

Meeting of:	<b>Cabinet</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 19 January 2023</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Corporate Performance and Resources
Report Title:	The Council's Response to the Welsh Government Consultation: Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper
Purpose of Report:	To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed response to the Welsh Government's consultation paper on Electoral Administration and Reform White Paper
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services
Responsible Officer:	Rob Thomas Electoral Registration Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	As the matters raised in the consultation cover the whole of the Council's services and areas, it is not appropriate for Ward Members to be consulted directly
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <p>Welsh Government's (WG) White Paper includes proposals for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting engagement in elections</li> <li>• making standing for election safer and more straight forward</li> <li>• legislation to modernise the administration of elections</li> <li>• legislation to improve the conduct of electoral and community reviews for local government</li> <li>• legislation to consolidate electoral law</li> <li>• longer-term propositions for electoral reform to support Welsh democracy in the future.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

1. That the proposed response attached to this report at Appendix A is submitted to Welsh Government.
2. That the use of paragraph 15.14.2(ii) of the Council's Constitution (urgent decision procedure) be authorised to allow the response to be sent to Welsh Government by the extended deadline of 23rd January, 2023.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. So that the Council apprises Welsh Government on its views on the matters including in the Consultation.
2. In order to meet the Welsh Government timescale.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Consultation Paper: (<https://www.gov.wales/electoral-administration-and-reform-white-paper>) is the latest consultation issued by Welsh Government ("WG") which makes proposals for electoral reform to modernise electoral administration in Wales.
- 1.2 In the 5 years since the UK Parliament devolved responsibility for local and Senedd elections, through the Wales Act 2017, the Senedd has legislated to lower the voting age to 16, and enfranchised qualifying foreign nationals. WG has also laid the foundations for a voting system fit for the 21st century, including greater use of digital tools in the May 2022 elections, and a clear set of principles to guide WG's longer term programme of reform: equity, accessibility, participation, improving citizen experience, simplicity and integrity.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 The current consultation commenced on 11th October, 2022 and ends on 10th January, 2023, with WG having granted an extension to the 23rd January, 2023. the submission of responses.
- 2.2 The Consultation seeks the views on WG's long term vision for devolved elections; simplifying electoral registration in Wales; strengthening electoral administration; building democratic health, modernising Welsh elections; and improving democracy.
- 2.3 Appendix A details the responses to a list of questions on the above subjects and Cabinet is asked to consider the responses set out to enable the Council to respond to the Consultation Paper.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** Welsh Government's proposals, if adopted, will lead to changes being made to how devolved elections in Wales are managed, electoral registration and administration, and democracy in Wales, safeguards the long-term needs of local residents to ensure an effective and convenient local government and electoral equality.

### **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1** There are no direct climate change implications associated with the undertaking of that review.

### **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

#### **Financial**

- 5.1** Any changes made to how devolved elections in Wales are managed, and changes to electoral registration and administration may well have financial and resource implications. These would need careful consideration if progressed.

#### **Employment**

- 5.2** There are no employment implications arising as a result of this report.

#### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 5.3** The Consultation contains a large number of proposals which it is presumed will be enacted. The legal implications will be addressed as legislation emerges

### **6. Background Papers**

[WG Consultation Paper: Electoral administration and reform White Paper: 11 October 2022](#)

# Consultation questions

We would be keen to hear your views on these proposals, in particular on:

## Chapter 1

### Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the 6 principles for electoral reform of equity, accessibility, participation, improving citizen experience, simplicity, integrity?

We partially agree with the 6 principles for electoral reform so long as certain aspects don't create further divergence between devolved and reserved polls.

## Chapter 2

### Question 2

Should the Welsh Government commit resource to considering how electronic remote voting could operate for devolved elections?

In principle we think electronic remote voting is a good idea, however, from an administrative perspective it would cause even greater divergence between reserved and devolved polls. The option of a combined election would be out of the question. Consideration would need to be given as to whether polling stations would still have to operate for electors that want to continue to vote in person or would everything be online. Security at the present time is not robust enough and we would not be able to provide enough public assurances.

### Question 3

What impacts, if any, do you think the proposed introduction of an all-Wales database of electoral registration data would have on the electoral process (such as registration and electoral services)?

Please consider the potentially positive and negative impacts and provide evidence to support your response, where available. Please comment on each characteristic individually.

Pros – ability to identify duplicates quicker, able to check proxies with the need to contact other authorities for confirmation of registration.

Cons – There doesn't appear to be enough benefit that would justify the cost and administrative burden of an all-Wales database. Limited capacity in already stretched Electoral Services teams.

We would also like to know who would manage the database. Would it be a central database funded by WG? Would there need to be a newly created team within WG

to manage the database, leading to further cost? Would we be expected to integrate our existing EMS with the proposed all-Wales database and if so, have EMS providers confirmed they have the capacity to undertake this work?

#### **Question 4**

What are your views on the application of Elections Act 2022 provisions on (a) digital imprints for digital campaign material, and (b) online nominations?

a) Yes, we support this.

b) N/A

#### **Question 5**

Should principal and town and community councils revert to four-year terms?

We have no preference, but from an administrative point of view it is getting more and more worrying the thought of a combined election. This should be avoided at all costs, as it would be impossible to run a combined election with complete accuracy due to the ever-growing divergence between reserved and devolved polls.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Question 6**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the franchise for devolved elections should be restated in one bi-lingual Welsh Act?

We agree with this if it simplifies interpretation of legislation.

#### **Question 7**

From your perspective, should the franchise reflect the changes in the status of EU citizens now the UK has left the EU?

Yes, we agree with this.

#### **Question 8**

How can we best help people understand they have been automatically registered and feel confident that their data is protected, especially for people who may be vulnerable or wish to register anonymously?

We believe this a matter for Welsh Government to decide. However, some ideas could be to include something in privacy notices of other LA departments ctax, housing, call centres, HB to confirm data will be shared with ER and used to auto

register. This could be extended to include DWP, housing associations, NHS, Inland Revenue. It is very important to stress that electors will need clear communication to confirm that they are only registered for devolved elections and that completion of an ITR is still required to register to vote in reserved polls. Anonymous/vulnerable electors would need to be given sufficient time to opt out of the open register and register anonymously.

### **Question 9**

To what extent do you agree with the removal of the open register in relation to devolved elections?

Whilst we support this, it is hard to see how the process will work with reserved and devolved elections. It will add another layer of complication and divergence to a system that is becoming more and more complicated to administer. We would need assurances from EMS providers that they have capacity to implement all changes that are being proposed on top of the Elections Act work they will be undertaking over the next 18 months to 2 years.

### **Question 10**

Should the Welsh Government place a duty on local authorities to have data sharing agreements within the authority itself, and where applicable, with other authorities or organisations?

It would seem logical to place a duty on the ERO/RO and the local authority to have data sharing agreements in place to further support the legal provisions that already exist.

### **Question 11**

Are there any specific aspects of automatic registration that should be piloted before we move to an all Wales roll out?

We think the whole process would need to be piloted from data mining to registration. There also needs to be a massive amount of thought given to how this would work in terms of reserved and devolved elections, in particular in the event of a combined election. There is a huge concern that electors will be become disenfranchised believing that they are registered to vote in all elections, but only be able to vote in devolved elections due to automatic registration.

### **Question 12**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that students should have the option to register to vote whilst enrolling at university?

We fully support this.

### **Question 12a**

Should any data that is provided be subsequently shared, via a data sharing agreement, with the relevant Local Authority's Electoral Services Team?

Yes

## **Chapter 4**

### **Question 13**

Do you agree that a statutory Electoral Management Board for Wales should be established?

We agree that the introduction of an Electoral Management Board for Wales would be beneficial as this would allow a consistent all Wales approach.

### **Question 14**

If answered Strongly Agree or Agree to Question 13, what should its functions be?

Co-ordination of the administration of Senedd and Local Government elections and electoral registration to achieve a consistent all Wales approach including providing guidance and advice on best practice and legislation.

### **Question 15**

Should the Electoral Management Board have powers to issue directions to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers?

Yes, for devolved polls.

### **Question 16**

Should the Electoral Management Board have the power to issue advice to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers on the carrying out of their functions?

Yes, for devolved matters.

### **Question 17**

What are your views on who should be members of the Electoral Management Board and how they should be appointed?

Experienced and competent Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers from each electoral region. How they are appointed is a matter for WG to decide.

### **Question 18**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposals to provide for greater electoral certainty by extending the statutory time during which no final electoral review reports can be published and no electoral review orders may be made?

Boundary changes require a lot of administrative work and modifications to our EMS system. These changes need to be implemented taking in to account legislation and publication of the register.

### **Question 19a**

At which point in the electoral cycle should the Commission be prevented from publishing electoral review reports:

Within 15 months

### **Question 19b**

Do you agree the Commission should, as far as possible, be required to schedule electoral reviews within two years of a community review being completed?

Yes - it would be sensible to schedule electoral reviews within two years of a community review being completed by a local authority. This would ensure the prevalence of the electoral arrangements for the next scheduled ordinary council elections.

### **Question 20**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the suggested proposals for setting maximum review and decision making periods?

We strongly agree with this proposal.

We support any changes to the electoral review process that brings greater electoral certainty for administrators.

### **Question 21**

What are your views on whether a power to pause the conduct of electoral reviews should be included in legislation?

We support any changes to the electoral review process that brings greater electoral certainty for administrators.



## **Question 22**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of a common, extended list of mandatory consultees for all parts of the electoral review process?

We are supportive of an electoral review process consulting as many key stakeholders as needed to best inform proposed changes to boundaries and electoral arrangements. However, the extended list of mandatory consultees should not place an unmanageable burden on local authorities.

## **Question 23**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that requirements to engage with eligible voters as part of the electoral review process should be strengthened, including in respect of ward names?

We are supportive of an electoral review process consulting a wide range of stakeholders including eligible electors to best inform proposed changes to boundaries, ward names and electoral arrangements.

## **Question 24**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals to amend and extend the considerations the Commission must take into account when determining electoral arrangements which maximise effective and convenient local government?

We are supportive of proposals considering a wider range of factors when determining electoral arrangements.

## **Question 25**

Do you agree with our proposals requiring the Commission to undertake a further consultation where a recommendation in its proposed final review report is not one of the options it consulted upon in its draft report?

We agree with the proposal requiring the Commission to undertake a further consultation where a recommendation in its proposed final review report is not one of the options it consulted upon in its draft report.

## **Question 26**

Do you agree with our proposals to enable Welsh Ministers to require the Commission to revisit a part of an electoral review before they make an electoral review order?

We disagree with this as it goes against the new approach being taken by the UK Parliament that leaves any final decision on constituency boundary arrangements to the Boundary Commission. Allowing Welsh Ministers to challenge parts of an electoral review takes away the independence of the review.

### **Question 27**

Are there any further changes to the electoral review process that should be considered?

We have no suggestions.

### **Question 28**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the purpose of the six-week representation period should be clarified in the legislation?

We support any changes that lead to greater clarification of the purpose of requirements in legislation.

### **Question 29**

Do you agree that Welsh Ministers should be required to consider any representations received during this period before taking any action to direct the Commission to undertake further work or implement, modify or not implement the recommendations set out in the final recommendations report?

We disagree with the proposal enabling Welsh Ministers to consider any representations before directing the Commission to undertake further work or modify or not implement their recommendations.

### **Question 30**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that legal requirements on the Commission to provide hard copies of documentation should be removed, except for when they are requested?

We are supportive of the proposal. This will remove a significant burden from the Commission and reflect current practice. It also assists local authorities from having to distribute hard copies to other council buildings and libraries which can be a resource intensive process.

### **Question 31**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposals for legislative change in relation to community reviews?

We are supportive of the proposals that will bring consistency to both the electoral review and community review process. We appreciate the intention to require principal councils to report annually to their full council on their communities and community electoral arrangements. However, we stress that such a requirement should not bring unnecessary burden to local authorities.

### **Question 32**

Please provide any further comments on how you think the process of conducting community reviews could be improved.

Nothing else to add.

### **Question 33**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that seaward boundary review arrangements should be revised to include the ability for the Commission to undertake reviews relating to multiple local government areas and the expansion and contraction of seaward boundaries in a single review process? Should those arrangements to be included in the same review order?

We have no comment to make.

### **Question 34**

Do you agree with our proposals to transfer the functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to the Commission?

The Council has no objection with the proposal subject to the Commission continuing to consult with Local Government on matters affecting Member remuneration in Wales and that an Annual Report is produced.

### **Question 35**

Do you agree that functions relating to the determination of the salaries of chief executives should be abolished and not transferred?

The Council cannot identify any meaningful reason why these powers should be retained and transferred.

### **Question 36**

What do you think about the idea that new powers should be created to enable determinations to be made about parachute payments for councillors?

The terminology “parachute payments” is not the preferred description and may lead to a considerable amount of criticism from the public.

The principle of “redundancy” payments will need wider consultation by WG with the public. There would also need to be a clear explanation what these payments were for and if payments would apply to Councillors who voluntarily step down at an election. Fixed term contracts are widely used in industry including, the public sector. No payment would be made to an individual engaged under such arrangements when that fixed term contract ended. When elected, Councillors are aware of the period of office, so the WG will need to justify why a redundancy payment will apply to outgoing Councillors. It is acknowledged that such payments may assist in encouraging potential candidates from more diverse backgrounds to stand for office, but there is no specific evidence to suggest that this is widely the case.

Any methodology for such payments if introduced, will need to be clearly defined, transparent and clear to the public. The comparison drawn is the IRPW’s use of ASHE to calculate annual increases in Member remuneration. Consideration will need to be given by WG as to how Councillors qualify for such payments i.e., Senior Responsibility (SR). There would be obvious concerns if redundancy payments were made to Councillors who hold an SR role and receive the relevant remuneration, but who are also retain employment during their term of office when they fail to get re - elected.

Careful consideration will need to be given by WG as to how the initiative if introduced would be financially supported. The Council would have concerns if such and potential significant costs fell on Local Government especially, in these financially challenging times.

### **Question 37**

Do you agree with our proposal for Wales to maintain a single regulatory framework on political finance for reserved and devolved elections in Wales, where appropriate?

We have no opinion, as this falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 38**

Please provide any further comments on the specific measures under consideration regarding political finance.

We have no opinion, as this falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 39**

What types of innovation in electoral administration would you like to see piloted in the future?

Digital polling and automatic registration.

#### **Question 40**

How could we facilitate a more varied mix of local authorities participating in future pilots?

Electoral Registration teams are under increasing pressure. Therefore, we would recommend that authorities taken part in any pilots, should be given a lot of advance notice to be able to plan properly. Legislation for any pilot should be in place at the earliest opportunity. A clear direction and understanding of requirements should be set out at the start of the process to provide confidence to local authorities.

#### **Question 41**

What are your views on a power of direction for Welsh Ministers which would enable them to compel a local authority to pilot electoral innovations?

We don't agree with this recommendation . If a local authority with limited knowledge and capacity was compelled to run an electoral innovation pilot, it could seriously jeopardise the smooth running of the election leading to a loss of confidence in the electoral process.

#### **Question 42**

Should Returning Officers be subject to specific Welsh language requirements when elections take place?

Yes, we support this recommendation. However, we would encourage there to be flexibility in the approach taken by the Welsh Language Commissioner where non-compliance occurs due to other statutory obligations placed upon the RO/ERO. For example, an urgent need to communicate with electors on a last-minute change of polling station.

#### **Question 43**

Are there any types of services you would like to see Returning Officers providing in Welsh?

We have no comment to make on this.

#### **Question 44**

Have you ever experienced any issue related to the Welsh language during elections?

We have no comment to make on this.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Question 45**

Should the Welsh Government consider making provision for an online voter information platform? What information should be provided on the platform and who should host it?

Whilst we agree that an online voter information platform is a good idea, we would like to stress that it should not be the role of the RO or elections staff to host it.

### **Question 46**

Who would need to provide information to an online voter information platform and how could they be supported to do so?

We believe candidates and political parties should be providing online voter information directly to the designated host of the platform. The process should be prescribed in legislation in terms of timeframe, content rules, photo requirements, online/paper submission requirements and language requirements. It would be for the platform host to then determine whether the information meets the requirements before making the information available.

### **Question 47**

What should be done to encourage political parties to produce accessible materials?

We have no comment on this.

### **Question 48**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the returning officer at devolved elections should be under a duty to provide such equipment as it is reasonable to provide for the purposes of making it easier for disabled people to vote?

We agree with this and believe it would be beneficial for similar requirements to be placed on ROs in relation to the provision of equipment to support disabled electors for devolved and reserved polls.

### **Question 49**

What support should be put in place to ensure the returning officer is able to effectively discharge that role?

To discharge the role effectively sufficient funding should be provided by Welsh Government for the procurement, storage and maintenance of equipment purchased to support disabled electors as well as for additional training and staff time needs. UK Government will be providing New Burdens funding to support ROs in meeting the new accessibility requirements for reserved polls.

#### **Question 50**

Do you think the Welsh Government should specify in regulations the type of assistance which must be offered to disabled voters in polling stations?

We do not think it would be helpful for Welsh Government to specify in regulations the type of assistance that should be available. Instead, they should replicate the Elections Act and introduce a duty on the Electoral Commission to provide guidance to ROs on the requirement to provide reasonable equipment to assist voters with disabilities in polling stations.

#### **Question 51**

What sort of assistance do you think should be offered to disabled voters in polling stations?

Tactile voting device, magnifiers, ramps, seating, adequate lighting, pencil grips, large handheld ballot papers, staff name badges and a polling booth at wheelchair level. Disabled parking is not always an option as some polling districts have limited venues that can be used as a polling station, which leaves very little option.

#### **Question 52**

In addition to provisions in the Curriculum for Wales, are there any other measures that the Welsh Government should put in place through the education system to ensure that learners in Wales can confidently take part in Welsh elections?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

#### **Question 53**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the definition of the electoral offence of Undue Influence provided by section 114A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 be used for devolved elections?

We support consistency wherever possible

#### **Question 54**

Do you think some or all of these proposed actions described in the White Paper will help to contribute to reducing instances of abuse of candidates?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 55**

If an exemption from candidates spending limits for security related spending is sought, what activities should be included in that exemption?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 56**

Will the proposed addition to the standard wording included in the Statement of Persons Nominated form have the desired effect of reducing occurrences of abuse or would different measures would be more effective?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 57**

What other actions would contribute to reducing instances of abuse of candidates?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 58**

Should Welsh Ministers legislate to require the establishment and maintenance of an 'Access to Elected Office Fund'?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 59**

Should this Fund be available to support candidates from under-represented groups for all devolved Welsh ordinary and by-elections?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 60**

If you agree the Fund should be a requirement set out in primary legislation, what should be the parameters within which the Fund should operate?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

**Question 61**



To what extent do you agree or disagree that the requirement to set out the Local Government Candidates' Survey questions in regulations should be removed?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

#### **Question 61a**

If Strongly Agree or Agree, should the survey be updated through a formal review process involving key partners?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

#### **Question 62**

Do you agree there should be flexibility for local authorities to ask questions about local widening participation measures?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

#### **Question 63**

Do you agree questions should be included in the survey about candidates' experiences of abuse and harassment (see the section on "other measures we are taking to ensure candidates safety")?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

#### **Question 64**

Do you think Welsh Ministers should approve the full set of questions or only the core all-Wales questions?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

### **Chapter 6**

#### **Question 65**

What are your views on the impact of maintaining the current renewal time of 5 years in light of the Elections Act 2022 changes?

We believe the renewal time of 5 years should be reduced to 3 years allowing devolved polls to follow the same timescale for reserved polls. This should limit voter confusion and reduce administrative burden on EROs.

#### **Question 66**

Would you like to see advance voting and /or voting in a range of venues offered for devolved elections across Wales?

The pilots in May 2022 didn't seem to increase voter turn-out.

### **Question 67**

Do you support the introduction of an online absent voting application system in Wales? If yes, what would you like to see in place?

Yes, we do as this would be consistent with the Elections Act which will introduce an online absent voting application for reserved polls. However, we strongly believe that the same system that UK Government introduces should be used. This will reduce voter confusion and electors possibly being disenfranchised for certain polls. It is also important to point out that the option to apply via a paper application should still be available.

### **Question 68a**

Do you think that such a system would help to reduce the number of postal votes rejected due to errors on PVS' and help raise public confidence in the postal voting system?

An online absent vote system could help prevent errors on the initial application leading to the postal vote being rejected. An online system could have inbuilt validation rules that would prevent common errors that result in postal votes being rejected.

### **Question 68b**

Could a manual system be used to do this?

It would be impracticable to add validation checks in a manual system. While manual checks are currently conducted on paper forms to identify obvious issues it does not guarantee all will be identified.

### **Question 69**

Would the introduction of a postal ballot tracking system, such as that described above, create a significant administrative burden on local authority electoral teams?

As you have already stated the number of Welsh voters using postal voting has continued to increase in recent years. Any additional requirements added to the postal opening process will inevitably create an administrative burden for us when dealing with such high numbers of postal voters. We believe no duty should be placed on the RO to contact or attempt to contact voters whose postal vote has been rejected. This would place an unmanageable burden on electoral services teams at a crucial point in the election timetable.

## **Question 70**

Do you support the introduction of a postal vote e-tracking system in Wales?

No we don't support this, it would place an additional burden on administrators as what is already an extremely busy time.

## **Question 71**

Do you support the wider introduction and use of Digital Registers for non-reserved elections in Wales? What are the benefits or detriments of doing so?

Yes, we support this. The use of digital registers avoids the need for large paper-based copies to be produced which is often a timely process in the days prior to polling. It enables ROs to efficiently manage one of the integrity challenges that comes with multiple polling days if advanced voting continued to be pursued – the risk of double voting (an elector attempting to vote more than once). We believe that it will also improve the elector experience at the station as it would be quicker and more efficient. However, it is important to note that funding for the introduction of digital registers at devolved polls would be required from the Welsh Government.

## **Question 72**

Are there any potential barriers to a wider introduction of Digital Registers?

There are also no plans by the UK Government to roll out digital registers for reserved polls. While this is not necessarily a barrier, it presents another divergence issue leading to elector and polling station staff confusion between devolved and reserved polls. It would also prove problematic if a reserved and devolved poll were combined as there is no legal mechanism to use digital registers for reserved polls.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Question 73**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that there should be mandatory training and development for councillors?

Agree – The Council has already taken the step, as part of its induction programme post elections (and included within its Member Development Strategy) to make certain learning topics essential and which Members must complete.

Whilst newly elected Members will bring certain skill sets to the Councillor role there are a number of significant subject areas including legislative, that Members will need support to bring them up to speed and to be competent and able to fully engage and participate in the running of the Council and to support their

constituents.

Development sessions identified essential learning as part of the post-election induction programme by the Council included, the Council's Constitution, Budget, quasi-judicial Planning and Licensing (Members cannot take their seats on these Committees unless they undertake the training), Equalities and Diversity, Code of Conduct/ Ethics and Standards; Members Personal Safety, dealing with social media, ICT security, Safeguarding etc..

#### **Question 74**

If Strongly Agree or agree to question 73, should this mandatory training and development for councillors include principal councils and town and community councils?

Agreed in terms of Principal Councils. Please see response to Q73 in that the Council has already take a local decision to require newly elected Councillors to undertake mandatory development for certain subject areas.

Requirement for mandatory training in relation to Town and Community Councils is a matter for those bodies to respond to the consultation.

#### **Question 75**

If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 74, should the expectations for mandatory training be different between principal councils and town and community councils?

Should training become mandatory for Principal Councils and Town and Community Councils this will need to reflect the different nature of responsibilities and role, but it is accepted there will be some commonality in subject areas.

#### **Question 76**

If Strongly Agree or Agree to question 75, what proposals would you make for areas to be included in mandatory training?

Please see response to Q73.

Any Member Development should sit with in an agreed framework approved by that body. Member Development Strategies should be promoted and supported as best practice. WG should outline what they consider is the baseline for appropriate mandatory training. Heads of Democratic Services could assist in that assessment to ensure that the development of Members is relevant and proportionate given the

differing roles carried out by Councillors.

### **Question 77**

If Strongly Agree or Agree that there should be mandatory training, do you consider candidates should be asked to confirm their willingness to undertake it as part of the nomination of candidates' process?

Agree – Candidates should be made aware and confirm their willingness to participate in the induction programme and continued development. The Council has for a number of years included its induction programme with dates and timings in the Candidate Packs. This year the Council advertised on its website and via social media 3 open events for potential candidates. Due to poor take up, only one session was held. The purpose of the open events was to outline the role of Councillors, expectations and included information on the type of support that would be available once elected, which covered Councillor induction and development information.

### **Question 78**

Should there then be sanctions for candidates who do not confirm they are prepared to undertake mandatory training?

No – It would be difficult to see how this would work other than preventing the candidate standing for election.

### **Question 79**

Should a commitment to undertake mandatory training and development form part of the oath successful candidates must take before being able to take up their office?

If legislation were to be introduced mandating certain training and development, the Council feels that it would not be necessary to include such a commitment.

### **Question 80**

If Yes at Q79 what sanctions should apply to elected members for then not undertaking mandatory training and development?

There would be little benefit legislating/ regulating the requirement for mandatory development if there were no sanctions for those whose chose not to participate.

The LG&EW Act 2021 places new responsibilities on Group Leaders to ensure that their Groups members abide by a set standard. The Council has used this new legislation to raise issues individually with Group Leaders relating to non-attendance of mandatory training by their Groups to ensure we obtain 100% attendance and up to a point this has been successful.

Any failure of an individual Councillor to attend mandatory training could be addressed by the Council Standards Committee, but this would need a review of the legislation to provide for sanctions/ appeal arrangements etc.

### **Question 81**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the policy proposal to bring arrangements for Town and Community councillors into line with the disqualification regime for principal council members in Wales, so that members of Town and Community councils are disqualified from becoming a member of the Senedd?

Agree – to ensure consistency between tiers of local government.

### **Question 82**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that the grace period for all councillors elected to the Senedd should be retained?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 83**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to assessing the impacts of the proposals set out in the draft IIA? Do you have any comments?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 84**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the approach to assessing the costs and benefits of the legislative proposals set out in the draft RIA?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 85**

Are there other areas that should be considered as we develop the IIA and RIA further?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 86**

Please identify any other sources of data and information that we should consider in the IIA and RIA ?

We have no comment on this as it falls outside of our service area.

### **Question 87**

We would like to know your views on the effects that our proposals for electoral reform would have on the Welsh language, specifically on:

- opportunities for people to use Welsh, and
- on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English

What effects do you think there would be? How could positive effects be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

We support the equal use of both the Welsh and English languages as part of the electoral process.

### **Question 88**

Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have:

- positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and
- no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language

We support the equal use of both the Welsh and English languages as part of the electoral process.

### **Question 89**

We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any comments on any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please tell us below:

We have no further comments.