed as a strategy for collective empowerment for community and town councils and an offer to citizens, we need to clarify the nature of the opportunities being opened up locally - which ultimately community and town councils may not find out about until Unitary Authorities are reformed and their roles and responsibilities identified and resolved.

## **b) HOW SHOULD THEY OPERATE?**

Table 3 below sets out some of the thinking currently within the community and town council sector. However, what was clear from both the consultation events and the on-line survey feedback was that this was not an easy question to answer and had member councils frequently stating this will depend on x or y. With the unknown of Unitary Authority reform community and town councils responses were based on the here and now – consequently this question will need to be revisited should there be any Unitary Authority developments in the near future.

Furthermore without a defined purpose or roles currently there appears to have been a tendency to revert to the status quo when responding to the questions posed.

<p><b>Table 3: One Voice Wales member views on ‘How Community and Town Councils should operate’</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They should exist and operate right across all the communities of Wales/ To be universal to serve all communities in Wales</li> <li>- Clear template on services that are provided by Community Councils – a clearly defined role.</li> <li>- Be able to apply for grant funding from Welsh Government/ With some form of direct funding such as business rate</li> <li>- Professional bodies with a clear statement of purpose led by remunerated members and advised by professionally qualified Clerks possessing sector relevant qualifications.</li> <li>- Accountable / Publish Annual Report / Publish Plan Medium Term governance accountability</li> </ul>
--

- Shared resources and workforce across Community and Town Councils and between layers of local government/ Possessing the necessary powers to work across boundaries to support other community and town councils either in partnership or in a client and contractor role/ Joint delivery of services by Community and Town Councils where this could prove of benefit/ Closer co-operation with other Town and Community Councils
- Power to trade and carry out commercial activities across community areas.
- Widen the extent of powers to permit collaboration with other public sector bodies as well as the third sector including the power to set up arms-length bodies including companies and trusts/ Interact with voluntary bodies/organisations
- Promote economies of scale by local councils sharing key posts with other community areas e.g. Clerks, RFOs, Community Development Officers and Cemetery Managers being shared amongst grouped councils/ Groups of councils co-operating in identified areas e.g. old rural district
- Community Councils to network to share services and expertise/ Councils work together but stay independent
- A planning council not a responding council
- Regularisation and standardisation of community and town council procedures, Standing Orders and Constitutions
- More dialogue and working together with County Councils – targeting workable goals for the community / The ability to second key personnel from the principal authorities to promote capacity and capability and to expand local government knowledge, expertise and specialist skills.
- One Voice Wales should be properly funded by the Welsh Government.
- Training should be mandatory and easily accessible so councillors/Clerks know what they're doing
- Formally trained staff and councillors with good working relationships between councillors and staff – respect both ways. Strategic staff structure with appropriate skill set to deliver.
- Greater participation in a council by community groups and members of the public
- Embrace technology in order to engage the local population, which should lead to the public taking a greater interest in local politics
- Option for a local council to determine its own pathway. The pathway will determine the suite of powers available with wider powers for ambitious councils and a reduction in powers for councils merely wanting to act as a local voice. The pathway could also determine the level of audit, inspection and regulation requirements. For example, councils with very low ambition could revert to a limited and lighter touch audit regime.
- Councils need the freedom to adopt systems that work best for them e.g. contracting out/employing own staff and should be encouraged to seek maximum engagement with their communities in order to achieve a mandate for additional services and responsibilities that they take on
- Accountable and transparent formal decision making arrangements with a regular cycle of council and committee meetings for ambitious councils including clear lines of reporting, sound and sustainable financial arrangements and a scheme of delegation to officers.

We need to be clear about the recommendations we put forward as a sector about how to strengthen community and town councils to make them more flexible and appropriate for the current challenges of community governance.

A number of developments would assist community and town councils to operate more effectively and efficiently and consistently for their communities as set out below:

- Development of Framework for Asset and Service Devolution between Unitary Authorities (or public services) and Community and Town Councils as has already been done in Cornwall CC
- Development of a Community Planning Model for Wales with a supporting toolkit – many examples of how to do community planning but not a consistent approach and one that everyone can get behind
- Introduction of an Innovation Grant for Local Councils –Establish a framework of support and incentives for encouraging further cooperation around community governance, supporting the management of change and developing capabilities and legitimacy at the very local level.
- New Council Start – Up Grant – OVW getting several expressions of interest but currently no funding to support this.
- Time for Towns – use the work of the Carnegie Trust on Turnaround Towns to implement a programme of improvement as well as deploying the Understanding Welsh Places initiative which will enable community and town councils as well as partner agencies to access data relevant to sub Unitary Authority areas/ local geographies. Based on the Understanding Scottish Places programme initiated in 2010 this has had a profound effect on policy at the town and community level and realised multiple benefits for communities and the organisations supporting them.
- Development of a Local Democracy marketing programme specifically targeting future potential community and town councillors
- Framework for Activist Councils – although we are working towards General Power of Competence in Wales there is no reason why we could not have a self evaluation scheme for councils that informs residents of the level of governance in their area...e.g. if you badge yourself as a bronze council you'll have certain governance in place, silver additional and so forth.
- Reconsideration of the Electoral Commission's 2004 proposals for the core funding of electoral services nationally in light of the new local democracy agenda
- Central government could commit to match member subscriptions of One Voice Wales to enable greater support and advice provision to be available to the sector

In terms of stronger local democracy the following developments are suggested to the Panel:

- Strengthen the standards regime governing councillor behaviour by allowing Community and Town Councils to refer alleged breaches to the 'county –wide' Standards Committee for breaches of the code of conduct.
- Support the sector to create an improvement and development strategy, providing a framework for good governance, community engagement and council improvement.
- Work with the sector to encourage more people to become councillors, making it easier for people to stand and serve, promoting contested elections and establishing a national democracy fund.
- Introduce a duty to ensure community and town involvement in public service board scrutiny processes.
- Support the development of models of scrutiny where Community and Town Councils play a part in monitoring other public bodies and their commissioned services.
- Structured communication between localities and County to highlight what is working well to avoid duplication of effort. There should be an avoidance of duplication of resources at Community/Town and County level.
- Formal Clerk networks that share best practice and good governance.
- Structured training and induction for new Councillors that sets the standards and means of communication
- There could be advantages of economies of scale for purchasing purposes, for example, where there is more than one community council within a locality. This might specifically be helpful for play area equipment for example.
- Pooling resources for legal and insurance service provision might also realise savings.
- For some smaller Council's the clerk may be the primary annual expenditure. Perhaps consideration could be given to the clerk role and whether it should cover more than one Council. Or have a hub and spoke approach pooling expertise e.g. for grant applications and sharing best practice.
- Greater recognition should be given to the role of community and town councils with regard to town centre regeneration programmes – there was a noticeable absence of reference to the sector in the Vibrant Places Strategy and feedback from One Voice Wales member councils suggest they have largely been ignored around this agenda. With financial austerity this surely cannot continue.
- With the ending of the Communities First programme by Welsh Government there are opportunities for Community and Town Councils to play a more engaged role and support the anti-poverty agenda being the public service closest to those affected. New powers to address this

agenda may help community and town councils to deliver meaningful anti-poverty measures.

- As highlighted recently by Pembrokeshire County Council, Community and Town Councils could be recipients of second home tax to assist community developments – they could receive upto 75% of this revenue to put towards local causes.
- Finally there could be an operational role for community and town councils in terms of leading local economic development forums as exemplified by recent developments in Cornwall where councils (town councils to date) form part of a local Place Shaping Forum – **Appendix 3** sets out the Terms of Reference. This provides an opportunity for the local public body to link democratic accountability to local delivery in a space that enables partner organisations to contribute to local sustainable services.

### **c) WHAT'S STANDING IN THEIR WAY TO DELIVER FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY?**

Feedback from member councils suggests there are many challenges standing in their way to deliver for local communities. In particular a need to focus on:

- Working together more effectively and across boundaries
- Developing local councils with the flexibility to meet local needs and requirements
- Developing local councils that ensure citizens are an equal partner in determining the services and support they need and receive
- Developing clerks and councillors to ensure they have the right skills to meet the above challenges.
- Better understanding of priorities for their local area / underlying issues not truly understood
- Local councils recognising the need to up precepts to take on additional services from other parts of the public service family or even private sector locally and appoint new staff and allocate appropriate resources
- Concurrent functions and double taxation is an issue and especially if Revenue Support Grant hypothecation formula remains the same.
- Speed and scale of change daunting – management of change and its associated process will be difficult to manage especially when never done before by sector...some will fear change and either ignore or resist it.
- Expectations from many quarters that the community and town council sector will be able to resolve a range of local matters eg Welsh Government Community Resilience Group partner organisations see Community and Town Councils playing a critical role in the future of community resilience but Community and

Town Councils are not even part of the statutory consultees to this agenda. And the Local Resilience Forums have no representation by Community and Town Council's so foundation work required in advance of our sector playing an active part.

- Bottom-up fixing needed – it's a problem currently for Community and Town Councils to get their issues on Unitary Authority agendas or Public Service Board agendas
- Connectivity between Public Service Boards and Community and Town Councils inconsistent – Charters could be a potential solution but will require renewed support from Unitary Authorities.
- Fears of hollowing out a real concern for Unitary Authorities as reported in a recent Institute of Fiscal Studies report in September 2017 – this could hinder discussions on managed transitions of services across Wales
- And on a similar theme a lack of preparedness by community and town councils for asset and service devolution though it is acknowledged that Welsh Government has put in motion actions to address this situation.
- Currently the sector has no representation on the Workforce Partnership Council and we will be working with Welsh Government colleagues in addressing this situation to ensure that in these significant times of change the local councils sector voice is heard when shaping our communities future services.

**Table 4: Overview of issues raised by One Voice Wales member councils as to factors standing in their way to deliver**

- The key restriction is the concern that electors will complain about double taxation if services and assets are transferred from unitary authorities.
- Councillors who see themselves as 'unpaid volunteers' and not elected representatives
- There is a need for statutory clarification about what the sector is expected to deliver and what powers it can exercise. At present most of these authorities' responsibilities are in essence voluntary and this is not a sustainable and modern way of working. The absence of a legal framework makes it very difficult for smaller local councils to have as much impact and effective as they can be, especially in those areas where relationships with other authorities are more challenging.
- Lack of clarity between County and Community council's responsibilities
- The varying size of local councils has implications for the range of their activities, ambition, and the sector's general capacity and capability.
- Fear of taking risks, fear of raising the precept, not wanting extra responsibility.
- Relationships with principal authorities, neighbouring local councils and other stakeholders.
- The legal and financial restrictions associated with the current range of powers.

- Current financial framework – in general there is limited financial capacity; no access to government grants; double taxation issues associated with the devolution of services from principal authorities (including asset transfers); no access to local business rates with all expenditure met via local council tax. Members have a tendency to act in a frugal manner because of these constraints.
- Not all communities in Wales have a local council acting as a local voice.
- Lack of diversity in council membership: this also ties into the inability to attract new members. The time and cost to the individual to get involved in council activities can be a deterrent to full time workers or those with family commitments.
- The drive and determination by some town and community Councillors, and Councils being large enough to operate efficiently
- Lack of purpose, strategic planning and ambition.
- Often Community Councils are deemed irrelevant in the democratic process. Councils should be encouraged to be the representation of their Community and used as such by County Councils and Welsh Government. There seems to be an obstacle between sectors due to the lack of insight into what Community Councils/ Lack of trust from government to allow councils to grow and evolve.
- Restrictions and controls which are imposed by County Council and Government. It is assumed that County Councillors are protective of their responsibilities and reluctant to relinquish them. Poor and ineffective decision making on the part of the Council possibly due to bureaucracy and lack of determination. Funding either partial or fully for new areas of responsibility off loaded by County to Community Councils. Reduced emphasis on minority groups. It is clear from a planning perspective Powys CC take little regard to recommendations from community councils – we are the local voice but it is so often ignored. I am sure community and town councils would put more in if their views were taken more seriously. Most people see us as a talking shop with no real authority Do we need to be bigger with more budget or does this take away the local element – this needs discussion There is often a lack of professionalism at community councils – well intentioned people but not with the skills or training required
- Often Community Councils are ignored as being un-important. Councils should be empowered and seen by County Councils and Welsh Government to be representative of their Community. Lack of understanding of the sector is also a barrier, young people should be taught in schools about how their local Councils operate and what services they provide within their Communities.
- Current culture is resistant to embracing change and it lacks strong leadership.
- Being out of touch with the application and use of modern technology including social media.
- Part-time hours of Clerks and employment terms can be prohibitive – in terms of general working arrangements and them being available to serve the public. This is coupled with a lack of a personnel structure generally across the sector.
- Public confusion over the extent of local council powers and responsibilities and not knowing about the two tier system of local government and who does what.
- Local councils' inability to deal with the majority of local problems reported by the public to them.

- At present, T&CCs are often too small to effect significant change for the better on any meaningful scale. T&CCs are often seen as doing only small-scale things for their communities, or by many people, T&CCs are not seen at all. Public apathy (or lack of knowledge) leads to fewer and fewer people being interested in voting and fewer and fewer people being interested in standing for election to do what is best for their communities. Having to stand for election in itself is also a major barrier to many people, who are passionate about improving their local communities and would be (and are already in many cases) excellent drivers of change and deliverers on the ground, but are put off by the election process, the politicisation and the criticism involved. Our T&CC has only two staff, both part-time. The time available to them, to do anything above the basics of running an organisation effectively, implementing council decisions, advising the council, dealing with meetings and complying with the council's audit requirements is minimal. This lack of resources, the lack of general power to improve local quality of life, the lack of public interest and the election process are possibly the biggest inhibitors standing in the way of T&CCs delivering more for their communities.
- Threat of dissolution.

- Potential undermining of existing democratic structures at the local council level – Education Reform consultation last year recommending ending the right for community councils to have a community governor on primary schools. One Voice Wales members would argue this need to be strengthened rather than ties cut.
- There is a lack of capacity in patches across Wales: some councillors lack clarity on their role and the confidence to do anything practical.
- Action cannot be local in isolation – it has to integrate into the work underway to co-ordinate sustainability and sustainable economic development at a regional scale. The challenge remains the same - to integrate the local with the regional and national. Aligning the work of local councils with the Local Well being Plans and Local Development Plans has been challenging to date though not insurmountable in future with better lines of communication between the sector and other public bodies.
- Community and Town Councils are not fully represented across Wales on the Public Service Boards as yet or the Local Development Plan structure – they are part of the statutory consultees to these plans but often feel side-lined. However in some cases they are not helping themselves and do not make vigorous representation when given the opportunity. Local village plans or 'Place Plans' are not part of the LDP process although their potential use is supported by the Local Government Act 2000. No formal, legislative powers for local/village plans but it could be argued that they should be adopted as supplementary planning policy guidance documents.
- Councillors as individuals receive limited remuneration and as a consequence have limited capacity to engage with major strategic issues. Clerks are often under resourced and work longer hours than they get paid for.

Additionally the Review of Community and Town Council Funding in the autumn of 2015 identified there was a consensus that the nature of the sector – a high number of very small councils – means that communicating with the sector and effecting change in it is not a straightforward matter. Features of the sector which were highlighted in discussions included:

- Councils do not cover the whole of Wales
- A high number of small councils;
- Councillors see themselves as volunteers, and the fact that they are unpaid means their goodwill needs to be maintained;
- In many places there can be difficulties in recruiting councillors and many are co-opted after the elections have been held.
- Many councils rely on a part-time Clerk, and have limited ICT and other facilities;
- Significant changes in the role of councils, and the demands placed on them, could see a high turnover of clerks and councillors. One Voice Wales has been giving increasing support to community and town councils on employment matters and the recruitment of clerks.
- Councillors regard the link to their local community as absolutely vital and believe that the creation of larger councils covering a wider geographical area will break that link and lead to greater difficulties in recruiting councillors. The potential for ‘clustering’ of councils or development of potential joint delivery bodies will need to be dealt with sensitively.
- Councils were highly concerned about increases to their precept, and a careful approach to use of their budgets was a factor in their attitude to OVV membership fees.
- Cuts to services and the delegation of local authority services was the most pressing issue facing councils at the present time and generated heated discussion, particularly on the role of local authorities in enabling councils to take sound decisions on the viability of transferring services.
- For larger councils, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act presents new challenges in terms of how they engage with their electorates and collaborate with Public Service Board plans.

Community and town councils wish to play an active role in supporting the ‘reform of local government’ agenda and One Voice Wales member councils have recognised a number of significant gaps in capacity and knowledge within the sector. The key gaps that have been identified are as follows:

**Sustainability** – in the light of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act there is a need to encourage all councils to contribute to the wider strategic agenda of sustainability irrespective of whether they fall under the requirements of the Act.

**Financial Governance and Accountability** –The Auditor General for Wales has again in 2017 published concerns about failings in the systems of governance and accountability in a large number of councils throughout Wales. The audit regime for

councils has been strengthened since April 2015 and revised guidance on budgeting and internal audit has been circulated to all councils. It is important that councils become fully aware of their responsibilities and obligations. It is clear however that One Voice Wales needs an additional training module that goes into more depth about what is required of Councils. One Voice Wales will be actively encouraging councils to take up further training on financial governance which is covered in the Advanced Finance training module.

**Working with the Third Sector** – Many Council's have a long history of working in partnership with the third sector but this is not widespread throughout Wales. The growing incidence of devolution of services and community asset transfers will require the local council and third sector to join forces and create effective partnerships to ensure that use of social capital is maximised for the benefit of the people of Wales. Training is much needed in this area and it may well be desirable to open up such a training module for both Councillors and third sector representatives. We will aim to build on this following the recent Partnership Council for Wales (February 2018) where an action point was for One Voice Wales and the WCVA to consider how they may collaborate more effectively in future.

**Managing and Supporting Local Events** – A major element of the work of the majority of councils in Wales is the organisation of local events such as fetes, summer festivals, carnivals and a wide range of Christmas events. It is vitally important that such events are well managed and comply with statutory requirements such as health and safety etc. Ensuring local council compliance is becoming more of an issue as more work is undertaken by councils – especially when the service hasn't been undertaken by the sector previously.

**Appointing Youth Representatives and forming Youth Councils** – The importance of creating a greater diversity in Council composition is paramount if the needs of all sectors of the community are to be taken into account. There is, to date, only limited evidence of developments in appointing youth representatives and forming youth councils and this may well be due to the previous lack of guidance and information available to Councillors. During 2016 One Voice Wales through the support of Welsh Government funding drafted a new guidance document on Youth Councils for the local council sector – One Voice Wales will continue to market and encourage councils to develop Youth Council arrangements in their areas however there are at the present time no specialist resources available within the sector to support councils on this endeavour.

**Community Renewables** – This is an area of significant importance as Wales strives to conserve its resources, manage climate change and maximise the use of its natural resources. Councils need more knowledge and active encouragement to take on board

the critical challenges that need to be addressed. Whilst there are organisations that can provide support to individual councils there is no central resource available within the sector to enable councils to engage with this agenda fully.

**Working with Public Service Boards** - A major step in support of full partnership working would be to ensure that the community and town council sector gets a seat on every Public Services Board (PSB's) in Wales. With the implications of the Future Generations Act on larger community councils (income over £200k) there will be a need for closer working relations between the community and town council sector and current Public Service Board member organisations - this would mean having a place on the Public Service Board within each Local Authority geography and able to play a full role in the decision making that impacts on the communities that locally elected councillors are accountable too.

**Funding for Community and Town Council Sector** - One Voice Wales recognises that this will require new skills and capacity within the local councils sector. Preparation work needed to deliver a major change in the community and town council sector would be substantial and Welsh Government funding would be essential to deal with the costs involved. One Voice Wales' members consider it necessary for the Welsh Government to allocate a block grant to increase the number of councils in Wales to ensure 100% coverage. A block grant is also needed to fund those services that are devolved as well as the transfer of community assets processes across Wales. Specifically in terms of fairer funding for community and town councils One Voice Wales would bring to the Panel's attention for the need to:

- Ensure the Revenue Support Grant and the range of specific grant funding from the Government is passed on to Community and Town councils by Unitary Authorities where appropriate.
- Reform the business rate system to provide a share for Community and Town Councils to help them support local economic development, regeneration and growth.
- Serious consideration should now be given for Community and Town Councils to receive funding directly from the Welsh Government. For example, the introduction of a Community and Town Council Improvement Grant programme would encourage innovation and may provide the necessary resource to pump prime the transition of assets or services between the two tiers, something which is absent at the present time.
- Ensure communities benefit from development through stronger measures to provide community and town councils with a greater share of Community Infrastructure Levy than the current 15% 'meaningful amount'.
- Enable Work with One Voice Wales to support the organisation playing a greater role in accessing European funding for the benefit of Community and Town Councils and the communities they serve.

- Whilst perhaps a minor matter in the overall considerations of the Panel, we have considered the existing arrangements whereby monies arising from local planning gain, such as Section 106 monies or Community Infrastructure Levies (we understand) go directly to the principal authority. We take the view that if a development arises within an area which provides some form of development premium, that such funding should go straight to the town or community council for investment directly within the community where the development is based. This should not - as is currently suggested to us – be reliant on the Community or Town Council having a Place Plan as justification for passing the monies for direct use in the community.

One Voice Wales believes that the level of engagement with the public and the degree of quality services delivered have both improved significantly over the past decade or so. Whilst there is a long way yet to go, the sector is well poised to take on the mantle of responsibility envisaged in relation to what the Welsh Government seeks to deliver and what the public deserves. The wide variation across the sector exists largely due to historical reasons, but the foundations are already in place for rapid and meaningful improvement, where relevant. Like all other public sector bodies, there are some severe challenges ahead, but the dedication of local representatives will sustain the necessary efforts required at this time.

**Awareness of the work of Community and Town Councils** - In 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned a survey of the public's perceptions of Community Councils. The report highlights that there is generally a high level of awareness of Community Councils, they are valued by communities and effective engagement increases satisfaction. However, there is a lack of awareness of what they do and some confusion with Local Authorities' functions. There is considerable confusion over the amount of precept raised by Community Councils.

The lack of awareness on the part of the public in Wales as to what is done by the various sectors, for example, the split in functionality between unitary and community/town councils. Many people fail to distinguish, for example, between the roles of local government and those of health boards, whilst many more do not understand the distinction between local and central government responsibilities over highway construction and maintenance. The answer, therefore, is for more education and engagement with the local public, something that community and town councils are well placed to help with.

To overcome the barriers and challenges a number of issues need to be addressed. Again these issues were re-affirmed as still existing in the eight Independent Panel Review consultation events held by One Voice Wales mentioned above:

- A clear demarcation and public statement on what the precept pays for: what does the unitary authority do and what does the community/town council do. Precept linked to specific services and outcomes – it becomes obvious what the local electors money is spent on and whether it has been spent well.
- Some Charters with unitary authorities are a bit light touch. The charters need to be given more weight and linked to a clear annual action plan. The Cabinet Secretary has been made aware of the concerns of the Community and Town Council sector during 2017-18.
- Councillors need better instruction on their roles and some kind of intervention to give them more confidence in carrying out these roles – One Voice Wales has worked with Welsh Government in 2017 to develop a positive narrative for the local councils sector in advance of the 2017 elections in the form of a Local Elections Guidance document for prospective candidates. One Voice Wales supported the marketing of the 2017 elections encouraging local people to stand for election as a community or town councillor. Further work in advance of the next elections will be required to encourage new councillor entrants.
- Clerks need to be better equipped. Increasing the professional capacity and status of the clerk role would have enormous benefits. Clerks are the corner stone of an effective council. This inevitably means greater financial support from the Welsh Government. Councils often perform best when they have access to easy to understand guidance about practical action that supports strategic agendas – for example the development guidance in 2016-17 on Youth Councils. In 2018-19 One Voice Wales will endeavour to provide additional guidance and support documents to the community and town council sector in Wales albeit external financial support may be required to enable this to happen.
- Local scale plans have to be based on wide, democratic engagement. They have to address immediate and locally relevant issues if they are to generate commitment and support. Whilst in principle they support wider and larger strategic aims such as resilience and sustainability, they have to be presented in an accessible and locally relevant context. With the requirement to produce Annual Reports for those councils who fall under the statutory requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act One Voice Wales will be actively engaged in providing support for the Councils concerned.
- One Voice Wales needs more resource either in staff or the financial capacity to procure expertise that can be directed to increasing the capacity and confidence of councils to fulfil the roles described above. The review of Community and Town Councils Funding Arrangements in 2015 recognised that the organisation had a low resource base and was struggling to cope with the increasing demands being placed on it. It has become apparent in 2017-18 that the demands upon One Voice Wales are increasing especially as membership has increased to over 80% of all local councils in Wales.

There are however several impending opportunities for overcoming the barriers and meeting the needs:-

- The implementation of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act by community and town councils will need to be carefully monitored to determine its impact - it presents significant challenges to the sector in terms of developing the capacity and skills needed to comply with the SD Duty requirements.
- Together with the local councils Manifesto launched in October 2015, the current Community and Town Council Review 2017-8 by Welsh Government represents an opportunity for the Community and Town Council sector to present a vision for the future role of local councils in Wales.
- The Local Wellbeing Plans should in theory provide a structure into which Community and Town Council planning and strategy can integrate and thus complement and be supported by county and emerging regional approaches. To date there has been a very mixed level of engagement by Public Service Boards and further work will be needed to ensure greater consistency of engagement with the sector across Wales.
- The potential development of community hubs and third sector-Community and Town Council partnerships would ensure that responsibility and resources are shared. Consortia of councils, voluntary groups and social businesses present a stronger more representative structure for raising funds and taking action. In this model, Community and Town Councils can provide seed funding from reserves or precept and form the basis of applications for charitable, lottery or loan funding.
- Organisations with a specific remit such as The Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens (FCFCG), Community Energy Wales and Planning Aid Wales are able to provide practical guidance and financial support to councils and their local partners.

The work begun in 2015-16 by Welsh Government with partners including One Voice Wales, WLGA, TUC Wales, Wales Co-operative Centre and WCVA on **Alternative Delivery Models** (albeit this has been delayed during 2017-18) provides an opportunity to consider new working relationships and organisational partnerships across Wales between local councils and stakeholder organisations. For example, Community Hubs would give councillors more confidence – in this model the council works in partnership with voluntary groups and residents and gets clarity on what the people want for their community and what they expect from their council. The forum can act as a means for clarifying misunderstandings and establishing what the precept can/should be spent on and whether it should be raised to meet certain objectives.

One Voice Wales very much welcomed the Cabinet Secretary's announcements at the National Conference in October 2016 to take forward an agenda of action to help build resilience and renewal in community and town councils:

1. Produce a toolkit to support community councils in working through what is required in taking on new services and assets, building on experiences of the key ingredients. Work has begun on this in 2017-18 and it is anticipated this work will be completed in 2018-19.

2. Press ahead with legislating for the **General Power of Competence**, shaped by the suggestions made in response to the previous Government's consultation, for innovative ambitious councils looking for more freedom to serve their communities.
3. Re-energise ties between community councils and local authorities and provide a platform to share the good examples across Wales, bringing the new cadre of county and community councillors
4. Facilitate the creation of **clusters** of smaller community councils, making some modest funding available to support the initial setting up of joint arrangements. The findings of the 2017-18 pilot program will assist in the future direction of such arrangements.
5. Legislate to make it an obligation on councils to **consider and plan for their training needs** and review it regularly.
6. Ensure citizens are kept informed and have the right to **make representations** on any business conducted at a council meeting. Learn from where this is done well and look for a legislative opportunity to strengthen current provisions.
7. Support community councils to **raise awareness and encourage participation** in community council elections and to increase diversity

However, in order to realise the opportunities the current environment offers One Voice Wales member councils consider that there are several further activities that need to be progressed as set out below:

- Additional financial support for One Voice Wales and /or for groups to enable the creation of new Councils in those communities currently without a local council
- Introduction of guidance on grouped councils, partnerships and federation arrangements isn't currently in place however it is anticipated that useful learning will be derived from the Cluster Pilots programme in 2017-18 which can be shared with local councils upon completion of the programme.
- Guidance developed for TUPE and delegated functions for community and town councils
- Introduction of an accreditation scheme – One Voice Wales will be presenting papers to the National Training and Advisory group in 2018-19 to look at how this may be taken forward within the community and town council sector.
- One Voice Wales has begun work on the Alternative Models of Delivery with Welsh Government and this provides the vehicle to explore the development of guidance on these topics.
- The creation of a range of specialist posts in One Voice Wales to support local councils eg with the current 'devolution of services' agenda and transfer of assets and implementing the Welsh Language Champions initiative across all community and town councils

- The development of clear guidance on the funding arrangements for delegated or devolved services/assets
- Commissioning the regular surveys of Community and Town Councils to better understand their needs and activities and the outcomes achieved for communities. Working with Welsh Government a comprehensive survey was undertaken on the asset and devolution of services in 2017-18 which will help to inform future support and developments on this topic.
- Commission research to examine possible mechanisms for directly funding Community and Town Councils to include:
  - Reviewing current practices in the funding of delegated functions
  - Procedures for the avoidance of double taxation
  - Implementation of directly funded grant schemes
  - Address the issue of concurrent functions and improve local accountability and transparency
- Development of a programme for improvement based on the availability of community based grant scheme for community and town councils to encourage innovation and efficiencies in service provision at the very local level

**d) HOW DO COUNCILS ENSURE THEY BEST REPRESENT THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY?**

Community and Town Councils can and do play a vital role in creating and sustaining a strong sense of community. One Voice Wales believes that community and town councils, as the first tier of government in Wales, are well-placed to ensure the sustainability of community development actions supported by other sectors. One Voice Wales is also mindful of the importance of the Welsh Government’s vision for community involvement in developing public services in Wales. Through promoting local developments, working alongside partners based in or supporting the community, the increased interaction between individuals in the community can engender a positive outlook and feeling of well-being. As the individual communities of Wales develop in this way they will make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of Wales.

Table 5 below and overleaf provides much detail on the views expressed by One Voice Wales member councils on how they can ensure they best represent their local community.

<p><b>Table 5: One Voice Wales member council views on how councils ensure they best represent their local community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having clear plans of action based on engagement of community needs that are communicated effectively to the electorate and report on progress undertaken at least annually to local residents to enable full accountability and transparency of elected</li> </ul>
---

members

- Good liaison between Community and Town Councillor's and County Councillors, Assembly TC's and local Member of Parliament / European Parliament
- Keep the public informed of how the precept is spent and making optimum use of the precept – partnership working with local authority and outside bodies
- Identify specific very local issues which County Council may have overlooked
- By positioning themselves at the heart of the community and being able to hold other public bodies to account through effective scrutiny/ Minor authority governors on local school governing bodies/ Establish strong links with local County Councillor who should provide annual report to Community and Town Council/ Representation on outside local bodies
- By having a full complement of councillors and adhering to the "rules"/Contested elections with a diverse mix of councillors
- Working with minorities, schools, clubs and societies youth clubs and community safety links/ Working with other local organisations to add support and expertise and increasing success/ Facilitate meetings between providers and groups in community/ Liaise with neighbouring councils
- Regular newsletters, up to date website, drop ins. The most important thing is to listen to what residents say, want and feel/ Ensuring that they engage with their local community by asking questions, surveys, community events/ Regular interactive communication via councillor surgeries, annual reports, social media and the council website; calling public meetings over locally important issues, conducting a community needs assessment and other community development initiatives; conducting public consultation on council programmes, developing good communication links and networks with other public sector bodies, the third sector and community associations and organisations/ Use local papers to showcase the work
- Ensure Clerks and Councillors have skills for future demands/ Possessing a trained and dedicated team of members and staff with appropriate budget provision to sustain the required skill set.
- Look to promote the principles of sustainable development and the five key ways of working as identified in The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This should be universal for all local councils.
- Mandate the responsibility for community services to local councils or give them the powers to take on greater responsibility/ Never assume anything; research, check and verify – move then with confidence
- Encourage younger people to come forward – provide a different perspective/Involving the community in local projects, consulting the community on major decisions via a Town Plan. A website that is up to date and greater openness and accountability. We always encourage our community to attend council meetings and welcome those who do/By being proactive and responsive to local issues of concern/ More digestible way of public knowing what's going on rather than just publishing minutes on website
- Demonstrating democratic accountability by holding a regular cycle of meetings and being transparent and accountable with council business arrangements.
- Ensure there is scope for the use of the Welsh language in meetings to ensure everyone feels engaged and involved/ Safeguarding and promoting the use of the Welsh language.
- Maintaining a meaningful working budget with identifiable spending programmes and a

capital budget which is community driven.

- Preparing a place plan through consultation with local electors/ To have an active participation in local decision making arrangements including supporting the work programme of Public Services Boards at a local level; timely consultation responses to local planning issues and being able to develop supplementary planning guidance to support the local development plan; greater interaction with the fire, health and police services.
- Rewarding community innovation with grants/ Insist on publicity from groups for Community Council grants and funding for projects

Clearly the thrust of how councils feel they can ensure they best represent their local communities is through effective two way communication channels between them and their local electorates: this could be via public meetings, surgeries, regular newsletters, use of social media, provision of Annual Reports as well as listening to, encouraging and involving local electors in planning projects as well as ensuring they are provided feedback on outcomes and any benefits accrued; and finally by ensuring the council is well networked and represented on relevant outside bodies serving local electors interests. Ensuring local electors feel connected to local councils is the challenge for community and town councils and as already mentioned earlier in the response and acknowledged by One Voice Wales members better use of social media will be key to delivering this agenda moving forward given the levels of public usage and focus on this will be paramount for community and town councils.

There is however concern within the community and town council sector that enlargement of the present community and town council areas could dilute the strong sense of community feeling. Feedback suggests that the best representation will be achieved as locally focussed organisations drawing membership from their own communities. Member councils consider that there is a wide range of skills available in each community and the Community and Town Councils can and should draw from this pool. To enable this community and town councils should work with the community to encourage interest in local government and new interest from people to stand in local elections, thereby improving the democratic process. There is a recognition that more needs to be done to promote and educate the community on what the community and town councils do and who we are moving forward.

The UK government's austerity agenda and the impact on public finances in Wales means that unitary authorities are in the position of having to consider cutting services or transferring them to other bodies. The strong message from the focus group meetings held with councils in the course of the recent consultation in relation to the Community and Town Council Review Panel review was that the delegation of services was the most pressing and most important issue facing councils at the present time. Having a clear framework for service and asset devolution between community and town councils and County Councils will help local councils to ensure they best represent local residents when considering the transfer of public assets or services. One Voice

Wales is already involved in policy discussions on asset transfer and delegation of services but there is still considerable work required in order for community and town councils to be in a position to take on services.

One Voice Wales ongoing work for the community and town council sector will need to include the following priorities to ensure community and town councils have the right resources available to them to ensure they best represent their local communities. This includes:

- In collaboration with WLGA, WCVA, National Assets group, local authorities and other partners, supporting councils in responding to the delegation of services agenda;
- In collaboration with the Future Generation Commissioner for Wales office and organisations such as Cynnal Cymru, supporting larger councils with the requirements of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act;
- Developing a policy position on the principles which should underpin the forthcoming LDBCW reviews of council areas;
- In collaboration with the Auditor General for Wales, identifying councils which are likely to need targeted support to enable them to comply with audit requirements;
- In collaboration with the SLCC developing an appropriate training / assessment programme for Clerks;
- In collaboration with relevant experts e.g. Participation Cymru; e.g. WCVA e.g. Electoral Commission Wales develop an action plan for increasing local interest in future community and town council elections;
- Continue to provide training, advice and support to councils to enable them to conduct business effectively. In collaboration with Planning Aid Wales continue to improve councils' ability to engage effectively with the planning process and the development of Place Plans as appropriate.

However it must be acknowledged by the Panel that the increasing breadth of support required by community and town councils is placing significant pressure on One Voice Wales to provide broader and deeper advice on technical matters relating to the growing areas of responsibilities of community and town councils.

One Voice Wales supports the overall proposed direction of travel – “we want all our Councils to be activist councils; engaged in delivering modern, accessible, high quality public services with their communities”. One Voice Wales and its member councils are committed to retain public services where possible although the sector recognises it needs additional capacity and tools to deal with the challenges ahead and that funding support was needed to enable local councils to deal with the possibilities of transfer of services and assets in the coming months and years.

**Final comments:**

One Voice Wales wish to express it's thanks to the Panel for the opportunity to offer views and opinions for consideration as part of the independent review.

Should the Panel consider it necessary or of value to further pursue or clarify any of the matters we have presented within this response, we would be pleased to assist.

Similarly, we would wish to express our thanks that the invitation has provided us with an opportunity to air and exchange views within the governance of One Voice Wales in preparing and agreeing our response.

**Mr Lyn Cadwallader**  
**Chief Executive, One Voice Wales**

## **Appendix A - List of Consultation Events and Attendees**

### **Caernarfon (Tuesday 28 November 2017 2pm – 4pm)**

Llanystumdwy  
Pwllheli  
Llandwrog  
Caernarfon  
Llangefni  
Bangor  
Penrhyndeudraeth  
Porthmadog  
Dolbenmaen  
Llanfair Mathafarn Eithaf  
Criccieth  
Menai Bridge

### **Chirk (Wednesday 29 November 2017 2pm – 4pm)**

Chirk  
Overton  
Trelawnyd and Gwaenysgor  
Montgomery  
Llantysilio  
Gresford  
Mochdre with Penstrowed  
Llandrillo  
Gwersyllt  
Mold

### **St Clears (Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 6pm – 8pm)**

Llangeler  
Newcastle Emlyn  
Llangennech  
Manordeilo & Salem  
Llangynnwr  
Carmarthen  
Solva  
Narberth  
East Williamston  
Laugharne  
Pembrey & Burry Port  
Aberaeron

Ciliau Aeron  
Llansantffraed  
Merlins Bridge  
Freystrop  
St Clears  
Lamphey & Freshwater  
Penarth  
Llanwenog  
Llanstadwell  
Kilgetty-Begelly CC  
Cynwyl Elfed,  
Llanllawddog  
Llanwinio

**Howey (Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018 2pm-4pm)**

Llanfihangel Rhydithion  
Vale of Grwyney  
New Radnor  
Nantmel  
Rhayader  
Talybont on Usk  
Llandinam  
Llandrindod  
St Harmon  
Newtown & Llanllwchaiarn  
Churchstoke  
Hay  
Trefeglwys  
Knighton  
Llanfrynach  
Abbey Cwmhir  
Disserth & Trecoed  
Presteigne & Norton  
Old Radnor

**Gorseinon (Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018 2pm – 4pm)**

Llandybie  
Porthcawl  
Grovesend  
Llanedi  
Pontarddulais  
Clydach  
Gowerton  
Coedffranc  
Tawe Uchaf

Gwaun Cae Gurwen  
Mumbles  
Gorseinon  
Upper Killay  
Three Crosses  
Bridgend  
Merthyr Mawr  
Pennard  
Pelenna  
Cwmamman  
Llanedi  
Llannon  
Mawr  
Manorbier

**Pencoed (Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 6pm – 8pm)**

St Georges & St Brides  
St Donats  
Llancarfan  
St Fagans  
Pentyrch  
Pontyclun  
Ewenny  
Coychurch Lower  
St Brides Minor  
Llantwit Fardre  
Coychurch Higher  
Lisvane  
Pencoed  
Coity Higher  
Tongwynlais

**Henllys (Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2pm – 4pm)**

Abergavenny  
Penarth  
Llangynidr  
Llangybi Fawr  
Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon  
Cwmbran  
Penarth  
Langstone  
Magor with Undy  
Caldicot  
Monmouth

Henllys  
Crickhowell  
Shirenewton  
Mathern  
Blaenavon  
Cruorney  
Llanelly  
Vale of Grwyney  
Pontypool  
Ponthir  
Llanbadarn Fawr

## **Appendix 2 Capability and Capacity Framework**

### **CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY BUILDING FRAMEWORK 2016-2023**

#### **VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCIL SECTOR**

*It is envisaged that community and town councils will play an active role in meeting the needs of communities and providing vital public services as a result of local government reform. In particular, the aim is that councils will deliver services which meet the needs of vulnerable groups in communities, such as children, young people and the frail elderly. (White Paper: Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People 3 February 2015)*

#### **PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK**

The framework will enable a strategic approach to be taken to ensuring the community and town council sector has the necessary capability and capacity to meet the challenges, and take advantage of the opportunities the sector faces.

A multi-year capacity and capability building framework will provide clarity and consensus on what additional support is required over the short, medium and long term. This will inform decisions on the areas where Welsh Government should target support each year, and what activity will be commissioned.

The purpose of the framework will be to:

- Identify what additional capability and capacity (skills, behaviours, knowledge and understanding) clerks and councillors will need
- Identify when this capability and capacity will need to be built

The framework will sit alongside the National Training Strategy, which seeks to improve the core knowledge and skills of councillors and clerks and establish a training culture.

#### **FRAMEWORK**

The framework adopts a phased approach, mapping out the capability and capacity requirements over the short, medium and long term. Some of the capability and capacity requirements will be specific to each phase whilst others will be cross cutting and require development throughout the period of the framework.

The skills, behaviours, knowledge and understanding can be broadly mapped under the following themes:

- Commercial and business management skills
- Expertise in provision of services and management of assets
- Understanding customer service and care
- Expertise in needs and support for specific groups
- Skills in engendering community cohesion
- Regulatory and legal expertise
- Leadership
- Staff management skills
- Fulfil role as an elected representative of the community
- Ability to manage change
- Professionalism
- Working in partnership

## **Phase 1: 2016/17; 2017/18**

### **General capacity and capability development**

This phase precedes the Boundary Commission reviews and the focus is on raising the capacity and basic skills of the whole sector. The specific drivers are building the capacity and capability to deal with the intermediate pressures of devolution of services and assets; to engage with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; and encouraging and supporting a diverse range of people to stand as councillors.

- Increasing competence in commercial skills – ability to scrutinise proposals, probe evidence, critically appraise advice, develop plans and make well informed decisions.[Commercial and business management skills] [Expertise in provision of services and management of assets]
- Building skills and expertise in commissioning services [Expertise in needs and support for specific groups] [Expertise in provision of services and management of assets]
- Developing an understanding of alternative delivery models
- Developing the ability to set budgets, report on progress and produce annual reports [Commercial and business management skills]
- Encouraging people to stand for election in 2017 elections [Community leadership]

- Ensuring new councillors understand what is required of them [Fulfil role as an elected representative of the community]
- Enhancing leadership skills – learning to be proactive and setting direction. [Personal leadership]

## **Phase 2: 2018/19; 2019/20**

This phase co-incides with the progress of the LDBCW's reviews; Community Councils will be making representations to the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales (LDBCW) in this period. . At this stage the proposed configuration of the community and town council sector will be starting to emerge. This will be an appropriate time to build specific capacity and capability to take on new powers and duties proposed in the Local Government Bill - councils wishing to make use of the general power of competence will be considering how to meet all three requirements; councils will also be considering how they will respond to the rights of the public when attending council meetings and participation at meetings. Capacity and capability to engage in the community engagement arrangements of the county council will also need to be considered.

- Ability to manage staff effectively [staff management skills]
- Increasing the number of qualified clerks
- Continuing to strengthen financial management and governance
- Starting to upskill clerks and staff who will be part of a much larger community council under new arrangements [Ability to manage change]
- Awareness of risk management [Regulatory and legal expertise]
- Awareness of social media [Ability to manage change]
- Partnership working / negotiation skills [Work in partnership]

## **Phase 3: 2020/2023**

### **Transition to new community council arrangements**

This phase follows the completion of the majority of the Boundary Commission's reviews. There will be a need to map the capability and capacity of existing councils against the recommended new arrangements and a move to a more targeted approach to address specific capability and capacity gaps . Capacity and capability building to make the transition to the new community councils arrangements once the outcome of the review is finalised.

- Ability to manage staff in larger organisations. [Staff management skills] [Leadership]

- Skills in handling staffing cuts and redundancies [staff management skills]
- Encouraging people to stand in 2023 elections.[Community leadership]
- Upskilling clerks and councillors who are now part of a much larger community council.[Expertise in provision of services and management of assets]  
[Understanding customer service and care]
- Ensuring new councillors understand what is required of them [Fulfilling role as representative elected to office]
- Ensuring new employees understand what is required of them

## **Appendix 3**

### **Bodmin Place Shaping Forum** **Terms of Reference**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Forum is to plan, discuss, prioritise, and where appropriate deliver or support the delivery of services within the Bodmin Community Network Area. The forum is designed to work together in partnership with each member representing their specific area of specialism, and ensuring wider engagement across all sectors.

The forum will have a broadly economic development focus, but have a wholistic view of this understanding that economy is linked, driven and dependant on all aspects of a community.

The Forum will develop a long term 2030 vision in order that the aspirations of the Bodmin area are captured, and developments are in line with this vision.

The forum will

- Exploring opportunities for joint working/funding.
- Run themed sessions to progress agreed priorities.
- Establish sub group/time limited working groups as appropriate
- Hold 2 stakeholder events each year in order to inform the wider group of developments

---

#### **Bodmin Place Shaping Membership**

The Forum will consist of one lead individual from each area listed below –

- Economy
- Arts and Culture
- Health and Wellbeing
- Sport and Physical Activity
- Heritage/Tourism
- Town Centre Focus
- Community Projects
- Housing and Transport
- Education Skills
- Community Network Panel
- Bodmin Town Council

These leads will be from the wider Bodmin Community and will be elected by the wider stakeholder group each year. Appropriate Cornwall Council Officers will be invited to attend these meetings as and when appropriate.

### **Bodmin Forum Meetings**

- Six **Bodmin Place Shaping Forums** will be held each year, on a two monthly basis.
- The forums will be supported by Cornwall Council officers as and when appropriate
- The Forum should strive to reach consensus.
- Where a vote is necessary it will be on the basis of one member one vote. In the case where the Forum cannot reach a decision the Chair will have the casting vote.
- Agendas should be circulated 4 weeks prior to the meeting with the opportunity for items to be added up until 2 weeks before the Forum Meeting.
- The Forum Meetings will be held at a venue in the Bodmin area and will commence at 5.00pm.
- A Chair will be elected for a twelve month period.
- The meeting will be recorded by informal, brief notes, action points and a record of any formal decisions made.

### **The wider Stakeholder group meeting**

In addition to the Forum meeting a wider stakeholder meeting will be held twice a year. These meetings will allow the Forum leads to report on progress, to take questions and comments from the stakeholders, and to gain a wider steer on developments.

The new leads will be appointed at this stakeholder meeting on an annual basis (???? Too often???? – may not allow much time for the leads to embed???)

### **Sub Groups/Working Groups**

On occasions if an issue requires further work the Forum has the authority to set up a sub group or working group to progress this issue.

### **Informal Processes**

It is anticipated that most activity will take place through day-to-day interactions between councillors, officers, groups, individuals and partner organisations. These

“informal” processes are likely to be the most active components of the Forum and should always link/feedback to the Forum meetings.