The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Standards Committee: 22nd November, 2018

Report of the Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Review of Community and Town Councils Sector in Wales - Independent Review Panel's Final Report

Purpose of the Report

1.	To apprise Members of information received from the Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales.

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Reason for the Recommendation

To apprise Committee of the information received.

Background

2.	As part of the Standards Committee work programme agreed at the meeting on 22nd March 2018, a report was presented to the Committee on 17th May, 2018 regarding the Independent Review that was being undertaken of the Community and Town Councils Sector in Wales.

3.	The Independent Review Panel had been commissioned by Welsh Government to undertake the review with the following remit:

•	To explore the potential role of local government below principal Councils;

•	To draw on best practice;

•	To define the most appropriate models / structures to deliver this role; and

•	To consider how these models and structures should be applied across Wales, this to include consideration of any situation to which it would not be necessary or appropriate.

4.	All Group Leaders of the 22 Local Authorities in Wales had been advised of the review which was to focus on what was required to ensure the most local level of government was effective, efficient and delivering benefits to local communities.

5. The review had commenced in July 2017 and the Council had been informed that the Panel had heard the views and gathered evidence through a range of stakeholders.

6. At the last meeting of the Standards Committee on 20th September, 2018 Members were provided with a copy of the Independent Review Panel's August edition newsletter and a copy of their outline findings and recommendations.

Relevant Issues and Options

7. A copy of the final report that was published on 3rd October, 2018 and presented to the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services is attached for the Committee's information at Appendix A to this report.

8. The Council awaits the views/decisions of Welsh Government in respect of the report.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

9. None as a direct result of this report

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

10. None as a direct result of this report

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

11. None as a direct result of this report

Crime and Disorder Implications

12. None as a direct result of this report

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

13. None as a direct result of this report

Corporate/Service Objectives

14. None as a direct result of this report

Policy Framework and Budget

15. N/A

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

16. N/A

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

17. N/A

Background Papers

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Officers Consulted

Responsible Officer:

Ms. D. Marles
Monitoring Officer / Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales

Final Report

Contents

Foreword

Dear Cabinet Secretary

In June last year the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Mark Drakeford AM, asked us to be part of, and lead an independent review on the future role of Community and Town Councils in Wales. We are pleased to present our final report and recommendations to you.

Over the last year, we feel we have delivered a truly evidence based review, with over a thousand points of contact with stakeholders. This included over 800 responses to our dedicated surveys, of which over 100 were from young people.

We have heard a variety of views ranging from across Wales. In some cases, there was a general consensus reached around some topics of discussion. For example, many responses agreed that the key role of Community and Town Councils is that they are democratically accountable and operate at a very local level. As expected, in relation to some topics, some responses were polarised. For example, there were strong views both in favour of, and against councillors serving on more than one council, whether training for councillors should be mandatory and the role of party politics within a Community or Town Council.

Our findings and recommendations have been shaped by these views and, in some cases, may seem radical. We know that whilst we can learn from the past and only deal with the present, we have a role to prepare Community and Town Councils for the future. We believe that if we are to succeed in improving the well-being of future generations, Community and Town Councils have a vital role in contributing towards this – and should be recognised.

We are grateful to our Panel members for the conscientious and constructive way they have undertaken their responsibilities. We also wish to acknowledge the excellent secretariat support we received from the dedicated Welsh Government team, consisting of Claire Germain, Laurie Davies and Lisa Aspinall. We want to take this opportunity to again thank the sector, key stakeholders and the general public for their involvement and the constructive responses received to the Review. Without the help and support we received over the last year, we believe we would not have been able to come to the evidence based conclusions that we have.

Yours sincerely

Gwenda Thomas
Co-Chair

Rhodri Glyn Thomas
Co-Chair

Introduction: Community and Town Councils in Wales

Community and Town Councils are the grassroots level of local governance in Wales. There are over 730 Community and Town Councils throughout Wales, but not every community in Wales has one.

Community and Town Councils are accountable to local people and have a duty to represent the interests of the different parts of the community equally. Some represent populations of fewer than 200 people, others populations of over 45,000 people.

Commissioning of an Independent Review

The Independent Review Panel was established in July 2017 by the then Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Mark Drakeford AM.

We were established to:

- explore the potential role of local government below Local Authority councils, drawing on best practice

- define the most appropriate model(s)/structure(s) to deliver this role

- consider how these models and structures should be applied across Wales. This will include consideration of any situations in which they would not be necessary or appropriate.

We were given a deliberately broad remit, with the scope to be radical if necessary.

The review is strongly supported by the current Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies AM who confirmed the scope to be radical in finding the best and right solution for Wales.

We were appointed to ensure political balance across the four main parties in Wales and two individuals appointed through an expression of interest process for their expertise and experience of Community and Town Councils or wider community representation or activism. We all also have our own personal experiences of Community and Town Councils whether that's from being a councillor, clerk or attending and working with Community and Town Councils.

Who we are

Gwenda Thomas (Co-Chair) –
Representing Welsh Labour

Rhodri Glyn Thomas (Co-Chair) –
Representing Plaid Cymru
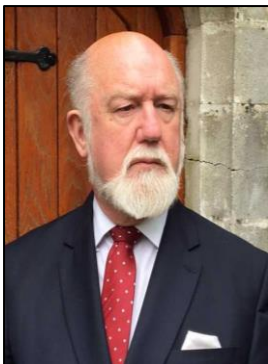
William Graham
– Representing
the Welsh
Conservative
Party

Councillor Kathryn
Silk –
Representing
Welsh Liberal
Democrats

Jessica Morgan –
Representing
Community
Development
working with the
Pembrokeshire
Local Action
Network for
Enterprise and
Development

Edward Humphreys
– Town Clerk for
Newtown and
Llanllwchaiarn
Town Council, and
Clerk to the Council
for Churchstoke
Community Council

The work of the Panel

Between September 2017 and February 2018 we met on a monthly basis. During these meetings, we undertook broad exploration into the key role of Community and Town Councils in Wales as well as developing an understanding of the sector and the challenges it faces. We received oral and written evidence from key stakeholders in the sector, as well as from Community and Town Councils themselves. During the latter stages of these meetings, we moved towards targeted / thematic exploration of key features of a Community and Town Council and used meetings to formulate our early thinking. This was supported by evidence gathering through our suite of engagement (set out in the chapter below).

Since February 2018, we focussed our efforts on targeted engagement and evidence gathering, concentrating on the areas we knew needed more information. We continued to formulate and test our early thinking, as well as using the evidence we gathered to develop outline findings and form recommendations. Our emerging recommendations were submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services on 17 July 2018.

As we progressed through the review, our findings and emerging recommendations fell naturally into four themes:

- **What Community and Town Councils are**: including tackling the big questions such as whether Community and Town Councils should exist, coverage and types of Community and Town Councils.

- **What Community and Town Councils do**: looking at aspects of the role such as Local Delivery, Powers and Flexibilities, Local Voice and Identity, and Community Engagement.

- **How Community and Town Councils do it**: exploring Capacity and Capability, Staffing, Funding, Expert Advice, Role of a Councillor and the Relationships Community and Town Councils have with other bodies.

- **How Community and Town Councils are held to account:** considering Democratic Accountability, Diversity, Audit, Independent Scrutiny and Support / Intervention.

Our findings and recommendations should be considered as a package. We believe all these things need to happen at one time to have the intended outcome. Our emphasis has been on how we can encourage and enable change from within, rather than prescribing and imposing.

Engagement: What you've told us

To support our work, we undertook a suite of engagement to seek evidence and gathers views from Community and Town Councils, key stakeholders and communities themselves.

How we engaged

We targeted our engagement in four groups:

- ➢ with Community and Town Councils and key stakeholders
- ➢ with Local Authorities
- ➢ with members of the community and
- ➢ with children and young people.

In October 2017, to kick start our engagement campaign, we issued a formal call for evidence to all Community and Town Councils in Wales. This was also sent to all stakeholders with an interest in the sector. A full list of stakeholders involved in the review can be found in our full Engagement Report (at Annex B).

In order to keep Community and Town Councils up-to-date on our progress, we developed a Review Newsletter on a bimonthly basis. Our call for evidence was supported by four online surveys, targeted at the engagement groups identified and bespoke questions were developed. The online surveys were publicised through the Welsh Government website and were also shared by stakeholders.

To ensure everyone had the opportunity to share their views, we developed a series of engagement events. As Panel members, we also took it upon ourselves to visit Community and Town Councils, collectively and individually, to encourage engagement with the review and to hear individual council's views on the future of the sector.

Our large events were open to all, including members of the public, but were mainly attended by stakeholders from the sector itself. Five events were planned for March 2018 but like everyone else across Wales, we could not control the weather! Our planned event for Dolfor, Newtown was snowed off at the start of March…and again mid-March. We decided not to reschedule the event, but made sure those who were due to attend the mid-Wales event had the opportunity to share their views through other avenues.

In addition to our larger events, we also held two drop in sessions for Community and Town Councils, one in Merthyr Tydfil in February 2018 and one in Aberystwyth in April 2018. These additional sessions provided stakeholders a further avenue to share their views and an opportunity to consider the same questions posed at the larger engagement events.

In April, we also held four events across Wales targeted specifically at representatives from Local Authorities to ensure their perspectives were captured.

Finally, to make sure all communities and members of the public had the opportunity to share their views, we called on Community and Town Councils and partner stakeholders to host 'pop-in' sessions across Wales.

To have maximum impact, where possible, we asked people to host their event on the same date (24 May 2018). A handful of councils chose to combine their 'pop-in' session with events previously arranged in May within their community. Where stakeholders were unable to host a session themselves, we asked that they advertised a session near them. Those hosting an event were provided with the resources they needed to publicise their event and capture feedback. Feedback forms mirrored the questions asked as part of the public survey.

Item 1

● Pop-in sessions held
● Places we have visited

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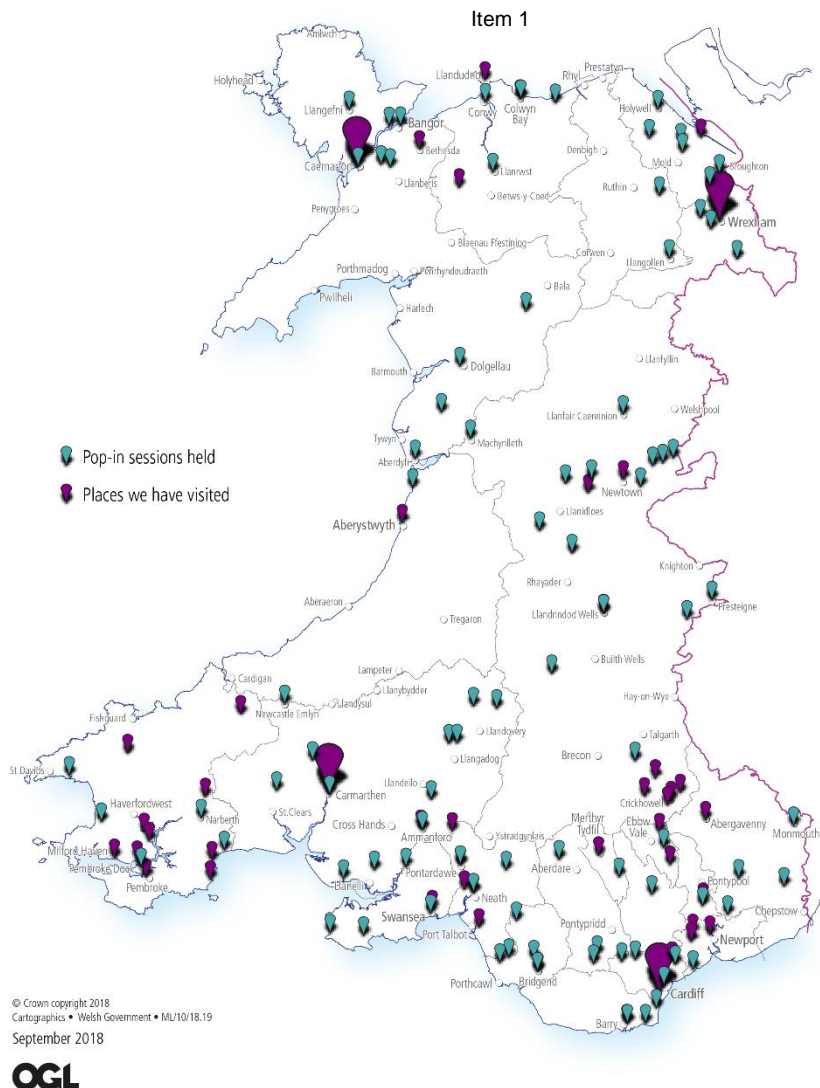
One Voice Wales also held its own engagement events with their members of the sector, submitting a substantial response, which we welcomed.

This map (item 1) shows the places we visited as a Panel (whether individually as Panel members or as part of a planned engagement event) and the locations of all the stakeholder led 'pop-in' sessions.

In total, we had over one thousand points of contact with individuals as part of the review engagement. Over 190 individuals attended our engagement events and over 600 views were received as part of the feedback from the 'pop-in' sessions. The map below (item 2 below) shows where responses were received from across Wales, from those respondents who told us where they were from.

In response to our surveys, both online and submitted to the review mailbox or our secretariat, we had 801 responses in total. This is broken down as follows:

➢ General Survey (mainly sector based responses) – 227
➢ Public Survey – 453
➢ Youth Survey – 104
➢ Local Authority Survey – 17

We also received 27 written items of evidence. Whilst this seems relatively low, this mainly included key stakeholders who provided both written and oral evidence at our meetings. Where appropriate, other stakeholder responses were incorporated into the survey responses.

What we heard

We received a wealth of evidence from many individuals. Thank you to everyone who filled in a survey, attended an event, or sent us your thoughts. With these responses, we believe we have achieved a truly evidence based review.

While in relation to some topics, responses were polarised, there was general consensus reached around the majority of issues.

Many responses noted that Community and Town Councils should be responsible for local community issues or services. In addition, the key role of a Community and Town Councils is to be democratically accountable and represent local views.

It was recognised that there are barriers preventing Community and Town Councils from doing their best for the community including Finance, Capacity and Capability. Many responses noted the lack of awareness around the role of a Community and Town Council and a lack of engagement from some councils with their community.

There were strong views both in favour of, and against dual members (councillors who are a member of more than one type of council) and the role of party politics within a Community and Town Council. We will explore these themes throughout the report.

A more detailed analysis of the responses received can be found in our Engagement Report.
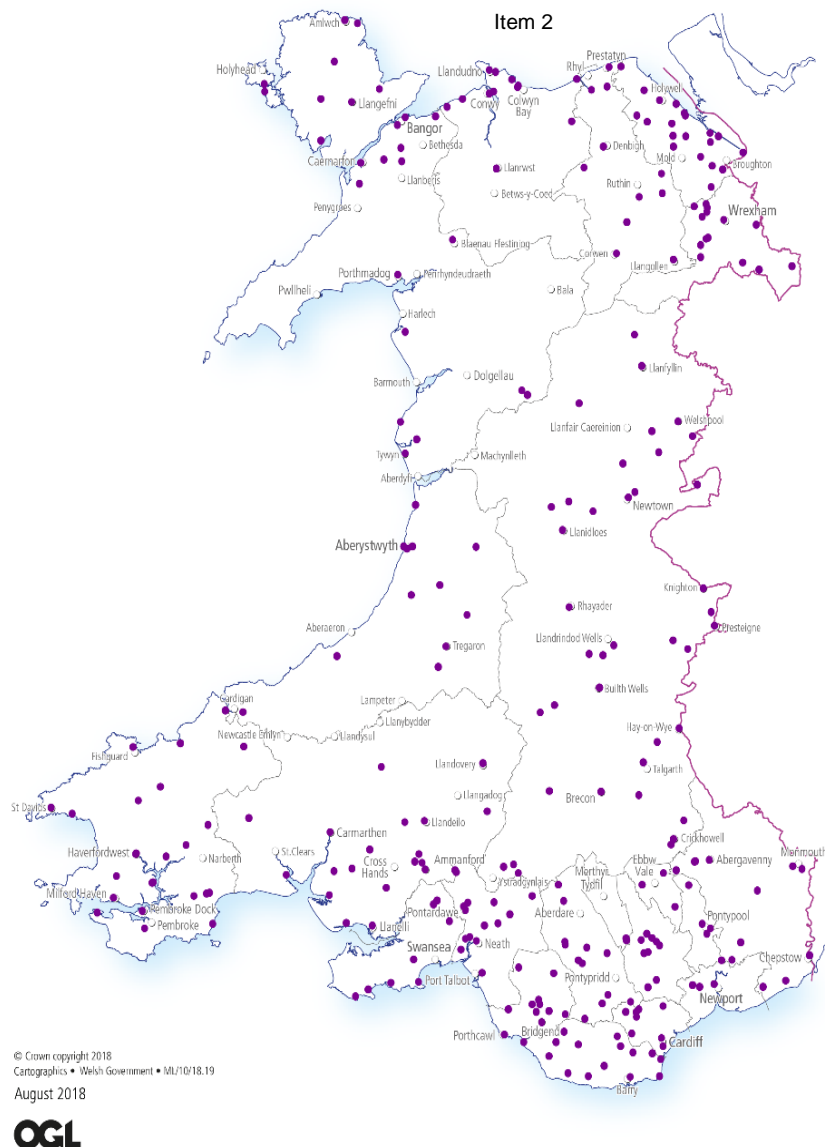
Theme 1: Community and Town Councils - What they are

> **Key Recommendation:**
>
> The case has been made to retain Community and Town Councils on the basis that they are **very local,** are **democratically accountable and are able to raise resources**. All areas should be supported by a Community and Town Council and should be established in all areas that haven't currently got one.

The Cabinet Secretary gave us a uniquely broad and challenging remit, supported by the notion to be radical. We started with the big questions, 'Should Community and Town Councils exist?' and if so, in what form. We explored different models of Local Government from around the world including France[i], Germany[ii], Netherlands[iii], USA[iv] and Denmark[v]. We also considered how Local Governance differs across the UK[vi]. Our case study (at Annex A) outlines the differences between these models and the current model in Wales.

> Read more about how these models compare to here in Wales, as well as our other case studies, in our Annex.

Through our call for evidence, many responses were received around this theme. There was clear disparity between those in favour of retaining Community and Town Councils and those believing they should be abolished. For example, there were comments outlining the flaws in the current system 'they are old-fashioned', 'they are not all fit for purpose'. Respondents also noted that 'society is changing' and that Community and Town Councils should operate 'consistently or not at all'. This was a very small minority view (with 12 responses out of 453 responses to the public survey). The overwhelming majority of responses were concerned with how the sector could be improved; outlining the benefits a Community and Town Council brings including as an enabler for sharing the voice of the community it represents.

We believe the case has been made to retain Community and Town Councils on the grounds that they can:

Provide / Commission Services   Represent and Influence   Enable others to act   Be a communications channel
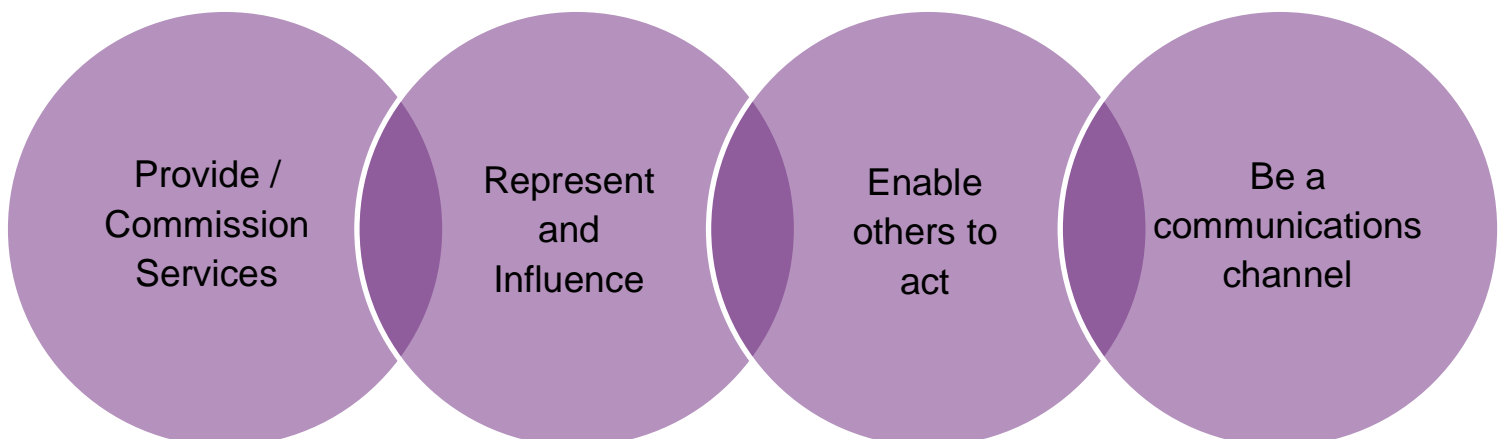
The key features of a Community and Town Council, which other models of community governance do not provide, are that they operate at a **very local level**, **democratically accountable** and are **able to raise resources**. They are uniquely positioned to be pivots of local democratic action and resourced to lead, change and influence.

Whilst we felt that there are defects in the current system, replacing the model as a whole would be difficult. There is not one alternative solution that would fit all areas across Wales. This does not mean that Community and Town Councils should continue as they are. We believe there is scope to be radical in how councils operate in the future.

All areas should be supported by a Community and Town Council. We believe that unless universal coverage is achieved there would be areas of unmet need, if the role we envisage for Community and Town Councils is to be realised. Every effort should be made to ensure local communities are aware of the benefits of having a Community and Town Council. We know there are challenges in existing Community and Town Councils regarding attracting an appropriate number of individuals to stand for election, so more needs to be done beyond just establishing Community and Town Councils in all areas across Wales.

With over 730 Community and Town Councils in Wales, it's hard to imagine that there are community areas without a council. But, we know that there are approximately 110 communities or 30% of the country's population without a council. Only 12 Local Authority areas in Wales have total coverage in respect of Community and Town Councils (see item 3).

We have had difficulties in obtaining detailed evidence from those areas without full coverage. We know that in these areas, other community organisations play a similar role – for example in Merthyr Tydfil. We heard evidence from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, who confirmed that where Community and Town Councils do not currently exist in the Borough, they believe their ability to respond in a swift and agile fashion to the challenges posed by austerity has been demonstrably weaker.[vii]

Item 3

full coverage

does not have full coverage

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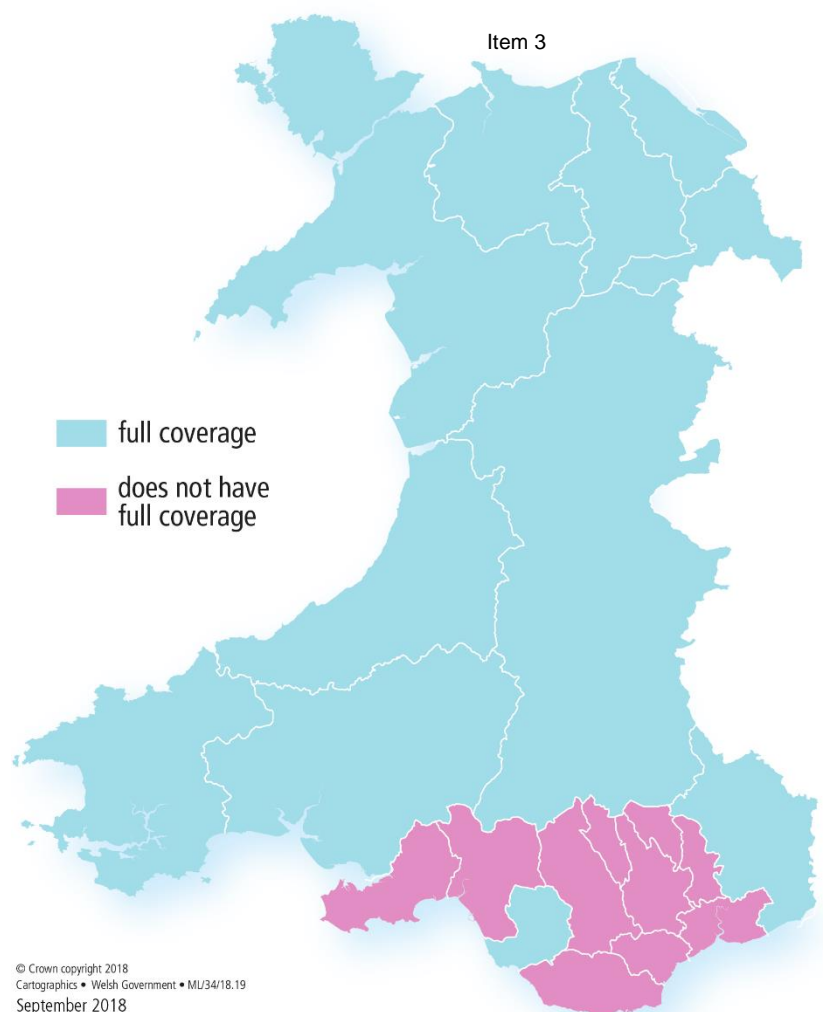
Local Authorities have also told us that it is often difficult to consider transferring services when they do not have coverage across the authority. The lack of coverage potentially causes issues of inconsistency and more confusion for the general public.

We are of the view that universal coverage is important and preferable and the foundation of other recommendations. **We would expect Welsh Government to make every effort to encourage, promote and support local communities which do not currently have Community or Town Councils to establish them**.

The boundaries of a Community and Town Council need to be relevant and fit for purpose in order to correctly serve the local community. A strength of Community and Town Councils is that they are locally based and have a natural sense of community. We believe it is not for us as a Panel to draw lines on a map, or to propose an arbitrary reduction in numbers. However, some of the present boundaries of Community and Town Councils no longer best serve their communities, for example reflecting recent housing developments.

We also do not believe that some Community and Town Councils will be sustainable or be able to fulfil the role we envisage for them if they remain as they are. Many Community and Town Councils will need to work together to fulfil the role envisaged in later findings. Some Community and Town Councils may choose to merge to play that role.

We sought and received both written and oral evidence from the Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales and considered the *Guidance for Principal Councils on the Review of Communities*. We know that the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013, requires that a Local Authority conducts a community review every ten years[viii]. From the Boundary Commission's evidence, we know that the extent to which Local Authorities have undertaken community reviews varies. We understand that all but five of the 22 Local Authorities have carried out reviews within the last ten years. Of the outstanding five, one has not made any changes to the communities in their area since 1996[ix].

We believe there should be a comprehensive review of boundaries of Community and Town Councils without delay to ensure community areas fit the current and future needs of their community and the future role envisaged for them arising from later findings. **Community areas should then be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure they continue to make sense as areas (and needs) change and develop.**

There is significant variation between Community and Town Councils across Wales, not just in function but capacity and capability too. There are different sizes of Community and Town Councils, ranging from the very small 'micro' Community Councils to very large Town Councils.

They also operate differently, for example, in terms of the formality of governance. Some Community and Town Councils currently deliver services. Some are purely focussed on representing their community. Each has its value.

There have already been two attempts to distinguish between existing Community and Town Councils. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales has determined a set of groupings of Community and Town Councils for mandatory payment for councillors[x]. Furthermore, in suggesting pay scales for clerks, the agreement by the Society for Local Council Clerks and the National Association for Local Councils groups Community and Town Councils into bands based on scale of activity and job evaluations.[xi]

In the context of this review the main distinguishing factor is whether they are able (have the capacity and capability) to fulfil the place based service delivery role envisaged by us and explained in later recommendations. We are not prescribing an arbitrary threshold for this, either in terms of geography, population or income, though all of these will impact on a council's ability to operate.

We believe that every council should play the same role that we outline elsewhere but have the scope to play that role differently whether they choose to:

- deliver it themselves

- group together to deliver or

- commission services from other Community and Town Councils or their Local Authority or Third or Private Sectors.

We have heard of many different ways Community and Town Councils already deliver services in a way that suits them best. For example, we know from the Auditor General for Wales report on *Financial Management and Governance in Local Councils[xii]* that some Community and Town Councils jointly provide services through joint committees established for specific services, usually burial services. Each of these models has its value.

Community and Town Councils are part of the wider Local Government landscape. It is important for them to work effectively and collectively with Local Authorities. Too often these relationships feel forced and Community and Town Councils are seen as 'pests not partners'. Community and Town Councils and Local Authorities should be equal partners and are not accountable to each other.

Positive, meaningful and equal engagement is required between Community and Town Councils and Local Authorities. Later recommendations suggest how we believe this is best achieved for the benefit of communities across Wales.

Theme 2: Community and Town Councils - What they do

> **Key Recommendation:**
>
> Place based services should be delivered by Community and Town Councils.

There is a need for greater clarity on the purpose and role of Community and Town Councils, guided by the principle of what can be done better locally.

When we asked about the delivery role a Community or Town Council should play, many respondents outlined very local non-statutory community services. For example, public footpaths, social centres, street cleaning, public conveniences, cemeteries, parks, tourist information etc. A significant proportion of the evidence received for the review highlights the confusion between the responsibilities of Community and Town Councils and Local Authorities. In some cases, there is even confusion from Community and Town Councils themselves.

We believe there should be a clear distinction between what a Community and Town Council is responsible for and what the Local Authority is responsible for. This will provide clarity for the public and drive change. Community and Town Councils should, by and large, be responsible for all 'place-based' services and Local Authorities should be responsible for 'people based' or statutory, regulatory or strategic services (such as education, social care and environmental health).

> Caerwys Town Council, together with Community Councils of Halkyn and Whitford, work jointly on street lighting.
>
> Llandudoch Community Council worked in partnership to identify possible land for allotments.

We have determined that 'place-based' should be any (mainly discretionary) services that helps the social, cultural, economic & environmental, and physical wellbeing of the community which can be linked to a place and can vary from place to place, rather than people based, statutory or regulatory services that are more likely to need equitable service across the country. It is difficult to determine a full list of place-based as these services can vary based on community need and lists can quickly become out of date. Examples of place-based services could include[1]:

- Burial Grounds
- Bus Shelters and Street Furniture and Features
- Community Assets including: Village halls / centres, Toilets etc
- Culture, Tourism and Heritage including: Libraries, Arts venues, Museums
- Environment including: Street cleaning / street bin collection, Litter, Grass cutting, Drainage
- Highways including: local footpaths and pavements

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[1] Some of these services could be delivered by a Community and Town Councils in agreement with the relevant authority.

- Leisure / Recreational Facilities including: Leisure centres, sports halls
- Markets
- Playing Fields / Open Spaces / Parks / Allotments
- Transport including: Local community / village transport / bus shelters
- War Memorials.

We believe that 'People-based services', statutory, regulatory and statutory strategic 'place-based services' should remain at Local Authority level. We have outlined below some examples of functions that we consider are NOT place-based services. This is not an exhaustive list.
- Electoral & Registrar Services
- Revenue Billing and Collection
- Strategic and Regulatory Education, Social Services, Housing & Health
- Strategic and Regulatory Waste Management – Disposal, Household Collection and Recycling
- Strategic and Regulatory Highways and Transport – Acting as a highway authority responsible for trunk roads, maintaining roads, managing traffic flow
- Regulatory Consumer Protection
- Regulatory Environmental Health and Services
- Strategic and Regulatory Planning
- Strategic Economic Development
- Emergency Planning.

In many cases, defining place-based will be down to local determination and need. We recognise there will be variations where the margins between the two are not always clear, nevertheless, we feel use of this distinction provides clearer separation for public, staff and councils themselves between the role of Community and Town Councils and Local Authorities.

We considered the January 2018 research undertaken by Welsh Government on the *Management and delivery of services and assets in Community and Town Councils*[xiii]. The research found that Community and Town Councils are already taking on place based services within their communities. For example, of the 254 councils who responded to the survey, 81 per cent reported that they provided services / amenities to the public. The three most common services provided were noticeboards, seating, and playing fields, village greens and other green space. Other services provided included flowers and play area car parks, youth services and leisure services. Of the 203 councils that indicated whether they had taken on services in the last 12 months, 21 per cent reported that they had done so. The most common recently acquired services/amenities were playing fields, village greens and other green space, public conveniences, bus shelters and Christmas lights. Finally, 28 per cent of all councils surveyed signalled their intention to take on services in the next 12 months; most of these had not also taken on services in the previous 12 months.

The role Community and Town Councils play in local land use planning was highlighted by the majority of sector responses, with many Community and Town Councils themselves noting the lack of weight given to their responses to planning applications. We believe that planning is best delivered strategically, as it is now.

However, we feel more could be done to strengthen responses from a Community and Town Council – both in terms of the quality of the response and weight given to it. We will address this through later recommendations. Community and Town Councils are also well placed to facilitate the development of Place Plans as part of the supplementary planning guidance underpinning Local Development Plans.

We believe in the principle of subsidiarity and that certain services should be devolved if they can be better delivered and have the biggest impact for citizens at that level. **We expect place based services to become the responsibility of Community and Town Councils.** We recognise there will be need for a transition period however we believe this process should start as soon as possible. Universal coverage of Community and Town Councils with sufficient capacity and capability is an implicit requirement of this.

It is vital for Community and Town Councils to have the ability to do whatever they think is best for their community – above and beyond

delivering the place-based services described above. Community and Town Councils should have the ability to undertake additional activity which is supplementary and complementary to other 'people' based services provided by the Local Authority (rather than taking over the role) providing this is based on local want and need. For example, the power to generate and supply community energy locally.

Community and Town Councils should have a key role in supporting the implementation of Social Services and Wellbeing Act by providing basic information and support in their communities. In their role as an enabler of community activity, Community and Town Councils are often an incubator for unique ideas / solutions and this should be supported.

We know there are many examples of where a Community or Town Council has gone above and beyond 'normal' council activity to address a want and need in their community. We believe **Community and Town Councils have a clear role to improve the well-being of people in their areas and should not be constrained from doing anything they deem required by their community.** We believe the forthcoming introduction of the General Power of Competence, this will give the flexibility needed.

> Monmouth Town Council has been working in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council and Monmouthshire Museums Service to support people living with dementia and their carers.

Community and Town Councils must have the necessary powers for them to undertake the place-based delivery role we envisage for them.

Over the course of the review, we have heard a lot of evidence around the need to review the legislative framework for Community and Town Councils. It does not seem sensible that councils have the power to own a boating lake but do not have the powers to run a swimming pool. This is just one example of the anomalies we found.

We have considered the powers available to them and while it is clear there are some powers missing from the framework of powers available to Community and Town Councils, we do not feel it would be prudent to attempt to list and address

each of these powers separately, given the scope for any set of powers to become outdated.

With the forthcoming introduction of the General Power of Competence, and intention to make this available to councils which meet certain criteria, we believe this will provide the legislative power needed for Community and Town Councils to fulfil the role envisaged for them.

We call upon all Community and Town Councils to be working towards meeting the criteria to be able to exercise the General Power of Competence and think it is reasonable to expect them to achieve this within the next three years.

There is a key role for Community and Town Councils continuing to act as a local voice of the community. Community and Town Councils are not a 'lesser' tier of Local Government but the closest tier to communities. Their local knowledge is crucial and being a local advocate for decisions / advice to other partners (including Local Authorities, Public Services Boards, Welsh Government and other community organisations) is a key role they could and should play. Community and Town Councils ought to be an integral part of decisions on use and allocation of public funds that affects 'their place'.

A key function of Community and Town Councils should be as a provider of information for their communities and to become a local hub / play a signposting role. They are ideally placed to be the key mechanism by which information is shared within their community.

A lot of evidence from members of the public identified a key role in Community and Town Councils being at the centre of community life. They are ideally placed to share information both with the community and from the community. As mentioned above, the majority of responses from Community and Town Councils themselves outlined the lack of weight placed upon their views, particularly in relation to planning.

Community and Town Councils should have a stronger voice in helping to shape their areas. **We recommend that an explicit duty to represent their communities is explored to give formal weight to the voice of Community and Town Councils, subject to any relevant protocols.** We also believe that a duty to provide information should be considered.

In relation to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we know that it currently applies in a limited way to Community and Town Councils (with a duty on larger Community and Town Councils to take reasonable steps towards delivering the local well-being plan for their area). If we are to truly benefit future generations, Community and Town Councils play a vital role in improving well-being and this should be recognised more fully.

We recommend that while they should not be subject to the full well-being duty **all Community and Town Councils should be required to act in line with the Sustainable Development Principle (the five ways of working).**

We know there are good examples of Public Service Boards (PSBs) who already engage with Community and Town Councils in their areas, to include the voice of their communities in the work of the PSB. For example, we know that Vale of Glamorgan and Ceredigion PSBs both have representatives from Community and Town Councils on the board.

While we know some PSBs have sought representation from Community and Town Councils in their work, we are conscious that Community and Town Councils have no formal role on a PSB and believe this should be rectified. To be able to play this role Community and Town Councils need to have the democratic mandate to do so and we come to this later.

We recommend that Community and Town Councils – or a representative of them – should become a statutorily invited participant on all Public Service Boards.

Since the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Carmarthenshire Public Service Board have developed a good working relationship with the seven councils which come under the duty of the Act and meet regularly with them.

To be good at the above, Community and Town Councils should play an active role in engaging and consulting their communities. While there are examples of good practice in this area this is not universal and currently Community and Town Councils have no duties in relation to engaging or involving their communities.

Respondents to the review highlighted the variation in Community and Town Council engagement. Some were supportive outlining the lengths their community council goes to in engaging their community, whether this is through events, newsletters or community planning. However many responses, particularly from members of the public, noted that they had not been engaged by their community council. In addition, over half of responses received from young people had not had contact with or been involved in their community council (excluding when completing our survey).

Monmouth Town Council devised an event for the community to create lanterns for display during an evening parade.

In Llandough, the council asked the community how their services were being used and how they could be improved.

Some respondents highlighted language as a barrier to engaging with their community council. We note that all residents have the right to engage with their Community or Town Council in the language of their choice and councils should take appropriate action to meet this need, as far as is reasonable and practicable. Access to Community and Town Council business should be a right to all individuals including disabled people, again as far as reasonably practicable.

We believe there should be set standards and principles all Community and Town Councils should follow in terms of Community Engagement.

To enable Community and Town Councils to truly represent their communities, **we recommend that Community and Town Councils have a duty to engage and are supported in doing this appropriately**. This should be combined with a requirement to set out what they intend to do, and to report on what they have done. Further detail on how we think this could be achieved is in the last theme.

Theme 3: Community and Town Councils - How they do it

Key Recommendations:

All clerks must hold a professional qualification and CILCA should be the expected minimum qualification.

A core package of training should be mandatory for all councillors as a requirement of acceptance of office.

Community and Town Councils need the capacity and capability to play the role envisaged. Many do not have this capacity and capability currently. Community and Town Councils fall into two categories, those who can independently fulfil the role envisaged for them and those who cannot.

There are a range of different models through which Community and Town Councils could choose to deliver place based services. They could:

- If they are large enough, choose to deliver services themselves

- Work together with Community and Town Councils and / or Third or Private Sectors in their area to deliver services

- Commission these services from their Local Authority or another larger Community and Town Council or Third or Private Sectors.

It is worth noting that there is a distinction between organising to deliver, and the actual delivery. For example, smaller councils may come together to deliver the role and then choose either direct delivery or to commission it. There is also a distinction between 'self-contained' services which could be delivered discretely by a community council and 'cross border' services where the service or asset may sit within one council area but would be used by surrounding councils.

We considered different delivery models, exploring examples across Wales, including the memorandum of understanding to better regulate activities of collaboration established by Llanelli Rural Community Council; varieties of social enterprise such as the one established by the Ogwen Partnership; the limited non-for-profit company established by the Penllyn Partnership; the community interest company being established by North Montgomeryshire; and the non-for-profit social initiative established by Solva Community Council. Each has their value.

We've found many examples of different delivery models and mechanisms including Memorandums of Understanding, Service Level Agreements and Social Enterprises.

Many respondents told us that what and how Community and Town Councils deliver locally should be determined by local need. In addition, we know there is a desire from Community and Town Councils to retain their local identity and not be constrained or overtaken by a larger council. We believe the best model to achieve this is to establish a similar model to the Penllyn and Ogwen models.

However, **we do not believe we should prescribe how Community and Town Councils choose to take on this role we envisage for them.** They should have the flexibility to determine which delivery model works best for them.

To support and encourage Community and Town Councils to work together we believe the Welsh Government should look at mechanisms and incentives to encourage collaboration such as match funding to deliver a joint collaborative project or legal assistance with formal collaborative arrangements. We know that the Welsh Government already encourages Community and Town Councils to work together for a purpose through their clustering grant.

We also believe there should be guidance and support available, including sharing of good practice, to support Community and Town Councils in choosing the best delivery model for them.

Community and Town Councils need to be professionally supported through qualified and independent staff. The clerk is a key source of advice to a Community and Town Council and it is vital the clerk is properly equipped to play that role both in terms of expertise and time. We have heard that they can feel exposed and isolated.

There is a current contradiction and conflict where clerks are employed by a Community and Town Council and a key function of the clerk role, as the proper officer, is to ensure councils and councillors operate within their legal powers. Whilst this is also the case for some officials in a Local Authority, the small numbers of staff (often one person) in a Community and Town Council can exacerbate the situation.

Over the course of the review, we've heard from clerks themselves about the struggles they face. In many cases they've told us that although a very rewarding job, it can be lonely and demanding at times. Whilst many are not full time, they work above and beyond their contractual hours to help their community. Many councils have expressed the vital role their clerk plays in supporting the council and its community.

We know from the Welsh Government's *Management and delivery of services and assets in Community and Town Councils[xiii]* research, that in many cases Community and Town Councils only employ a single clerk. Even then, this vital resource is often part time, with 72 per cent of councils having no full time employees.

The Society of Local Council Clerks commissioned research[xiv] on issues relating to council governance. The research found that, whilst there are a small minority of councils where the clerk or other staff are direct recipients of poor behaviour from councillors, more generally clerks tend to get caught in the crossfire, either as part of general targeting of the way the council is run or because they are having to manage the behaviour or reconcile factions. A minority of respondents said they had left a previous role as a clerk because of the way they were being treated and a handful of respondents were either currently engaged in an employment dispute with their council or actively considering it.

We believe that if clerks operated as part of a 'pool' it could provide them with them with peer support as well as offer opportunities to standardise approaches (such as to terms and conditions); provide more scope for flexibility of support across councils; and enable career progression. **We recommend that Welsh Government should explore how such a Welsh network of clerks would operate.**

Given the key role clerks play in a council, **we recommend all clerks must hold or be working towards a professional qualification and Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA) should be the expected minimum qualification**.

We believe Welsh Government should contribute to the costs associated with achieving this qualification. **We recommend that clerks should be appointed from an approved national list.** This can ensure all clerks have the expected accreditation before being employed by a Community and Town Council as well as providing a mechanism for supporting clerks.

We believe democracy and citizenship should play a strengthened role in the curriculum to help enthuse and encourage young people to play an active role in local democracy and consider the Public Sector as a career.

Even with our recommendations above, we know there is a need, in certain instances, for Community and Town Councils to be able to draw on professional expert advice and support.

Many Community and Town Councils have told us that, despite the efforts of the sector's representative body, there is a lack of professional advice and support available specifically for expert areas. We have heard examples of where Community and Town Councils have required expert advice in relation to human resources support or legal advice.

From considering the evidence, we have identified Community and Town Councils use three different mechanisms to obtain this advice:

- Source the advice (if available) from the Welsh sector representative body, One Voice Wales or, where appropriate, the English sector representative body, National Association of Local Councils

- Source the advice from the Local Authority – in some cases across Wales there are agreements in place for Community and Town Councils to pay for this advice. However, we know there are many cases where this information is given on an ad hoc, free basis (recognising that the Local Authority may have different law and objectives). This can depend on the spare capacity of the Local Authority

- Source the advice independently – this is often costly and can be time consuming to secure.

These different avenues can and often does lead to Community and Town Councils receiving different advice about the same issues. **We believe there is a need for this advice and support to be provided on a national basis**, to ensure consistency, accuracy and efficiency of advice.

It is important that Community and Town Councils have the resources they need to play a place-based delivery role envisaged for them.

In his most recent report[xii], the Auditor General for Wales outlined that community councils' income in Wales has increased by over £7 million since 2014-15 and 75% of this is raised from council tax (precept). Community and Town Council income from precept alone has increased from £33 million in 2014-15 to just over £40 million in 2016-17.

Community and Town Councils have the power to raise precept and shouldn't be reluctant to do so where a clear case has been made through local conversation with their electorate.

Some Community and Town Councils themselves have expressed that they believe it is their duty to keep the precept as low as possible. While we appreciate the sentiment behind this, we know that there are many instances where a Community or Town Council has, in consultation with their community, raised the precept to meet need and deliver valuable services.

From data held by the Wales Audit Office, we know that 325 Community or Town Councils raised less than £10,000 precept during 2016-17. During this period, the lowest precept raised by a Community or Town Councils totalled just £174 whereas the highest precept raised was just over a million pounds at £1,003,230.

Number of councils by precept amount, 2016-17

Less than 5k	5-10k	10-25k	25-50k	50-100k	100-200k	200-500k	Over 500k
162	163	151	100	77	42	36	11
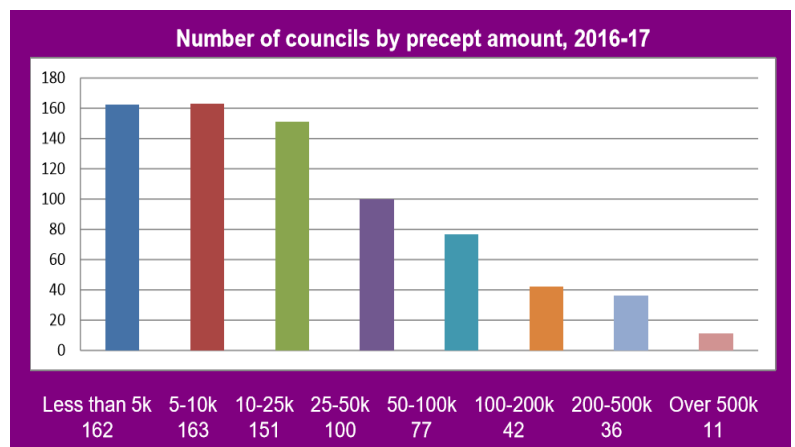
We can clearly see that there are a number of Community and Town Councils whose precept is simply not large enough to deliver an increased role or take on additional responsibilities.

Even when increased, there are also cases where precept would not be sufficient to sustainably fund services. The majority of responses to our surveys outlined the need for greater access to funding for Community and Town Councils. Many respondents identified various different funding streams which it is believed Community and Town Councils should have access to. For example, many Community and Town Councils contribute to the viability of their community, which local businesses benefit from. A vast number of responses highlighted the need for Community and Town Councils to receive a proportion of Business Rates. We also understand there are various restrictions on access to some grants for Community and Town Councils.

Community Councils' reserves are also increasing each year and as of March 2017, totalled £41.5 million. Whilst we know that reserves are held for a variety of reasons, Community and Town Councils' reserves have increased by over £10 million (33%) over the financial years 2014-15 to 2016-17.

When services are transferred from Local Authorities to Community and Town Councils, there is an expectation that an agreement is found in relation to funding. We know this does not happen and often Community and Town Councils are, effectively, asked to take on liabilities without support. While we recognise the financial constraints on Local Authorities, the presumption should be that where Community and Town Councils take on place based services the funding / income associated with them comes with them. In addition, any place based income generated should be received by the community.

We have heard a lot about the issue of 'double taxation'. This appears to take two forms, the first where the public *perceive* that their council tax buys a specific service from the Local Authority, where it may no longer provide it. The second is where the Local Authority delivers a service in one part of its locality but that same service is delivered by a Community or Town Council in other areas of the locality. We believe, a clearer distinction of the role of a Community and Town Council will address the former. More consistent delivery of place-based services by Community and Town Councils will help address the latter.

Some responses have outlined that councils feel constrained by the Section 137 limits, with the financial limit preventing competence and improving communication with the Third Sector at a local level. At our engagement events, attendees told us that there is a lack of clarity and confusion around the Section 137 limits and what the funds can be used for.

We believe there are many different avenues which should be explored in relation to additional funding for Community and Town Councils including:

- Better use of existing funding sources (e.g. raising the precept, using reserves, ability to borrow, power to charge for a discretionary service)

- New access to funding sources (e.g. eligibility for grants, power to trade)

- Redistribution of funding provided to Local Government (e.g. proportions of non-domestic rates and council tax; Community Infrastructure Levy)

- Additional funding (e.g. new local taxation, direct funding from Welsh Government).

We believe that Community and Town Councils should be made aware of, and have increased access to, these alternative sources of funding. In addition, we recommend the Welsh Government should explore how the transfer of funding and income related to place-based services taken on by Community and Town Councils can be achieved.

The role of a Community and Town Council councillor is changing. We know many councillors think of themselves as volunteers, when they are in fact elected members with statutory responsibilities. The Auditor General for Wales confirms that a significant number of Community and Town Councils demonstrate a lack of understanding of the governance framework within which they operate and do not comply with their statutory responsibilities. We agree with the steps taken by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales to reinforce that councillors are elected members. We believe there should be a clearer description of what the 'ask' of a councillor is in light of the new role for councils we have set out.

As elected members, councillors have to meet the standards expected of them in the Code of Conduct[xv] and adhere to the Seven Principles of Public Life (Nolan Principles)[xvi]. We talk more about the conduct of councillors in later recommendations.

Evidence has told us that some councillors are willing to attend regular training, where as some are more reluctant. It is important they are familiar with what's expected of them as councillors.

We recommend that a core package of training should be mandatory for all councillors as a requirement for acceptance of office and that this mandatory training is repeated regularly (every election term). This should include:

- Code of conduct

- Induction (covering role/expectations and the legal framework)

- Being an employer

- Diversity and Inclusion

- Health and Safety

- Finance (core basic requirements)

- Planning (including the requirements of completing a planning response).

We call upon Welsh Government, Community and Town Councils and councillors themselves to ensure all councillors are fully trained and have a training plan.

A lot of evidence and strong views has been received both in favour of, and against party politics. Many responses have outlined how they feel party politics hinders the Community or Town Council in achieving what's best for the community. Conversely, we have heard the benefits party politics can have in demonstrating what Community or Town Council candidates stand for. Community and Town Councils can also provide an avenue for local individuals to enter politics. We believe it is not for this Panel to decide whether party politics should be involved in this tier of Local Government.

There are many councillors who are both a Community or Town Council Councillor and a Councillor for the Local Authority, or on more than one Community or Town Council. Again the Panel has heard a lot of evidence and strong views have been received both in favour of such membership and against. Many respondents have told us that dual membership can help strengthen the relationship between the Community and Town Council and the Local Authority. Conversely, many responses have outlined the confusion it can cause, particularly with members of the public, or when discussing issues that are impacted by the Local Authority's agenda.

In their response to the review, the Welsh Local Government Association[xvii] tried to compile details of the number of 'dual' councillors across Local Authorities in Wales. However, they only received information from thirteen Local Authorities. Out of the thirteen responses, 433 out of 790 councillors or 54.8% were identified as 'dual'.

We believe that whilst having dual members can help engagement it can cause conflicts of interest, as well as constraining the democratic pool and causing confusion. For these reasons, **we recommend against having dual members regardless of the types of councils** and that County councillors should regularly attend Community and Town Councils within their wards (in ex-officio capacity) to ensure engagement.

It is important that councils are nimble. Councils should be focusing on strategic decisions and using a committee system, where appropriate, or delegation to officials to take forward the operational detail. This will enable councils to focus on 'What is to be done' and Committees and or officers focus on 'How it's done'. We call on Community and Town Councils to be nimble, agile and strategic in the way they serve their community. We also recommend that all Community and Town Councils should set out a Scheme of Delegation with the aim of achieving faster decision making at a level appropriate to scale and implications of the decision.

To enable them to focus on the core business of the council there are opportunities to share 'back office' functions (including but not exclusively HR, Payroll, Finance etc.). **We recommend that Community and Town Councils should look to share back office functions**.

Despite Community and Town Councils being required to have a website, we know from the Auditor General for Wales report[xii] that whilst there has been a significant increase in the numbers of councils with websites, over 100 councils do not have adequate arrangements in place to comply with the requirements of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

New Radnor Community Council has recently modernised its website targeted at engaging the community.

We also know that some of the requirements on a Community or Town Council, are enshrined in laws made a number of years ago which could not foresee the development of technology as we use it now. For instance, Community and Town Councils should have the ability to issue summons and papers electronically.

We know many Community and Town Councils are starting to use social media to enhance the way they work. For example, some councils are starting to live stream portions of their meetings. **We recommend Community and Town Councils explore digital mechanisms to aid ways of meeting, engaging and sharing information.**

Community and Town Councils must work closely and have strong relationships with partners in the area to benefit the community.

Community and Town Councils should 'collaborate not compete' with partners including sharing information and working with Third Sector partners. We know that there are parallels between the engagement and involvement undertaken by both the Third Sector and Community and Town Councils.

In particular, there is a need for a better relationship with Local Authorities. We know that it is not a consistent picture across Wales in relation to Local Authority relationships with Community and Town Councils. A number of partnership forums exist with the aim of fostering relationships, but there is not universal coverage of these forums and the quality of them vary. For example, some meet quarterly where as some meet just once or twice a year. Beyond these forums, we are aware of other connections for example, as mentioned previously, we know there are some Community and Town Councils who have arrangements in place with their Local Authorities to obtain expert advice.

While many responses highlight the importance of a strong relationship between the two tiers of Local Government, ultimately we've heard much about the failings in this relationship. For example, many Community and Town Councils believe Local Authorities see them as a burden and subsidiary to them. Responses received from Local Authorities themselves highlight the difficulties in establishing and maintaining a good relationship with Community and Town Councils, outlining the inconsistencies between councils and patchwork coverage as barriers to good relationship building. We note that there are examples of Local Authorities identifying the gap in their relationship with Community and Town Councils and are seeking to address this.

We believe that, across Wales, relationships can and should be improved. We recommend that **all Local Authorities should have regular partnership forums** with Community and Town Councils based on equal partnership in a common goal. There should be meaningful charters, or other ways of formalising the relationship, in place. In addition, **Local Authorities should have a dedicated liaison officer** for liaising with Community and Town Councils in the region. It is important that Community and Town Councils have access to the right people to speak to.

In Wrexham, a Forum was organised to bring together Town and Community Councils and the County Borough to discuss issues of common interest.

Flintshire County Council has jointly agreed a charter with its Town and Community Councils and meets regularly.

Conwy County Borough Council have set up five Local Area Forums and are piloting different models of working with Town and Community Councils.

Theme 4: Community and Town Councils - How they are held to account

It is important that Community and Town Councils are accountable for their actions – they raise and spend public money and run public services. Democratic accountability is a main feature of their role and this should be strengthened.

Ultimately Community and Town Councils are held to account by their public and the ballot box. But not all members of a Community and Town Council are elected, many are co-opted. This calls into question the democratic mandate of the council.

There was a noticeable lack of candidates in the 2017 elections. We know from the 2017 Local Government Elections data that over 64% of seats in Wales were elected uncontested. The map (item 5) shows the lack of elections across Wales. All but two Local Authorities had under 50% contested seats. Bridgend had the lowest amount of uncontested seats, with just 28%. In comparison, Cardiff had the highest amount of uncontested seats with 74%.

Item 5

SEATS
- Contested
- Elected uncontested
- Empty

Local Authority — No. of councils
no. of seats per category
Total number of seats

WALES 737/739
1531 | 5075 | 1348
7954

ISLE OF ANGLESEY 40
33 | 293 | 136
462

CONWY 35
69 | 245 | 45
359

FLINTSHIRE 34
105 | 272 | 63
440

DENBIGHSHIRE 37/39
122 | 207 | 48
377

GWYNEDD 64
71 | 536 | 139
746

WREXHAM 34
50 | 285 | 86
421

CEREDIGION 51
79 | 384 | 77
540

POWYS 110
93 | 743 | 205
1041

MONMOUTHSHIRE 33
68 | 218 | 70
356

PEMBROKESHIRE 77
119 | 454 | 116
689

CARMARTHENSHIRE 72
182 | 500 | 108
790

MERTHYR TYDFIL 1
6 | 3
9

BLAENAU GWENT 4
6 | 41 | 22
69

RHONDDA CYNON TAF 12
58 | 77 | 14
149

TORFAEN 6
27 | 49
78

SWANSEA 24
32 | 186 | 64
282

CAERPHILLY 18
58 | 131 | 14
203

NEATH PORT TALBOT 19
90 | 124 | 34
248

NEWPORT 14
16 | 83 | 31
130

BRIDGEND 20
155 | 66 | 13
234

CARDIFF 6
46 | 16
62

VALE OF GLAMORGAN 26
98 | 129 | 42
269

We recognise there are significant challenges in attracting more candidates. To support candidates in standing for election, **we recommend that Welsh Government support vibrant elections with a national campaign** encouraging people to step forward to represent their communities. **We also recommend Welsh Government explore a free post for Community and Town Councils**, allowing election literature to be delivered post free to electors and that this should be in the form of one item of literature per candidate for each household.

We have heard that some Community and Town Councils are consciously avoiding the cost of holding an election by ensuring they have the right number of candidates for seats available. **We believe that elections should be called regardless of whether seats are contested**. Consideration should be given to the financial implications of this for councils.

We recognise the value of co-opted members; they can bring a range of perspectives from within the community that may not otherwise be heard. However, it is important that members are democratically accountable. To ensure democratic accountability, **we recommend that councillors cannot be co-opted for more than a one consecutive term**. We believe that one term should be enough for individuals to determine if they want to stand for formal election.

There is a lack of diversity amongst current Community and Town Council councillors, in terms of age as well as gender and BME representation. From the Welsh Government Local Government Candidates Survey[xviii], based on the 2017 Local Government Elections, we know that over half (55 per cent) of community councillors are aged 60 or above. We also know that 1.2 per cent of community councillors were non-white and around 65 per cent of candidates were male. Furthermore, amongst community councillors, 15 per cent considered themselves to have a disability. In line with the Social Model of Disability, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and adopted by Welsh Government, there is need to remove barriers, including negative attitudes and physical barriers preventing people's inclusion.

A Community and Town Council cannot be truly representational unless it reflects the diversity of its community. Over the course of the review, we have heard anecdotally of Community and Town Councils actively encouraging wider diversity in their councils. However, we have also heard of barriers to engaging with councils, for example of individual experiences where some people have struggled balancing timings of community council meetings with personal commitments. **We believe more should be done to encourage diversity as part of the national campaign** to encourage involvement in elections.

Significant responses identified the need to engage with young people, including from young people themselves. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 enabled the appointment of community youth representatives by youth councils. We know that a number of Community and Town Councils work with young people in their area and have a youth council, however, this again is not universal.

> Barry Youth Action listens to the views and ideas of young people, ensuring they are taken into account when decisions are made.

For example, within the Vale of Glamorgan, the Vale Youth Service supports the Youth Cabinet to represent the voice of young people living in the Vale of Glamorgan. There is ongoing work to consider decreasing the Voting Age nationally. **We recommend that if the national voting age is lowered**, **the age an individual can become a Community and Town Council Councillor should be lowered to the same age**. No matter what the voting or councillor age is, there will always be a need to build youth engagement in the work of the council.

There is a lack of visibility of the work of Community and Town Councils.

There is a significant need to increase awareness of their existence and work within their communities, as well as a need to engage with communities when making decisions.

From our engagement, we know that many members of the public have had little engagement from their Community or Town Council. From our Public Survey, we know that over 52% (or 238 respondents out of 453) confirmed they had not been engaged by their council. When asked how they would like their council to engage with the community, many responses suggested holding councillor surgeries, specific public events and utilising social media.

In addition, our youth survey has also revealed that almost 52% of youth respondents had not been engaged by their Community or Town Council. When asked how they would like to see their council involve younger members, youth respondents suggested engaging through local events, targeting engagement at youth representatives or engaging with local schools.

Community and Town Councils should all publicise and engage with their communities on their work – engagement is a key function and feature of their role. There are good examples of where the community has been engaged in decision making (through annual reports, newsletters, town meetings etc.), but there are areas where this is lacking and more needs to be done.

> Many Community and Town Councils engage with their community through newsletters, annual reports, social media and events.

Community councils should be setting out what they intend to do over the coming year as part of their budget decisions. We believe that **Community and Town Councils should follow a cycle of engage, plan, undertake and report**.
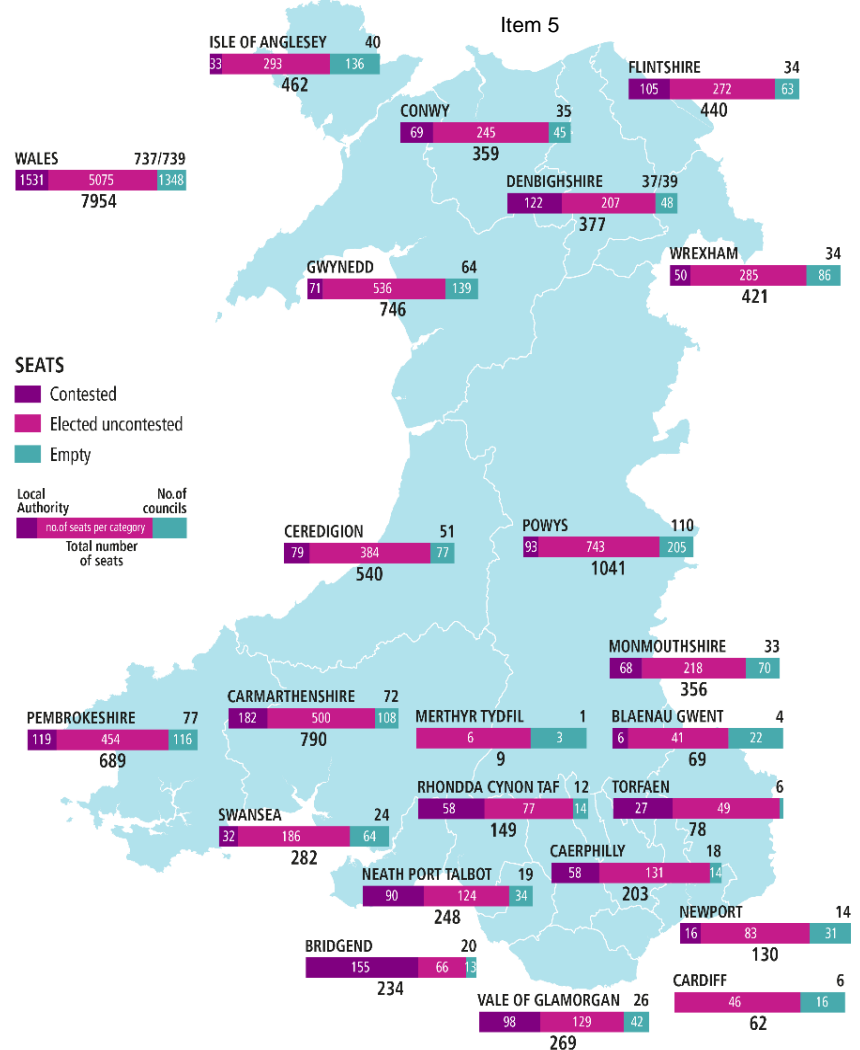
We recommend that all Community and Town Councils should provide an information leaflet with their precept notification, setting out what their plans for the year are. Furthermore, **all Community and Town Councils should have a duty to report annually** explaining what they've achieved over the last year and what they are planning on spending the future year's precept on.

We would like to see councillors as well as councils being held to account, for example by providing summary reports to their electors on what they have achieved. As a minimum, councils should be required to publish their councillors' attendance record in the same way as it publishes their remuneration record.

We know in Wales there is no requirement to hold an Annual Community or Town Meeting – unlike England. The Welsh Government encourages Community and Town Councils to invite public participation and some have a dedicated time in council meetings in which members of the public can express their views or ask questions. It is not known how many Community or Town Councils in Wales host meetings explicitly for members of the public. When considering the engagement evidence we received, it appears a small number of Community or Town Councils engage their communities through occasional public meetings. **We believe, all Community and Town Councils should be legally required to hold at least one public (community / town) meeting per year.**

Finally, Community and Town Councils should look to involve their community on an ongoing basis. **We recommend Community and Town Councils include social media as a mechanism by which to achieve this**.

Appropriate governance structures need to be in place to hold Community and Town Councils to account.

It is important that Community and Town Councils are accountable for the public money they spend and that this is managed well.

We believe that the audit regime developed by the Wales Audit Office is proportionate for Community and Town Councils. Despite this, many Community and Town Councils fail audit on basic issues each year.

Within the latest Auditor General for Wales report[xii], it is clear that over 80 councils failed to comply with the statutory timetable for publishing the audited accounting statements. Furthermore, 21 councils failed to submit their annual accounts for audit before 30 November 2017, two months after the councils were required to publish audited accounts and five months after the accounts were required to be approved by the councils. The Auditor General also notes that councils frequently submit annual return that are incomplete or contain simple errors. 86 councils in total made simple mistakes in completing their accounting statements. Whilst this is a significant improvement over the 175 councils that made simple errors in 2015-16, 30 councils made the same simple mistakes in both years' accounts.

There is advice and support from the Wales Audit Office, but we believe more support is needed. **We recommend more support is provided to smaller Community and Town Councils in order to help them fulfil audit requirements.**

There is evidence that the conduct of some councillors is not desirable for an elected member nor appropriate towards staff.

The Society of Local Council Clerks commissioned research[xiv] on issues relating to council governance, the Code of Conduct and standards arrangements under the Localism Act 2011. Whilst covering both England and Wales, the research notes that most councils do not have issues with member behaviour, however a significant minority (some 15%) do have serious issues.

Most clerks are dissatisfied with the outcome of complaints and the way they have been handled with a minority saying they (and in some cases their councillors) no longer see the point in making a complaint. There is a significant feeling that the current legislative framework means certain individuals now believe they are 'untouchable' and are given free rein to cause disruption and that problems therefore go on longer without coming to a resolution.

The Auditor General for Wales confirms that many councils are unable to provide evidence that they have adopted a Code of Conduct for members. This is a legal requirement and one we would expect all councils to meet.

In 2017-18, the Public Service Ombudsman[xix] received 167 Code of Conduct complaints involving Community and Town Councils. This is an increase of 33% since 2016-17. Whilst the Ombudsman clarifies that it is difficult to say exactly why there has been an increase, he believes many complaints have arisen following changes in council membership and difficulties between long established and new members.

We believe that the existing process for complaints about code of conduct is sufficient, but sufficient resources need to be in place to ensure these complaints are dealt with promptly. However, we have heard that there are sometimes cases where responsibility for complaints is not always clear. There should be easily available information which provides more clarity around these procedures. Furthermore, we hope that compliance with the Code of Conduct will be improved as a result of the mandatory training mentioned in an earlier recommendation.

We recommend that for the protection of other councillors, and of staff and for conducive running of the council that current behaviour is considered as being a factor in 'Qualification for Office', in particular current legal orders or sentences relating to unacceptable behaviour.

There is a lack of powers to formally support, and in a last resort, intervene in a Community or Town Council if it experiences service or corporate failures. This becomes more significant particularly if they are to take more of a place based service delivery role envisaged for them.

We believe, if Community and Town Councils take on the role we envisage for them, there should be some degree of safeguarding measures in place. We recommend, the emphasis should be on support, with intervention only as a last resort, and should be proportionate to the services delivered by the Community and Town Council. However, this responsibility should reside with the Welsh Government as Community and Town Councils are not subservient to Local Authorities.

Summary of Recommendations

A summary of our recommendations can be found below. As you can see from the main body of the report, we have highlighted our key recommendation in each theme. Other recommendations are identified within the text as they are marked out in bold.

Community and Town Councils – What they are

➢ **The case has been made to retain Community and Town Councils on the basis that they are very local, are democratically accountable and are able to raise resources. All areas should be supported by a Community and Town Council and should be established in all areas that haven't currently got one.**

➢ We would expect Welsh Government to make every effort to encourage, promote and support local communities which do not currently have Community or Town Councils to establish them.

➢ We believe there should be a comprehensive review of boundaries of Community and Town Councils without delay. These boundaries should then be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure they continue to make sense as areas (and needs) change and develop.

➢ We believe that every council should play the same place based delivery role that we outline elsewhere but have the scope to play that role differently.

Community and Town Councils – What they do

➢ **We expect place based services to become the responsibility of Community and Town Councils.** We recognise there will be need for a transition period however we believe this process should start as soon as possible.

➢ Community and Town Councils have a clear role to improve the well-being of people in their areas and should not be constrained from doing anything they deem required by their community.

➢ We call upon all Community and Town Councils to be working towards meeting the criteria to be able to exercise the General Power of Competence and think it is reasonable to expect them to achieve this within the next three years.

➢ We recommend that an explicit duty to represent is explored to give formal weight to the voice of Community and Town Councils, subject to any relevant protocols.

➢ All Community and Town Councils should be required to act in line with the Sustainable Development Principle (the five ways of working).

- ➢ We recommend that Community and Town Councils – or a representative of them – should become a statutorily invited participant on all Public Service Boards.

- ➢ We recommend that Community and Town Councils have a duty to engage and are supported in doing this appropriately.

Community and Town Councils – How they do it

- ➢ We do not believe we should prescribe how Community and Town Councils choose to take on the place based service delivery role we envisage for them. They should have the flexibility to determine which delivery model works best for them.

- ➢ We recommend that Welsh Government should explore how a Welsh network of clerks would operate.

- ➢ **We recommend all clerks must hold or be working towards a professional qualification and CILCA should be the expected minimum qualification.**

- ➢ We recommend that clerks should be appointed from an approved national list.

- ➢ We believe there is a need for expert advice and support to be provided on a national basis to ensure consistency, accuracy and efficiency of advice.

- ➢ Community and Town Councils should be made aware of, and have increased access to, alternative sources of funding. In addition, we recommend the Welsh Government should explore how the transfer of funding and income related to place-based services taken on by Community and Town Councils can be achieved.

- ➢ **A core package of training should be mandatory for all councillors and that this mandatory training is repeated regularly (every election term).**

- ➢ We recommend against having dual members, regardless of the types of councils and that County councillors should regularly attend Community and Town Councils within their wards (in ex-officio capacity) to ensure engagement.

- ➢ We recommend that Community and Town Councils should look to share back office functions.

- ➢ We recommend Community and Town Councils explore digital mechanisms to aid ways of meeting, engaging and sharing information.

- ➢ We recommend all Local Authorities should have regular partnership forums with Community and Town Councils and that all Local Authorities should have a dedicated liaison officer for liaising with Community and Town Councils in the region.

Community and Town Councils – How they are held to account

➢ We recommend that Welsh Government support vibrant elections with a national campaign encouraging people to step forward to represent their communities. We also recommend Welsh Government explore a free post for Community and Town Councils.

➢ We believe that elections should be called regardless of whether seats are contested.

➢ We recommend that councillors cannot be co-opted for more than a one consecutive term.

➢ We believe more should be done to encourage diversity as part of the national campaign.

➢ We recommend that if the national voting age is lowered, the age you can become a Community and Town Council Councillor should be lowered to the same age.

➢ **Community and Town Councils should follow a cycle of engage, plan, undertake and report.**

➢ We recommend that all Community and Town Councils should provide an information leaflet with their precept notification.

➢ **All Community and Town Councils should have a duty to report annually.**

➢ We believe, all Community and Town Councils should be legally required to hold at least one public (community / town) meeting per year.

➢ We recommend Community and Town Councils utilise social media as a key mechanism by which to involve their community on an ongoing basis.

➢ We believe that the audit regime developed by the Wales Audit Office is proportionate for Community and Town Councils. We recommend more support is provided to smaller Community and Town Councils in order to help them fulfil audit requirements.

➢ We believe that the existing process for complaints about code of conduct is sufficient, but sufficient resources need to be in place to ensure these complaints are dealt with promptly.

➢ We recommend that for the protection of other councillors, and of staff and for conducive running of the council that current behaviour is considered as being a factor in 'Qualification for Office'.

➢ We believe, if Community and Town Councils take on the role we envisage for them, there should be some degree of safeguarding measures in place.

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Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales

Annex A - Case Studies

Over the course of the review we have issued calls for Case Studies to all Community and Town Councils and considered the recent examples from the One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Awards. We have considered each case study and have selected a few below that we feel best describe some of our recommendations.

Theme 1: Community and Town Councils - What they are

Case Study 1: Other governance models

In other parts of the world local governance looks and feels quite different. For example, the French Commune (made up of a deliberative or decision-making body (the municipal council) and an executive (the Mayor)) is elected for six years. They lay down guidelines for municipal policy, adopt the budget, manage municipal assets, notably primary school buildings and equipment, and decide how the municipal administration is to operate.

Germany has an openly citizen centred approach, with citizen's having a co-production and commissioning role. German councils can decide on the boundaries of the community unit, local bylaws, budget and personnel plans, business plans, land use planning and town planning issues, as well as decision-making in local social, youth, senior citizens, cultural, sports and green space policies; equally infrastructure, energy and economic policy as far as it is a localised issue.

The United States of America has one of the greatest complexity of local government laws in the world. While municipal systems among many states are similar in policy, method, and practice, there are numerous variations, exceptions, and differences in form and function. These differences may even exist within states. In general, American local 'city' governments are modelled on the British system (going back to 'shires') of elected councils. People's needs – from police to sanitation, education to fire protection, housing and public transportation – are seen to, most directly, by city governments.

The Netherlands does not have a Local Government tier at the community level but has over 400 municipalities. Municipal councils within the Netherlands perform a seemingly similar function of Welsh Local Authorities.

Closer to home, across the UK, differences are equally clear. For example, Community Councils in Scotland[1] have fewer powers than their English or Welsh counterparts. Their specific role can vary according to their local area's needs with many Scottish Community Councils involving themselves in a wide range of activities including fundraising, organising community events, undertaking environmental and educational projects. Scottish Community Councils do not have the right to raise funds by setting a precept on local taxes, and are instead dependent upon Local Authority funding, which is usually received for running costs only (around £400/annum).

English Parish and Town Councils, seem the closest example to Welsh Community and Town Councils. They mainly operate in rural areas but varying greatly in size, activity and resources. Whilst typical activities include managing/maintaining roadside verges, footpaths, play areas and allotments, there are powers allowing them to undertake a wide range of duties. Parish and Town Councils receive no central Government grant funding, though they can (and generally do) raise a precept on the Council Tax bill.

Theme 2: Community and Town Councils - What they do

Case Study 1: Place Based Services

We know that many Community and Town Councils across Wales already deliver a range of place based services. This is not related to size with examples of smaller 'micro' councils and larger 'macro' councils all delivering place based services.

For example, Caerwys Town Council, together with Community Councils of Halkyn and Whitford, agreed to jointly review street lighting. With almost 400 lights between them, joint meetings were held with sub-committees from each Council: quotations obtained and subsequently agreed by full Council - with all three Councils entering into a contract to replace current lights with energy efficient lighting. The new lights are guaranteed for a period of 10 years and electricity consumption will be reduced by approximately 40%. This will reduce the carbon footprint, no longer require costly replacement bulbs and reduce maintenance costs. Between the Councils, there will eventually be a saving of between £6,000 and £7,000 each year in their electricity supply and repair budgets.

In response to demand from residents Llandudoch Community Council worked in partnership to identify possible land for allotments. 27 individuals expressed an interest in renting a plot and set up the St Dogmaels Allotment Association. The Community Council negotiated a ten-year lease for the Allotment Association on private agricultural land and mentored the Allotment Association while the Community Association secured two grants to fund the ploughing/harrowing of the land, construct a rabbit-proof fence and establish a water supply.

Case Study 2: Well-being

We know Community and Town Councils already go above and beyond, in order to meet a need or want from their community. For example, Monmouthshire Town Council is working in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council and Monmouthshire Museums Service to support people living with dementia and their carers. Alongside their themed reminiscence Memory Boxes, they have been piloting memory cafes. These monthly cafes offer an immersive experience for people living with dementia and their carers. Themed afternoon teas, reminiscence sessions, music and fashion are all used as triggers to stimulate memory and conversation.

Significantly these cafes have been developed and delivered with young people from Monmouth Comprehensive School as part of their Welsh Baccalaureate Community Challenge. The young people attended Dementia Friends awareness sessions and Reminiscence training, identified and researched themes for the cafes, developed appropriate menus and identified reminiscence objects and costume, as well as running the cafes on the day.

The sessions provide an inexpensive and beneficial programme to helping address loneliness, isolation and dementia. The young people also developed their knowledge and interpersonal skills.

Case Study 3: Public Service Boards who benefit from the voice of Community and Town Councils

We know there are good examples of Public Service Boards who already engage with Community and Town Councils in their areas, to include the voice of their communities in the work of the PSB.

For example, since the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Carmarthenshire Public Service Board have utilised the Act as a different way to engage with Community and Town Councils. There are 72 Community and Town Councils within Carmarthenshire, which can make it difficult engaging with all councils. However, a good working relationship has been established with the seven councils which come under the duty of the Act and meet regularly with them. Community and Town Councils have also demonstrated their commitment to working with the PSB by requested a template to use for annual reporting, based on the PSBs' objectives. This will help Community and Town Council to all report on the same thing and be able to feed into the PSBs' annual report.

Case Study 4: Engagement

There are examples of Community and Town Councils in engaging their communities, and involving their communities in local decisions. For example, in recent years in Monmouth the annual Christmas event had lost its sparkle. A working group was established jointly with Councillors and volunteers. Using a small budget from Monmouth Town Council, an event was devised whereby the community created lanterns to proudly display during an evening parade. The overarching aim was to encourage active participation.

The council connected with a wide range of groups and individuals, with volunteers and Councillors holding workshops to teach the process of making a pyramid lantern. Engagement was via email, Social Media, word-of- mouth and traditional methods (local newspaper and noticeboards). Two additional public and three after-school workshops were also hosted by the working group.

Participation in all workshops was high. In total, over 684 people attended the group leader workshops, with 110 at the public sessions and 81 at schools. Approximately 2000 people attended the Monmouth Christmas Lantern Parade on the 8 December 2017. Furthermore, fifteen new community members, who had not previously volunteered for Town Council, signed up joined the Town Council working group in anticipation of the 2018 Christmas event and support continues to grow throughout the Town.

In Llandough the council were aware of services and facilities within the community but wanted to find out how often they were used; and ask the community how to improve and develop these services and facilities. They established a Community Engagement Working Party gathering information and views from Vale of Glamorgan Engagement Team, Llandough Primary School, Scout & Guides and service users. Through initial dialogue a short, two page (double sided) survey was developed and distributed to all households. An online survey was also set up and publicised on the paper survey. 227 valid responses were received in total (25% of households). The data was analysed by a councillors and an action plan / schedule was produced to target use of current and potential future resources. The plan includes engaging with service users and actively looking for more users in the community.

Theme 3: Community and Town Councils - How they do it

Case Study 1: Delivery Models

Across Wales, where Community and Town Councils are clustering, there are different governance and arrangements in place. It is not yet known why Community and Town Councils chose certain models however chose what model suits them best.

During the course of the review, we have found several examples including:

o Llanelli Rural Community Council are working with Llanelli Town Council to support local ground maintenance and the management of Llanelli District Cemetery. Recognising the need to pool resources and formulise previous joint working through a committee, Llanelli Rural and Llanelli Town Councils have developed a **Memorandum of Understanding** (MoU). The MoU better regulates the activities of the joint committee and the relationship of the councils going forward. The two service areas are governed by separate service level agreements which form part of the MoU and define each council's role and contribution.

o Penllyn Partnership established a **limited not-for-profit company** (Cwmni Pum Plwy Penllyn cyf), to apply for grant and work in areas outside the remit of Gwynedd Council. The Penllyn Partnership itself was established in 2009 because of concern that services were being provided from a distance or not at all – and not meeting the needs of users. The partnership brings together five Community and Town Councils to enable collaboration and strengthen the role of Community and Town Councils in the area.

o Ogwen Partnership established a **social enterprise** (Ynni Ogwen) - a community benefit society, operating for the community and environmental benefit of Dyffryn Ogwen. Funded by three Community and Town Councils in the area, the model serves as a way of delivering services collaboratively whilst maintaining individuality and local representation for each council. Each council pays proportionately into the partnership, using an agree formula.

o North Montgomeryshire have established a **Community Interest Company** to assist their shared governance arrangements, ensuring each council has an equal say in collaboration matters.

o Solva Community Council has established a **non for profit social initiative** (Solva Care) to offer friendly, local support and help to those who need it in Solva and the surrounding areas. It is a community based project focusing on social care set up in 2015, in response to wishes of local residents.

o Cowbridge Town Council currently has **Service Level Agreements** with the Vale of Glamorgan in relation to ICT \ Website Management and Payroll. Hawarden Community Council, Broughton and Bretton Community Council also have Service Level Agreements with Shotton Town Council for administration and maintenance services.

o In 1996, Llandudoch Community Council established a **community organisation** to deal with issues surrounding footpaths (registration, re-opening and maintenance). 'Llwybrau Llandudoch' (St Dogmaels Footpath Association) remains a thriving organisation which undertakes footpath surveys, maintenance, social walks and recently organises events in partnership with other village organisations.

Case Study 2: Digital

We know there are good examples of Community and Town Councils who utilise websites and social media to engage with their community. For example, New Radnor Community Council has recently renewed, restyled and modernised its website. During this, new features were introduced including google translate into Welsh, a news and events page and council pages including:

- o Council Member information and Allowances
- o Council Meeting Calendar and uploaded meeting papers
- o Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest
- o Council Minutes, financial documents (inc precept, accounts, audit)
- o Council Regulations and Planning Applications
- o Council News.

Pages are updated after each Council meeting with the newest information and throughout the month as required. The site also contains a useful links page with contact information for local police, MP etc. and a specific page for Music in New Radnor – a popular attraction which draws many visitors to the village. Local businesses can request a page and a number have to promote their products and services. News and event items can be programmed to remove automatically after a period of time, avoiding items remaining on the site after the date has passed.

Residents may also submit photographs for inclusion on the site and be added to an email list to receive notification when news items are added. The Council are exploring costs on improving the site for the visually impaired and introducing translation into additional languages.

Case Study 3: Relationships between Local Authorities and Community and Town Councils

We know there are examples of positive relationships between Local Authorities and Community and Town Councils. We also know some Local Authorities have noticed areas where this can be improved.

For example, in Wrexham a Forum was organised to bring representatives of Town and Community Councils together to discuss issues of common interest between the two tiers of Local Government. The first meeting of the Forum was held in October 2006 and was attended by 19 different Town and Community Councils. Proving successful, arrangements were made for the Forum to meet on a quarterly basis and continues to be well attended. In addition to a variety of presentations from Officers within the Council, a number of external organisations attend the Forum to give presentations, e.g. North Wales Police, One Voice Wales and Virgin Media etc. Wrexham CBC believes the Forum is a very effective means of engaging with their Town and Community Councils.

Flintshire County Council has jointly agreed a charter with its Town and Community Councils setting standards on issues such as communication, governance, ethics and partnership working. financial management. In addition, the County Council meets with its Town and Community Councils 3 or 4 times a year at the County Forum. The forum is hosted and chaired by a different Town or Community at each meeting. The meetings are an opportunity for the County Council to inform the councils of issues of interest/importance, increase understanding of town/community councillors on important issues and consult town and community councils on big local issues that might affect them all such changes to bus subsidies. The agenda includes slots for the Town and Community Councils to raise issues of concern or to showcase local activities of pride such as festivals and events. The Chief Executive and/or Monitoring Officer will always attend County Forum meetings along with the chief officers or senior managers who are presenting on specific issues.

Conwy County Borough Council has been undergoing a major Modernisation Programme aimed at driving change and continuous improvement to meet the changing needs of their communities. They are focussing on reviewing the way they engage, communicate and work with their communities. Conwy recognises that working in partnership with communities, Third Sector partners and Town and Community Councils will better enable and provide services that meet the needs of residents. As part of the modernisation journey, they have set up five Local Area Forums to make the most of opportunities for community leadership, partnership working and locally based initiatives. They recognise it is early days for the Local Area Forums and are piloting different models of working, but work is being undertaken to develop a more inclusive, engaging and strategic approach. For example, one of the Local Area Forums is already working on the profile of their area in terms of demographics and infrastructure, and has arranged an 'engagement event' with the Town and Community Councils to get a better understanding of common themes, objectives and priorities, involving communities in the process as well as in the delivery.

Theme 4: Community and Town Councils - How they are held to account

Case Study 1: Encouraging diversity

We know that a number of Community and Town Councils work with young people in their area and have a youth council. For example, Barry Youth Action (formed in November 2014) is managed by Vale Youth Action and funded through the Town Council. It sits within the Youth Democratic Structure the same way in which the Town Council does and aims to listen to the views and ideas of young people in Barry to ensure they are taken into account when decisions are made.

Two Town Councillors are nominated to attend Barry Youth Action meetings to ensure continued engagement. Each year, Barry Youth Action set three main priorities and in 2017 litter was voted. The group embarked on an extensive research project to identify issues, problem areas and ways to improve the issue. The group engaged with the Deputy Chief Officer of the Town Council due to the Council's own project of installing Talking Bins at Barry Island to improve litter.

Barry Youth Action have been extremely valuable to the Town Council encouraging engagement with a younger audience. The Town Council are continuing to engage with Barry Youth Action on its future works including the Draft Community Engagement Strategy.

Case Study 2: Community and Town Councils who regularly report action to their community

We know there are many Community and Town Councils who regularly report action to their community and this action is reported through several different mechanisms. We asked for examples and have been told about:

- **Newsletters / Newspapers**
  - Marloes and St Brides Community Council has a Community newsletter which covering five or six Community Council areas. A Community Council article is supplied for every issue – usually ten a year. This draws attention to the important items discussed at the Council's last meeting, and issues which are ongoing.
  - Lisvane Community Council regularly have articles in the monthly Lisvane magazine.
  - Caldicot Town Council regularly issue press releases.
  - Caerwys Town Council has a monthly community newspaper (circulation of almost 500 copies). The Council have a full page report on activities. Copies are delivered, by subscription to households and are also available to purchase in the local Café, shops, Post Office and Craft Centre.
  - Chirk Town Council publishes articles in the quarterly Community newsletter. Articles provides updates on the latest council meeting as well as reporting on the work of the Council.
  - Cowbridge Town Council keep the local community informed by way of local newspaper.

- **Websites / Social media**
  - Marloes and St Brides Community Council has a Community Website.
  - Cowbridge Town Council website.
  - Lisvane Council website provides updates from the Council and includes links to more than 40 community activities from partner organisations.
  - Caldicot Town Council provides frequent publications on the website and social media.
  - Caerwys Town Council have a Facebook Page.

- **Reports**
  - Caldicot Town Council regularly report activities through an annual report.
  - Barry Town Council has developed a new Annual Report demonstrating impact to the community and providing information about the Town Council, what it does and how it spends the precept. The report is available online, in hard copy and was publicised widely through social media, website and issued at community events.
  - Cwmbran Community Council has Annual Reports and Residents Handbook both available in hard copy and online. Hard copies are distributed via local schools and at community events.
  - Blaenavon Town Council published its first ever Town Council Business Plan 2018-21, providing an understanding of what the council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver over the next four years. It has been publicised and distributed through the Council's Website, Facebook page, via email, Torfaen County Borough Council's weekly newsletter, distributed electronically to households across Blaenavon and Torfaen and articles in the Pontypool Free Press.
  - Llanwrst Town Council, for the first time this year, published an Annual Report about the work of the Council. Covering a twelve-month period, the report describes the work of the Council over the past year and how this has contributed to and promoted the environment and well-being.

- **Public Meetings / Engagement sessions**
  - Cowbridge Town Council has recently organised a drop in session inviting members of the public to meet Councillors. They were invited to put suggestions in a box, which will be sifted through and considered by the Town Council in an attempt to try and resolve some local issues, report issues to Local Authority and assist in setting the precept next year based upon Community requests.
  - Caerwys Town Council allows 'Public Time' at the commencement of every monthly Council meeting and also holds a Public Meeting in March. All residents are invited to attend and the Council Chair reflects on the past year and advises of the year ahead.
  - Caerwys Town Council holds monthly chats with a Councillor, held on a Saturday morning.

Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales

Annex B - Engagement Report

Introduction

The Independent Review Panel was established in July 2017 by the Welsh Government.

We were established to:

- explore the potential role of local government below Local Authority councils, drawing on best practice

- define the most appropriate model(s)/structure(s) to deliver this role

- consider how these models and structures should be applied across Wales. This will include consideration of any situations in which they would not be necessary or appropriate.

We were given a deliberately broad remit, with the scope to be radical if necessary.

Aim of this report

To support our work, we undertook a suite of engagement to seek evidence and gathers views from Community and Town Councils themselves, key stakeholders in the community and members of the public.

This engagement report sets out how we engaged and who we engaged with. It also includes an analysis of the responses we received, as well as a snapshot of early feedback on our recommendations.

Timeline of Engagement and Communications

Oct 2017
Formal call for evidence.

Established dedicated review mailbox and internet information pages.

Oct 2017
Commenced engagement with Community and Town Councils around Wales.

Evidence sessions began at panel monthly meetings.

Nov 2017
First newsletter issued.

Community and Town Council online survey opened.

Dec-Mar 2018
Continued engagement visits and ongoing evidence gathering.

Mar 2018
Regional engagement events held around Wales.

Workshops targeted at Local Authorities representatives.

April 2018
Online surveys launched for the public, youth and Local Authorities.

May 2018
Community and Town Councils and partner organisations across Wales hosted 'pop-in' sessions.

June 2018
Call for evidence and all surveys closed.

Aug 2018
Panel shared their emerging findings and recommendations.

Oct 2018
Publication of the Independent Review of the Community and Town Council Sector in Wales Final Report.

Presented to Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services.

Summary of Engagement Activities

A dedicated page on the [Welsh Government website](#) was created to act as a central point for information regarding the review with opportunities for people to get involved and have their voice heard.

In October 2017 an engagement and communications plan was developed and implemented to support the Review. This was targeted at reaching Community and Town Councils and the communities which they serve, as well as other individuals and groups who were anticipated to be affected by any changes to the sector. The target audience therefore consisted of:

- All Community and Town Councils
- All Local Authorities
- All community members (general public)
- Youth groups
- Voluntary and community sector organisations including County Voluntary Councils
- Relevant representative bodies such as, One Voice Wales, Society of Local Council Clerks, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action
- Individuals who had previously expressed an interest in the review.

We sent information introducing ourselves and our aims to the targeted audience using a variety of media, including:

- Emails
- Posted letters
- Welsh Government website
- Welsh Government social media.

Activities agreed and implemented as part of the suite of engagement included:

- A dedicated mailbox was set up for all review communications. Adolygiad.CTC.Review@gov.wales

- A dedicated hashtag was established for the review #MyCommunityMyCouncil

- Evidence was taken at Review Panel meetings

- Submission of written evidence was also encouraged

- Visits to individual Community and Town Councils across Wales took place in order to gather evidence and views

- Established partner organisation meetings/events across Wales were utilised to obtain views and feedback

- Regional engagement events were held across Wales

- Targeted workshops were held with Local Authorities seeking views on particular aspects of the review

- Targeted online surveys were published

- National 'pop in' sessions were held across Wales

- Regular bi-monthly newsletters were issued. You can find current and previous newsletters online at: http://gov.wales/topics/localgovernment/communitytowncouncils/review-of-community-town-council-sector/?lang=en

Evidence Sessions

From October 2017 until March 2018 a range of bodies were invited to meet with us during our Panel meetings to give oral evidence.

Bodies who were invited to give evidence at our meetings included:

- One Voice Wales – October 2017
- Wales Audit Office – October 2017
- Society of Local Council Clerks – November 2017
- Cwmbran Community Council – November 2017
- Llanelli Rural Council – November 2017
- Wales Council for Voluntary Action – December 2017
- Vale of Glamorgan Public Service Board – December 2017
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council – December 2017
- The Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales – January 2018
- The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales – January 2018
- Solva Community Council and Solva Care – February 2018.

These bodies also often provided written evidence to us to accompany their oral evidence. At times written evidence was requested where attendance at the evidence sessions was not needed, when the Review Panel was considering different delivery models from the Penllyn Partnership, and the North Montgomeryshire cluster outlining their work to establish a Community Interest Company.

Many Community and Town Councils also provided evidence when requested on topics including their co-option process and diversity to inform papers prepared for the Panel meetings.

Written Evidence

We received 27 pieces of written evidence in total. The written evidence received varied from information we had directly requested and unprompted submissions from stakeholders. Unprompted evidence was received from organisations such as Alcohol Concern Cymru, Play Wales, Churches Together in Wales and Big Lottery all outlining their views on the future of Local Governance in Wales. We also had formal submissions from One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks and Welsh Local Government Association.

Visits to Community and Town Councils across Wales

From November 2017 we visited various Community and Town Councils around Wales, individually and collectively, to collect evidence and views from the sector itself. We found these visits very informative and helped to develop our understanding of the sector. These visits included:

- Abergavenny Town Council
- Abertillery and Llanhilleth Town Council
- Bay of Colwyn Town Council
- Boncath Community Council
- Capel Curig Community Council
- Clunderwen Community Council
- Crickhowell Town Council
- Cwmdu & District Community Council
- Dyffryn Clydach Community Council
- Graig Community Council
- Gwaun Cae Gurwen Community Council
- Hook Community Council
- Llandinam Community Council
- Llandudno Town Council
- Llangynidr Community Council
- Llangattock Community Council
- Llangwm Community Council
- Letterston Community Council
- Milford Haven Town Council
- Neyland Community COuncil
- Ogwen Partnership
- Pembroke Dock Council
- Pembroke Town Council
- Pontardawe Town Council
- Rogerstone Community Council
- Saundersfoot Community Council
- Tenby Town Council
- Vale of Grwyney Community Council.

Attendance at partner organisation meetings/events across Wales to obtain views and feedback

Over the course of the Review, we as Panel members and our Secretariat on our behalf attended a variety of meetings, events and forums to give updates on the progress of the Review as well as promote involvement in the Review. These included:

One Voice Wales National Conference	September 2017
PLANED Fit for the Future Event	November 2017
Society of Local Council Clerks Glamorgan Branch	January 2018
WLGA Heads of Policy Meeting	March 2018
Society of Local Council Clerks Powys Branch	March 2018
One Voice Wales National Executive Committee	March 2018
Society of Local Council Clerks Larger Council Forum	March 2018
Vale of Glamorgan Community Liaison Committee	March 2018
Bridgend County Council Forum	March 2018
Flintshire County Council Forum	May 2018

Regional Engagement Events

During March we organised a set of large engagement events across Wales. Five events were planned for March 2018 but like everyone else across Wales, we could not control the weather! Our planned event for Dolfor, Newtown was snowed off at the start of March…and again mid-March. We decided not to reschedule the event, but made sure those who were due to attend the mid-Wales event had the opportunity to share their views through other avenues.

Whilst the events had been open to all stakeholders and members of the public, the majority of attendees were members and clerks of Community and Town Councils. The events were well attended with 197 people attending across the four events. We gathered a range of views and suggestions many of which were mirrored across the regions.

The North West Wales event took place in Caernarfon, North East Wales event took place in Wrexham, Cardiff hosted the South East Wales event and Carmarthen the South West Wales. Below is a snap shot of the feedback captured across all the events. The quotes you see are verbatim, taken from attendee's written feedback on the day.

Q1. What should Community and Town Councils be responsible for?

"*Voice of the community*"
"*Represent Community from grass roots level*"
"*Depends on budget! (no staff no resources to do more)*"
"*Improving experience of life in local area*"

"Town hall, allotments, bus shuttles, re-cycle centre, open areas, planning, community centres, family centres, cinemas. County Councils saying what their responsible for"

"Services which require a local solution rather than a one size fits all solution, imposed by county council e.g. planning"

"Community and Town Councils should have the choice to deliver what they think is best for their communities and working in partnership / collaboration"

"Community and Town Councils should have a business plan so they can plan for communities future"

Q2 - How should they operate?

"Capacity, capability and skills of councillors - require change management and new skills"

"More powers then more engagement from young people - can make things happen. Look at local needs"

"Shared roles - Smaller Community and Town Councils coming together to employ a clerk - create a separate entity to employ etc."

"Work in partnership with other neighbouring Community and Town Councils - cluster - share costs / equipment & staff. Be visible / deal with local issues / partnership - regular communications"

"Clerks role needs to be highlighted / professionalised (they are not PA) each clerk roll is as important (need to ensure qualifications are appropriate & all aware of why needed/what they are!)"

"Can only do so much (lack of capacity / Equipment)"

Q3 - What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?

"Lack of relationship / ongoing dialogue with Local Authorities"

"some things take too long – bureaucracy"

"Bullying / harassment within the Community and Town Council or by members of the community if you are a member of the Community and Town Council"

"Skills - Legal, Governance, IT, Property, Finance, HR, Contracts - Not always available"

"limit on precept, how can be spent on and one project."

"Money"

"Diversifying training to include wider remit i.e. how to engage with younger people"

"Lack of clarity about role. People don't know what we are and what we do"

Q4 - How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

"Develop a community engagement plan"

"Community consultation events"

"Change the profile from white male 50+"

"Develop a closer relationship with the public and getting all local Cllrs to engage with their wards and areas"

"Use social media to get younger people involved in the community council (nextdoor.com) (survey monkey - short simple surveys) live Q&A Facebook feeds. Newsletters 2 x PA. update what spend £ on - need to think about older population. Push through letterbox"
"Councillors not interested in changing things"
"Good links to local groups / associations"

In addition to the above we also held smaller drop in sessions where we invited representatives of Community and Town Councils from surrounding areas. These drop-in events provided stakeholders a further avenue to share their views and an opportunity to consider the same questions posed at the larger engagement events.

Merthyr Tydfil   February 2018
Aberystwyth   April 2018

Local Authority Workshops

Four workshops were specifically designed to gather views from Local Authorities. The four workshops were held at the Welsh Government offices in Swansea, Merthyr Tydfil, Aberystwyth and Llandudno in April. Thirty representatives from across the Local Authorities in Wales attended these workshops.

Under the four identified themes of the review, below is snap shot of the comments given.

What Community and Town Councils are?
'There are inconsistencies between all Community and Town Councils'
'The smaller sized ones don't encourage interest / skills to the role'
'Size of a Community or Town Council will be determined by the 'ask' and the expectations placed on them going forward'
'There could be a case to abolish Community and Town Councils if there is a lack of interest in this tier of Local Government'
'There are difficulties where there is a lack of coverage of Community and Town Councils – particularly around delegating functions.'

What Community and Town Councils Do?
'There is a need for Community and Town Councils to have an Area Committee approach.'
'Community and Town Councils should be responsible for local delivery.'
'The powers of Community and Town Councils are archaic.'
'Community and Town Councils have no duties on how they operate generally.'
'There is polarisation in appetite between the smallest Community and Town Councils and the largest ones.'

How Community and Town Councils Do it?
'Some councillors do not understand the legal issues / statutory requirements of Community and Town Councils.'

'Some councillors are not even attending basic Code of Conduct training.'
'In relation to expert advice, Local Authorities have corporate support and a whole range of expertise. Whereas clerks can be out on a limb without a multitude of support.'
'Clerks are vital. Some are capable and some might not want a professional qualification.'
'Some current processes for Community and Town Councils are archaic, e.g the lack of time [it takes] for questions to be posed and answers to be given.'

How Community and Town Councils are Held to Account

'There is no consistency in governance with some Community and Town Councils operating as they wish.'
'There is a need for consistency in governance.'
'The make-up of Community and Town Councils needs to include individuals who are equally unbiased.'
'Uncontested elections are a problem. Significant numbers of representatives were either elected unopposed or co-opted in 2017.'

National 'Pop-In' sessions

'Pop-In' sessions were held (map at item 1) in May to allow residents to share their views in a location close to them. It was intended for these events to be held on the same day for maximum impact. The majority held a 'pop-in' session on the 24 May 2018. A handful of councils chose to combine their 'pop-in' session with events previously arranged in May within their community.

Those hosting an event were provided with all the resources they needed to publicise their event and capture feedback. Feedback forms mirrored the questions asked as part of the public and youth surveys and were provided bilingually. As well as enabling potentially hundreds of opportunities to take part in the review, it also fitted naturally with the role that Community and Town Councils already play in engaging their communities.

Item 1

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May 2018
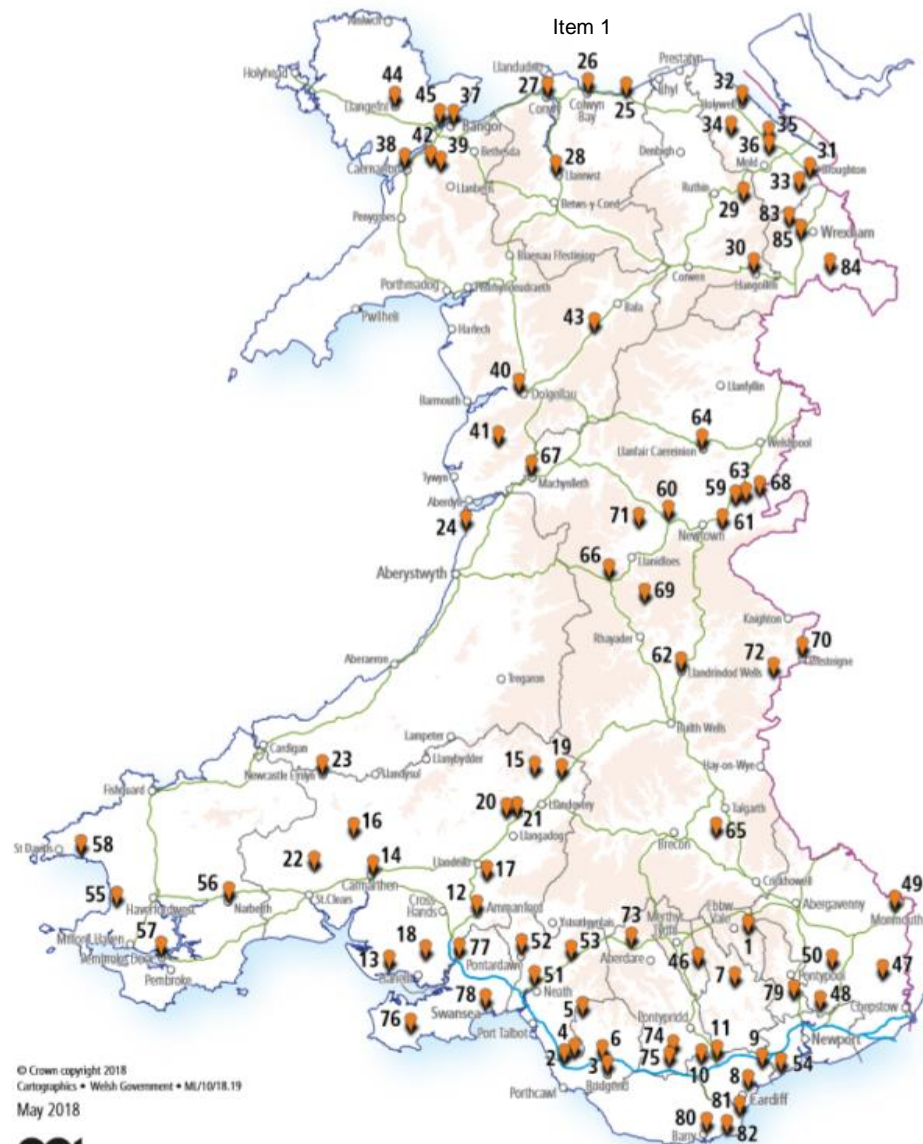
Invitations to hold a 'pop in' session sent	Over 800	All Community and Town Councils, WCVA, County Voluntary Councils, Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST), Boy Scouts Cymru, Girl Guides, YMCA, Church of Wales, Youth Cymru.
Invitations Accepted	86	
Invitations Declined	14	Those who declined to host the event stated reasons such as lack of interest, lack of notice (could not get agreement from council within the time period), lack of availability and lack of capacity.
No Reply	700+	
Overall Attendance	520+	Many of those who hosted sessions did not know final figures for those that attended.
Overall returned feedback	605+	

Feedback forms were based on the public and youth survey questions, with opportunity to provide additional feedback on additional forms.

When analysing the responses, the majority of feedback forms were used to raise specific issues with their local Community and Town Councils as well as make suggestions on improvements. Comments highlighted the confusion over what the Community and Town Council is responsible for raising issues including 'stop building houses', 'clean up the dog mess', 'sort out the litter' and 'build a by-pass'.

Online Surveys

Our call for evidence was supported by four online surveys, targeted at the engagement groups identified and bespoke questions were developed.

The online surveys were publicised through the Welsh Government website and were also shared by stakeholders.

The four surveys were hosted online at:
http://gov.wales/topics/localgovernment/communitytowncouncils/review-of-community-town-council-sector/?lang=en

All four surveys were also available in hard copy and offered at engagement events, workshops and pop in sessions for completion.

Participation in the surveys was encouraged through avenues such as:

- Email
- Newsletter
- Social Media
- Welsh Government website

Others who assisted in promoting the surveys included:

- Rent Smart Wales – included an article in their monthly newsletter to those who have signed up to updates.
- GWLAD – included an article in their January 2018 e-newsletter reaching rural and farming communities.
- Public Service Boards – included an article in their February bulletin
- Welsh Government Parenting Branch – sent an email to all Family Information Services promoting the review and survey.
- Youth, Disability and BME Organisations in Wales were also asked to promote the surveys.

Total number of responses received for each survey was as follows:
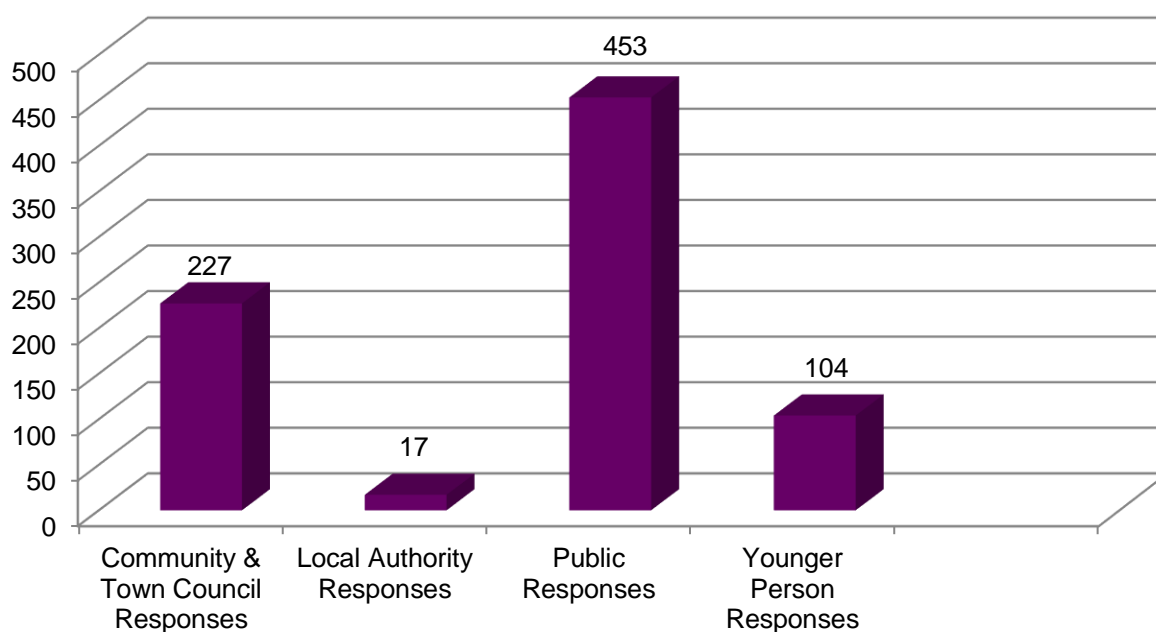
Summary of responses – What you told us

Overview of Feedback from Regional Engagement Events held in March 2018

Caernarfon

What should CTCs be responsible for?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Community impacting things	5
What they can do better than the Local Authority	4
Reflect local wants and needs	3
The voice of the community	2
They are different and should be treated differently	1
Clustering can help smaller CTCs pick up services	1
Clustering shouldn't be county led	1
Clustering doesn't work – should be one body	1
Service delivery is different from Community Voice	1
If you make CTCs bigger, WG will put something smaller in place	1
Don't reinvent the wheel	1
If they do more, they need more resources	1

How should they operate?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Elected Mayor / Paid 'Town' member for specific areas	2
Partner with outside bodies	1
CTCs can access grants where as County Council cannot	1
Can only do so much (lack of resources / capacity)	4
Difficult when the wider reform picture isn't formalised	1
Inconsistencies currently where CTCs can do what they want	1
Honesty, Openness, Accountability	2
Contact voters	1
Professionalise the role of clerks through partnerships (similar to Ogwen)	2
A new way of working (Similar to other countries)	2
More interest / more respect	1
Clerk is important and needs assistance	1

What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Lack of relationship / ongoing dialogue with LA (dumping services)	11
Capacity – bringing in extra staff can cause space problems / hidden costs	7
Finance	6
Lack of skills / expertise	6
Mandated role does not always consider what CTCs can physically do (WAO Requirements)	4
Resources	4
Lack of leadership from Welsh Government	4
Bureaucracy	3
WG naivety on what CTCs can do and how they operate	2
Changing requirements on staff and councillors	2

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Support and guidance	2
CTCs being relied on as the contact for the LA	1
Clerks should support, not deliver	1
Health and Safety regulations	1
LA's reluctant to let go of what they have	1
Bullying / Harassment within CTC	1
Data Protection Requirements	1
The closer the decisions are taken to the people they affect the better	1
Need to share good practice	1
Support for One Voice Wales	1

How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Engage community (Hold surgeries / surveys / public meetings / Website / social media)	11
Lack of candidates	3
Accountability / Scrutiny	2
Make links with other groups	2
Youth involvement	1
Councillors not interested in changing things	1
Develop a place plan	1
Co-opting good but reflective of the current council	1
Less community spirit	1
Good examples of delivery	1
Need expert advisers	1

Wrexham

What should CTCs be responsible for?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
What the Community wants them to do	3
Local services	2
Should have flexibility in their powers	1
Non-Stat services	1
Services being passed on without budget	1
Depends on the budget	1
Representing the community	1
Improving life in the local area	1
WG should dictate size and then aim	1
More influence on existing service delivery	1

How should they operate?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Funding (Direct / other models)	3
Specialist 'expert' knowledge	3
Professionalised clerk	3
Work together (SLA's between councils) & share advice	2
More support for smaller CTCs	1
Access to IT / Social Media	1
Money to come with services	1
Not just about service delivery. Legislation being approached differently by	1

Reoccurring Responses	Number
all	
One size doesn't fit all	1
Overcome those who don't want training	1
Lack of capacity	1
Keeping identity	1

What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
More visible funding streams	2
Short transfers / discussions with the LA	1
Barriers around legislation and double taxation	1
HUB councils	1
Limit on precept (section 137)	1
Maintaining identity when partnership working	1
Joint purpose	1
Lack of diversity	1
Time for training	1
Expertise of clerk	1
Little influence on County budget	1
Lack of expertise	1

How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Engage with them through a variety of ways	2
Manage expectations	1
Engage younger people	1
Help and support to engage a wider diversity	1
Not sure if core service would work	1
Local knowledge	1
Fundraising	1

Carmarthen

What should CTCs be responsible for?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Local Non-Stat Services	12
Better relationship with County Council	5
Lack of finance	4
Too many councils – all shapes and sizes	3
Local solutions rather than one size fits all	3
Place / 5-year plans	3
Listen to local community	3
What about areas without CTCs	2
Clarity on County Council role	2
Tourism	1
Bureaucracy is tough for smaller CTCs	1
Collaboration based on defined areas but keep local representation	1
County to take on all stat services including legal matters	1
Part of local community framework of provision	1
Traditions are needed but are we holding onto the past	1
Health and Safety	1

Lack of powers	1
Annual Plan	1
Double Taxation	1
Limits (section 137)	1

How should they operate?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Collaborating with neighbours for certain services (need trust)	6
Too many CTCs, structures and boundaries get in the way	4
Minimum compulsory training	4
Engage with the community / younger people	3
Accountability	2
Allowances for Councillors (including attendance allowance)	2
Better support network for councils	2
Change of Legislation	2
WG directive	2
Share clerks – simpler administration	2
Attendance should be mandatory	2
Share best practice	2
Better relationship with the County Council	2
Better understand the role of the clerk	1
Committee / Sub Committees	1
Support network for clerks	1
Powers for services	1
Need to know what we can legally object to	1
Trading opportunities	1
Share back office functions	1
Access to business rates	1
Too many rules	1
Partnering with other community organisations	1
No party politics	1
Transparency	1
Job description for clerk & councillor	1

What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Funding streams (access to grants)	5
Bureaucracy	4
Better relationship with County Council	4
Resources	3
Apathy	3
Advice for CTCs	2
Training of councillors	2
Community elected Mayor / Impartial Chair	2
Allowances	2
Digital inclusion / competence	2
Speed / processes	2
Lack of diversity	1
Use of social media to engage community	1
Attitude of members	1
Language / Terms used can put off people	1
Establish CTCs where they don't exist	1

Boundaries	1
Lack of interest in engagement	1
Governance	1
Double taxation	1
Seeing new councillors as rocking the boat	1
Society is changing	1
Accountability	1

How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Engage with community through various mechanisms	6
Communication to and from the community	2
Non political	2
Liaise with community regularly	1
Fixed term for councillors	1
Act as the local voice	1
Small payment does not attract younger people	1
Lack of diversity	1
Cost of election	1

Cardiff

What should CTCs be responsible for?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Local Services	15
Planning	14
One size doesn't fit all	5
Including communities in conversations	5
Should be down to CTC	4
Well being Act – five ways of working	3
Place plans that fit into the local development plan	3
Annual assessment for competence	2
Share best practice	2
How can you have more responsibilities if other reviews are looking to reduce number of councillors	2
What the community needs	2
Strategic links / better relationships	2
Prevention rather than cure / proactive not reactive	2
More responsibilities and powers	1
Communities are quick to challenge	1
Precept increase can be difficult	1
Responsibility for or resistance to spend precept	1
More weight in consultations	1
Encourage innovation	1
Community hubs	1
Strategic thinking	1
Community Cohesion	1
Services not dumped on CTCs	1
Link to education	1

How should they operate?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Training for members and clerks – online mechanism	10
Shared expert advice	5
Good relationships with LA and partners	5
Pool clerks – but could impact local knowledge	5
Work together / sharing roles	4
Competency of CTCs – what does a good CTC look like	3
Youth representatives	3
Sharing best practice	3
Funding	3
Corporate Plan / Vision	3
Explain role to community	3
Better support for councils	2
Service delivery and representation	2
Community need	2
Skills of councillors	2
Conduct of councillors	1
Clerks overwhelmed with the amount of information – should be summarised	1
Accountability	1
If bigger, more difficult to engage	1
Balance between having things / services	1
Abide by current laws	1
Volunteer in community to deliver projects	1
Employers to give time to council duties (i.e. training)	1
Engagement	1
Non-contributory pension scheme	1
Clear role between CTC and County	1
Induction process for clerks	1
Change local model of Code of Conduct	1
Capacity	1
Training ahead of legislation	1
Expenses for councillors	1

What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Money (including caps)	14
Election costs	8
Politics	7
Relationships with LAs	6
Lack of understanding of CTCs	5
Sifting through information – need summary	4
Lack of engagement / knowledge	3
Not enough weight given to views of a CTC	3
Match funding for training	3
No join up of layers to Welsh Government	3
Compulsory Training	3
Advice and support for candidates	3
Support for One Voice Wales	2
Clarity of responsibility	2
Co-options	2

Double taxation	2
Support for establishing a CTC	2
Relevance of wellbeing act to CTCs	2
Councillors with 'old views'	2
Lack of capacity	2
Lack of coverage	2
Not enough recognition of the clerk or councillor	1
Numbers of councillors (planned reduction)	1
Pressures on CTCs around remuneration	1
Non-stat services	1
Dual hatted ness can help relationships	1
Lack of response – slow	1
Lack of skills	1
Time	1
Voluntary status	1
Use of local expertise even if they are not a councillor	1

How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Engage young people	8
Link with schools	5
Community engagement plan	1
Community engagement through variety of ways	22
Democratic elections	2
Tell the community what they do	2
Viability	1
Increase diversity	15
Need to make it appealing	2
Consider commitments	3
Set attainment goals and actions	2
Have more representatives	1
Mandatory public sessions	1
Lack of consistent approach in engagement	1
Elections put candidates off	1

Overview of Feedback from Local Authority Workshops held in April 2018

What Community and Town Councils are?

Attendees identified an inconsistency between Community and Town Councils with some smaller one doing little more than covering essential running costs. There are different types of Community and Town Councils recognising the difference between Town and Rural councils. There are also hybrids and different dynamics but ultimately one size doesn't fit all. Some Community and Town Councils are really good however there are a lot of really poor Community and Town Councils. Some Community and Town Councils are unable to grasp the concept of what they are there for and treat money as if its their own - not spending it even if it's for benefit of community.

It was felt that if there is pressure on Local Authorities to work more regionally, an important role for Community and Town Councils is to ensure demographic representation closer to the community. Community and Town Councils should not be abolished as they know the issues of their communities but a change is needed for them to be more efficient. Community and Town Councils also need more power to achieve this role. If Community and Town Councils had additional powers, then there is a need to trust Community and Town Councils to work responsibly and not interfere too much.

What Community and Town Councils Do?

In relation to delivery of services, these needed to be delivered from the right place at the right time. Whether this should be Community and Town Councils – that's questionable. Community groups in areas without Community and Town Councils are achieving and supporting the community.

Views were expressed that many Community and Town Councils believe their only role is to have apathy and complain. However, there has been some success across Wales in keeping services open by getting Community and Town Councils to contribute to their running. Most of the small rural councils find it difficult to do anything because of size. Smaller Community and Town Councils are not happy to explore a partnership model because they want to be independent and believe the bigger town council will subsume them. This way of working is effective and avoids duplication.

Attendees felt past discussions held between Local Authorities and Community and Town Councils gave the feeling that Community and Town Councils were limited by their aspirations and capacity. In addition, Community and Town Councils have an eclectic mix of powers which needs to be reviewed.

How Community and Town Councils Do it?

Some current processes for Community and Town Councils are archaic, for example the lack of time for questions to be posed and answers to be given. This should form part of standard practice and examples of good and very bad practice could be highlighted.

In relation to expert advice, it was noted Local Authorities have corporate support and a whole range of expertise. Clerks can be out on a limb without a multitude of support. There is a need for a culture change in Community and Town Councils going to the clerk for everything. Community and Town Councils are the employer so if the clerk hasn't got the tools they need, they need to find it. The dynamic nature of the Community and Town Council can often depend on how dynamic the clerk is.

Some Local Authorities have a forum to consult on a quarterly basis with Community and Town Councils in their area, however in some areas the contact varies depending on the time of the year. In Powys in particular, there is no formal regular mechanism and as a clerk, it can be quite isolating. Clerks who are members of SLCC get support. It is important for clerks to share experiences with other clerks. In relation to expert / technical advice, Local Authority monitoring officer provides

advice on the code of conduct but in relation to other matters (such as employment) there is no advice or support available.

All clerks should have a professional qualification as councillors look to clerks to give advice on their role. One Voice Wales offers training on the role of the councillor however it is unclear how many councillors undertake the training. New councillors want to undertake training but longer standing members do not. This should be a core requirement.

Dual hatted members can skew decisions and provide conflicts of interest. Nevertheless, it can be both positive and negative benefits to Community and Town Councils. It should be a choice of the member and it may be that with an expanded role for Community and Town Councils, it would exclude local councillors because of time constraints. County councillors should engage with Community and Town Councils in their areas regularly but it was recognised this can be difficult when there are a large number in your area.

How Community and Town Councils are Held to Account

Attendees felt that despite many Community and Town Councils councillors believing they are volunteers, they are elected representatives who are responsible for public money. The Independent Remuneration Panel could be asked to look this again if the roles and responsibilities of Community and Town Councils and Councillors change.

The Local Government Act 1972 needs revising to bring it into the 21st Century. For example, notice of vacancies should be displayed online and shared through social media as well as local notice boards. Stronger policing of the code of conduct is needed (currently through the monitoring officer and Local Authority). It was agreed that there should be a core set of standards for all Community and Town Councils.

It is believed that if Community and Town Councils will have a larger role there will be an issue with accountability and governance. It was felt that Community and Town Councils would need more support to understand their responsibilities and conflicts of interest.

It was felt that there needs to be more clarity around funding and Community and Town Councils need to be accountable for the public money they spend (value for money.

Public Online Survey - Summary of results

Q1: Are you aware of a Community or Town Council in your area?
The vast majority, almost 94%, of people (425) answered Yes. A very small proportion of responses (3% or 14 people) answered No. The same small percentage (3% or 14 people) left this question blank.

Q2: Do you know what your council does?

Again the majority of people (74% or 336 responses) answered Yes. But around a quarter (24% or 110 responses) responded that they didn't know what their council does. 7 people left this question blank.

Q3: What would you like to see your council do?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Local Needs / Services including Bus services, local business, rights of way, highways, environment, pavements, social cohesion, fly tipping, affordable housing, challenge road safety, education, cash machines, elderly support, regeneration, support vulnerable people, road safety, transport, economic development.	118
Oversee and be proactive with community engagement (listen to concerns / views/ answer emails / community events)	72
Work together for and better represent community	30
As it does	20
Be more accountable (share minutes more frequently and in more places i.e. newspaper / online)	19
Be more visible, transparent and honest	18
Work better with Local Authority including challenge	17
Work with stakeholders / partners for the community	13
Develop a strategy for the community (space management / community development)	12
Abolished	12
Whole community improvement (not just specific streets)	10
Promote village / community	9
Anything is an improvement	9
Take more responsibility from County Council	7
Limited budget (restricted)	6
Support independent businesses	6
Community projects	6
Less bureaucracy	6
Be productive and efficient (fewer larger)	5
Engage with younger people	5
Better Democratic Election	4
Use more methods of engagement (newsletters, social media, chose to be paperless etc)	4
Future proof the area	4
Do more for the town	4
Access grants	4
Stop playing politics	4
More control of local issues	4
Community events	4
Stop wasting money (sending bilingual letters – should have opt out choice)	3
Keep rates as low as possible	3
Don't know what they do	3
Pay staff appropriately	3
Well being in the community	2
Take on assets and services	2
Have more as the authority for the town	2
Challenge Welsh Government	2
Power to award local grants (regeneration / business start up)	2

Spend money wisely	**2**
More professional (more money / trained officers & councillors)	**2**
Protect and enhance the village	**2**
Be more proactive and inclusive when providing facilities for the community	**2**
Open on Saturdays or later one day a week	**1**
Local planning	**1**
No husband and wife teams	**1**
Open / proactive to different ideas	**1**
Sack them if they get it wrong	**1**
Spend less time thinking how to get more money	**1**
Stop increasing precept when senior staff get perks	**1**
Have a council (we're paying a precept and haven't got one)	**1**
Less financial control	**1**
Be able to purchase land / build housing	**1**
Spend less on councillors and more on residents	**1**
Have more power	**1**
Separate vote for mayor	**1**
Avoid being used by county council	**1**
Communities exploited by paying twice for services	**1**
Clarity between LA and CTC	**1**
Not take on what LA should provide	**1**

Q4: Have you been engaged by your council?

The response was more mixed on this one. Just over half of responses (52.5% or 238 responses) answered No. Almost 44% of responses (199) answered Yes. 16 people left this question blank.

Q5: If not, how would you like to see your council engage with the community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Hold surgeries / AGM / events and publicise / welcome all residents at regular local meetings (and have conversations)	**87**
Social media	**43**
Better Communication / engagement	**32**
Better / Active Websites	**30**
Meaningful Proper Consultation (Public Survey)	**24**
Regular Newsletters	**22**
Being accountable, open and transparent	**14**
Councillors are visible	**10**
Via Email	**8**
Door to door discussions	**8**
Work with community groups	**8**
Learning from active Councillors	**7**
As they do now (they are doing enough)	**6**
Be abolished (move functions to LA)	**6**
Anything because their not doing anything	**5**
Respond when contacted	**4**
Leaflet Drop	**4**

Debates on future threats / priorities	**4**
Consider language of ALL residents (meetings held in Welsh, excludes English speaking residents)	**4**
Posters / Flyers	**3**
Don't want to – they do nothing	**3**
Impartial / independent members	**2**
Stop doing what you've always done	**2**
Respond to local service needs	**2**
Use plain English	**2**
Do something positive	**1**
Support community groups	**1**
Whole community approach	**1**
Don't know who they are	**1**
Work with other CTCs in the area	**1**
Promotion of elections and encouraging people to stand / vote	**1**
Act as a leader	**1**
Unclear question	**1**
On public cuts	**1**
N/A (response not linked to engagement)	**7**

Q6: In your opinion, do you think your council is representative of your community?

The majority of people (almost 60% or 271 responses) did not think their council is representative of their community. However, 35% or 161 people answered Yes. 21 people left this question blank.

Q7: If your answer is no, how do you think they can represent you better?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Better communication & engagement (grass roots, listen)	**77**
Younger people and reflect wider backgrounds	**62**
Ensure elections are held	**19**
Don't know what they do or who they are	**17**
Not visible enough	**14**
Do more for Community	**11**
Remove party politics - Impartial Councillors	**11**
Limit term of office (max term)	**8**
By investing more in public services	**7**
Better equality requirements	**5**
Abolish	**5**
Difficult because not everyone wants to be involved	**4**
Need to change their approach	**3**
Be accessible out of working hours	**3**
Need clarity when decisions are made	**3**

Publically elected mayor	**2**
Stop in-house struggles	**2**
Be accountable – spend money wisely	**2**
Whole Community Approach	**2**
Learn from other areas	**2**
Don't know	**2**
By letting go of the past	**2**
Stop dual hatted councillors	**2**
More working groups	**1**
Prioritise interests of council tax payers	**1**
They perform few functions	**1**
It could exist	**1**
Financially reward councillors	**1**
Get involved with businesses	**1**
If they did more they'd want more money	**1**
Anything	**1**
People moving into area do not understand our heritage	**1**
Have access to specialist skills / advice	**1**
Live locally	**1**
Publish business plans	**1**
All councillors should work together	**1**
Qualification by residence before people can stand	**1**
Link with County Council more forcefully	**1**

Q8: Have you ever considered standing for your council?
Over half of the people who responded (57% or 259 responses) said No. 180 or almost 40% of people said Yes. 14 people left this question blank.

Q9: If your answer is no, Why not?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Time commitments / personal reasons	**84**
Attitudes within CTCs	**56**
Don't know how to get involved	**21**
Not interested	**16**
Fighting dominant culture in standing against current councillors	**12**
Party politics	**11**
Too old	**10**
Previously have been	**8**
Language Barrier (meetings in Welsh but speak English)	**6**
Not connected to the community enough (new comer)	**5**
Abolish	**4**
Rather serve community as part of other groups	**4**
No influence	**4**
Big job – serious responsibility	**3**

I am a councillor	**3**
Don't know what they do	**3**
Because it's unpaid	**2**
Age – Only 25 / Only 58!	**2**
Never an election (over 20 years)	**2**
Occupation does not legally allow it	**2**
Family member already on CTC	**1**
Work for Local Authority – conflict	**1**
Too stressful	**1**
Don't trust them	**1**

People who responded to the survey also had the chance to make any additional comments they wished to.

Additional Comments	
CTCs are good & have great potential	**29**
Disband	**27**
All need to be of same quality/capability	**13**
Publicise / raise awareness	**10**
Define relationship with LA and WG	**9**
Listen to public	**9**
More power / money (finance & trading)	**8**
Force fair and honest elections	**7**
Too many – cluster or merge	**7**
Change needed	**6**
Good that review is taking place	**5**
Nothing will change	**5**
Councillors need to represent the community	**5**
Councillors are / should be volunteers	**4**
Remove party politics	**3**
Capacity to build back office support	**3**
Merge CTCs to make a stronger local force	**3**
I am a former councillor	**3**
Don't merge	**3**
Review is better spent elsewhere	**2**
Welsh Government needs to understand what a town council is before meddling	**2**
Need to engage	**2**
Need Training	**2**
Monitored by independent body	**2**
Be more open	**2**
Tighter controls / guidelines	**2**
Better relationship with County Council	**2**
Encourage community asset transfer	**2**
Become one stop shops	**2**

Village / rural areas left behind	**2**
Wider demographic representation	**2**
Need full coverage	**1**
CTCs should do local plans	**1**
Each community is different	**1**
Review CTC role	**1**
Would like to be more involved	**1**
Involve young people more	1
Defined boundaries	**1**
Useful to have county councillor on community council	**1**
CTCs should be a consultative body	**1**
Link funding to demographic representation	**1**
Work with volunteer and community groups	**1**
Double Taxation	1
One size doesn't fit all	**1**
Stay as they are – good	1
Need to set regional picture first	**1**
Need ability to vote no confidence	1
Survey isn't long enough to draw conclusions	**1**
Make review event accessible for all – Only one NWW event	1
Age limit	**1**
More recognition of CTCs and Councillors	1
Some are underhand, disrespectful and rude	**1**
Provide better local services	1
Councillors should have political affiliation	**1**
Decisions are made from a distance (in WG)	1
Review should have included more diverse representation	**1**
Support should be available to take on board Review Recommendations	1
Disjoint between national, local and town council direction	**1**
Review will be used to unload costly services onto CTCs without money	1
Community Councils should respect Town Councils when they disagree on issues	**1**
N/A (not relevant)	**17**

Youth Online Survey - Summary of results

Q1: Before today, had you heard about Community or Town Councils?
The majority of responses (88) answered Yes in response to whether they had heard about their Community or Town Council before considering the survey. Whereas a small number (14) answered No. 2 people left this question blank.

Q2: If your answer is yes, do you know if you have one where you live?
Almost three quarters of responses (72% / 75 responses) answered Yes. Just over a quarter (25.9% / 27) answered No. 2 responses left this question blank.

Q3: What would you like a council to do in your area?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
More / better services (events / places for teenagers / parks / bins / games shops / football pitches / street lights / cemetery / gym / community development)	30
Discuss with community (inc younger people)	12
No response	11
Clean up area	11
Abolish / pass responsibilities to LA	9
Nothing (waste of time)	9
Better roads (fill pot holes)	7
Improve local area	6
Work with community groups / other LAs	3
As it does now / its good	3
Work for the whole of the community	3
Make area safer	2
I don't know	2
Better rubbish system (too complicated)	2
N/A / not relevant	2
Improve communication / be inclusive	2
Encourage businesses to fill empty shops	1
Put up more shelters	1
Be more accountable	1
Maintain everything	1
Explain what they do	1
Sort local parking	1
Build pride	1
More of what the LA does now	1

Q4: Before today have you been in contact or involved with your council?

Responses to this question was mixed. Almost half of responses (45) answered Yes. and almost half (54) answered No. 5 people left this question blank.

Q5: How would you like to see your council involve younger members of the community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Engage local community (events / go to schools / litter picking etc)	29
Engage with youth / youth rep on council	26
No response	17
Nothing	13
Don't know	8
Safe place to go / youth club	6
Use internet / social media	5
Anything would be good	4
Don't care	3
Abolish	3
N/A	2

Be welcoming and accessible	2
Joint working with other LAs	1
It does	1

Q6: Have you ever considered being on a youth council or being a youth representative for your area?
Almost a third (29% of responses or 30) answered Yes in response to this question. In comparison, two thirds (66% of responses or 69) answered No to whether they had considered being on a youth council or being a youth representative. 5 people left this question blank.

Q7: If your answer is no, please tell us why?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
No response	42
Too old	14
Never thought / heard of it	11
Not interested	9
Don't know what it is	5
Too shy / lacking in confidence	3
Waste of money	3
Time consuming	3
Rather help the community	3
Don't have one in my area	3
N/A	2
Boring	2
Thankless task	1
Don't know how	1
Useless	1
Already have been youth leader	1

Q8: Anything else you think we should know?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
No response	41
No	24
Abolish	10
N/A	8
Improve the local area (sort canal out / less clothes shops / parks)	3
More communication with locals	3
Improve litter problem	2
Better relationship with LA	2
Ensure local decisions are made by local community	1
Get people to stop breaking stuff	1
CTCs are good	1

Need views from minority groups	1
Invite young people to meetings	1
Get a new clerk	1
Resources should be pooled into larger organisations	1
Delegate more to CTC	1
Publicise CTCs more	1
Councillors for larger CTC should have a wage	1
CTCs should be non-political	1

Local Authority Online Survey - Summary of Results

Q1: What should Community and Town Councils be responsible for?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Local Services / Resources (All non-statutory and strategic activities)	12
Be a voice / effective communicator for the community	4
All local matters	2
Community Well being	2
Maximising Community Assets	1
Strategic input into wider strategies	1
Town Councils have no purpose	1

Q2: Are there any barriers to the success of Community and Town Councils? What might enable them to achieve their aims?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Budget / Finance	7
Lack of community engagement including with young people (closed sessions)	5
No full time staff / resources	5
Clarity on Aims/roles/responsibilities	3
Better training for councillors in conducting meetings / communication / negotiation skills / using IT (including social media) and legal	3
Need to be larger to take on services	2
No community interest	2
Attitude of councillors	2
Lack of information on CTC activities	1
Update Local Government Act	1
Lack of public awareness	1
Lack of councillors	1
Inability to make local decisions	1
Support mechanism for Clerks	1
Lack of collaborative approach to partners	1
Lack of transparency (minutes late being published etc)	1

Q3: Do the current governance arrangements for Community and Town Councils work? How might they be improved?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
No / Not sure	4
Current arrangements remote and complex (do not understand)	4
Communication / visibility poor	2
Need for qualified clerks	2
Elected mayor / chair with executive powers	2
Better relationship with the Local Authority	2
Update Local Government Act	1
Lack of knowledge in smaller CTCs	1
Replace some CTCs with elected mayors for the area	1
CTC needs to be listened to by the Government	1
Should operate similar to county councils	1
Poor relationships with local organisations	1
Expert advice needed at a minimum level agreement to ensure consistency across sector	1
Finance should be replaced with a form of direct payment (general rates)	1
Current regime matches size / responsibility. If this changes this should be reviewed.	1

Q4: How should Community and Town Councils ensure they best represent their local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Numbers
Use all avenues of engagement (surveys / social media / website / online presence / Councillor surgeries)	8
Share information with the community (legal duty)	6
Be open / have public meetings (with times / locations considered)	6
Listen / consult	5
Local people as the elected representative (not represent political party)	3
Develop plans	1
Mandatory elections	1
Work with local groups	1
Approachable	1
Represent a political party	1
Be separate from Local Authority	1
Share learning between Local Authorities and CTCs on approaches to elections	1
Get rid and start again	1

Q5: Is it useful to have "twin hatted" councillors who sit on both the Unitary Authority and the Community and Town council? How might these arrangements be improved?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Yes	7

Builds relationships / trust	4
No – conflict of interest	4
Works well	2
Could be more formalised to avoid conflicts of interest	1
If reducing number of councillors at CTC level then not best	1

Q6: What relationship do you have with Community and Town Councils in your area, and how is (or could) this relationship be best managed?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
N/A / Response not relevant	7
No relationship	3
Local council forum	3
Only through one person	2
Mostly online and meetings where necessary	2
Room for improvement	1
Charter	1
Improved by keeping website up to date	1

Q7: What role do you envisage for Community and Town Councils in your area in terms of delivery of services or management of assets, in communities?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Responsibility for managing services / assets inc economic renewal (if larger or work together)	11
CTC facilitate services	2
Direct control of budget	1
Accountability to County Council and Community	1
Work with County Council to deliver local services	1
Work with local groups	1
Hard to say	1

Q8: Do community councils need to be a certain size to have the capacity and capability to play this role?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Yes	6
No	3
Should be linked to the size of their responsibilities	2
Possibly – number of councillors should also be considered	2
Nothing should be contracted out	1
Should be natural communities	1
Should address gaps	1
Should take into account local geography	1
Made up of between 5-8 wards and populations of between 8 and 15 thousand	1
But if too big can be more bureaucratic.	1
Size doesn't matter	1
Don't know	1

Community and Town Council Sector Online Survey - Summary of Results

Q1: What should Community and Town Councils be responsible for?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Local community issues or services	120
Ensuring local views are represented	46
Well being and Culture	29
Act as partner with Unitary Authority / Community Groups / Third Sector / Police	29
Influence over planning decisions / challenge and LDP	22
As little as possible / nothing / scrapped	18
Village / community planning	16
Local events / Tourism & Leisure	13
Community and Business regeneration	11
No additional responsibilities/non-vital services (no capacity)	10
As they do	8
Bringing Local Authority to account for service failure	7
Statutory responsibilities / Expanded to cover other local services	7
Depends on level of expenditure to deliver services. Should not largely increase precept without cost reduction in other charges (i.e. Council Tax)	6
Not an easy answer with such variation	6
All non-stat services	6
Enhancing the quality of life for residents	5
Setting an adequate precept	4
Clear definition needed	4
Management of relevant assets to scale and size of community (clustering and arms length body to deliver services if where appropriate)	4
Not taking over county services	4
General repairs & maintenance	3
Support and assist with fundraising for infrastructure projects.	3
Appropriate financial management and deliver value for money	3
With clear guidelines to avoid allegations of double taxation	3
Keeping public areas safe	3
Facilities beyond capability of Local Authorities	2
Be the hub of the community	2
Devolve car parks and revenues	2
Work across boundaries	2
Ensuring fairness in the community	1
Not responsible for labour intensive things (fly-tipping, bins)	1
Powers to enact by laws	1
Address operating issues	1
Interpret and help implement decisions made at higher levels	1
Competent assessment of CTCs before take on services	1
Open and transparent discussion with Local Authority	1
Should not include matters shared with other communities	1
Focus on deprived communities to redress the balance with more affluent areas of the community	1
PSB link	1

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Access grants and funding	1
Coproduction	1
Town and neighbouring Community and Town Councils should collaborate for the wellbeing of the area and protocol for this should be established	1

Q2: How should they operate?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Democratic election	30
Fully open and transparent	31
Local engagement	32
Better relationship with County Council (dialogue & terms of reference)	29
Publicise meetings (public allowed to speak) and meet more regularly (monthly)	18
Professional way (including no home clerks)	17
Clustering (regionally but with option to be independent)	16
Representing community diversity	16
Paid Staff / Full time staff / Training for staff (development officers & councillors)	14
Collaboratively with other services	13
Disband	13
As they do now	12
Online presence (social media groups / webchat / surveys)	11
Independent Councillors (no party affiliation)	11
Autonomously (with budget)	7
Keep small	6
Review / have decision making powers	5
Effectively / less bureaucracy	5
Councillors understanding role	5
Strong Governance	4
Experienced clerks advising councils (more formalised role)	4
Increase precepts	4
Expert support	4
Part funded from Welsh Government	4
LA Assistance with finance and processing finance	3
Reduce number of councillors	3
Within WG guidelines of volunteering	3
Consistently across Wales or not at all	3
Amalgamated (reduced by half / based on population of 10,000 or more)	3
Use existing powers and develop more powers	3
Financial Plans	3
All operate in the same way	3
Compliant with Code of Conduct	3
Mandatory training that doesn't impact on budget	3
Appropriate expenses	3
Develop community plans	3

Dependent on number of services they manage	2
Being involved in local planning	2
Change rules around Councillors being County Councillors	2
More support for smaller councils / less advantaged councillors (technology)	2
As Legally Stipulated	2
Councillors act without payment	2
Unclear question	2
Share learning	2
More Money	2
Work within the Well-being of Future Generations Framework	2
More support / help / less demand on clerks	2
Need to be careful of expectation	1
Mix of elected and non-elected members (same as school bodies)	1
Investors in people approach	1
As a community hub	1
Committee Style Council	1
One Voice network is useful to learn and apply best practice	1
New Council start up grant	1
Local Democracy marketing programme	1
Increase central funding through One Voice Wales	1
Introduce an age limit for Councillors	1
Act as a Business Board	1
Should not hoard / waste money	1
UK – Sustainable Development Principle	1
Area managers for devolved assets	1
Councillors should set policy / monitor delivery but not be involved in day-to-day management	1
Assets or cluster of assets run by arms length trusts	1
Nothing should stifle agility to respond and seize opportunities	1
Citizen's panel with communities.	1
GPoC for all could help with transparency	1
Flexible and proactive with revised governance	1
Shared resources, services and equipment	1
Unable to answer in current circumstances	1
Elected chair and vice chair	1
Free of party politics	1
Councillors should get paid	1

Q3: What's standing in their way to deliver for the local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Finance	73
Lack of relationship with County Council	67
Lack of paid staff / time	24

Qualified Councillors / Clerks	22
Red Tape	19
Lack of communication with the Community	15
Resources	15
Age barrier of councillors	12
Attitudes of councillors	12
Lack of understanding of role / sector	11
The Government (inc UK)	10
Lack of influence on a variety of decisions	10
Party Politics	10
Clarity of purpose / responsibility	10
Lack of Strategic Planning and budget planning	9
Lack of expert advice	9
Lack of knowledge	9
Appetite	9
Lack of participation in sector from community members	8
Reluctance to raise precept	8
Lack of openness / transparency	8
Lack of consistency – relationship with Local Authorities across Wales	8
Attitudes of other service providers (i.e. businesses)	6
Effective Communication	6
Clarity on legal powers (between Local Authorities & Community and Town Councils)	6
Democratic Mandate	6
Allegations of double taxation if take on services / assets from unitary authorities	6
Nothing	5
Many Community and Town Councils are too small	5
No payments for councillors	5
Lack of local training	4
Lack of willingness to work together	4
No other sources of income	4
Need to be main partner in the community	4
High workloads putting off attracting councillors	4
Conflicts of interest for councillors	3
Restrictions with powers (GPoC / Power of Well Being / Section 137)	3
Poor communications network across Wales	3
Too many councillors	2
Don't want to merge / lose individuality	2
Disband	2
Job description for councillors	2
Old fashioned practices	2
Whole community accessing Community and Town Councils services but not paying towards precept	2

No mechanism For scrutiny	2
Stop county councillors being community councillors	2
Lack of consistent reliable broadband	2
Too much untargeted contact (30 consultations to sift a month)	2
Sustainability	1
Self Belief	1
Excessive Audits of small councils	1
Every Community Area should have a council	1
Transfer of funding when services are transferred	1
Not enough support from One Voice Wales	1
Working across boundaries	1
Language Barrier	1
Lack of national coverage	1
Public Expectations	1
Too many Community and Town Councils	1
Political education	1

Q4: How do councils ensure they best represent their local community?

Reoccurring Responses	Number
Consult local community	99
Engage through other avenues (Online presence, local shops, forum, Surveys, Councillor surgeries	58
Be more transparent	29
Democratic elections	24
Work with other service providers (inc Local Authority)	22
Councillors reflecting local community (age range, interests, occupations etc)	21
Active Councillors in communities	13
Produce a community action plan	13
They don't	11
Encourage people to become a councillor or get involved	11
Remove requirement to represent a political party	6
Partnership with community	6
Share info about what Community and Town Council does and decisions they make	4
Maintain small councils	4
Being proactive / involved in regeneration	4
Mandatory training for councillors	3
Honest	2
Recognise work councillors do and explore payment	2
Share good practice	2
Remove confusion of different councillors	2
Mandatory training for councillors	2
Unclear question	2

Fewer Councillors	2
Dual hatted-ness both hinders and helps	2
Lower voting age to 16	2
Proportionality on committees	1
Acceptance that councillors are integral part of local democracy	1
Improve representation with nominations from local schools / businesses	1
By having tangible responsibilities	1
Abolish them	1
Adopt a participatory model	1
Geographic coverage	1
Time limit councillor service	1
Not rely on Community Councillors	1
Up to each Community and Town Council	1
Real Community Boundaries	1

Overview of Feedback from National 'Pop-In' Sessions held in May 2018

Public Feedback Forms

Q1 - Are you aware of a Community or Town Council in your area?		
YES	519	93.51%
NO	36	6.49%

Q2 - Has your Council engaged with you before today?		
YES	367	66.13%
NO	188	33.87%

Q3 - If not, how would you like your council to engage with the community?	
Website	5
Newsletter	16
Email	15
Social Media	23
Public Notice Board	6
Be more visible / personal presence / door to door / canvas / visit business / visit local schools, youth groups / places of worship	24
Engage with the community / public meetings / regular updates / listen to the public / attend community events / surgeries / focus groups	70
Town Crier	1
Letter drops / leaflets	5
Unsure	3
Any engagement would be helpful	4
Local free press	2
Other	30
No answer	351

Q4 - In your opinion, do you think your council is representative of your community?	
Yes	327
No	140
Did not answer	65
Don't Know	16
Not Bad	4
Other	3

If your answer is no, How do you think they can represent you better?	
Did not answer	406
Other	50
More diversity (answers include gender balance, culturally, minorities, local business reps, non political, demographic)	40
Younger Representatives	25
Do not disappear after elections	5
Less of a closed shop	3
More representative of the community	12
Good mix	10
Shake up / change needed	4

Q5 - Have you ever considered standing for your council? If your answer is no, Why not?	
Yes	101
No	433
No Answer	21
Time / too busy / commitments	132
To old	19
Too political / not interested in Politics	13
New to the area	46
Other	17

Q6 - What would you like to see your council do?	
Local Services & maintenance	335
Engage / be visible /involvement in the community / events / with all groups / be more accessible	143
No answer	114
Facilities for children and younger members of the community	83
Be more open / accountability / transparency	26
Pool services / merge / work with others	15
Continue as they are	22
More powers	15
Represent the community	21
Regular public meetings / updates	24
Be proactive / have a vision	11
Environmental	10
Other (Primary council responsibility)	197

Youth Feedback Forms

The total number of youth feedback forms returned was 50. When analysing the responses, it is clear that 12% of respondents are older than traditional 'youth' age limits when completing the youth feedback form.

Q1 - Before today, had you heard about Community and Town Councils		
Yes	42	84%
No	5	10%
No answer	3	6%

Q2 - Do you know if you have one where you live?		
Yes	36	72%
No	9	18%
No answer	5	10%

Q3 - Do you know what your Community and Town Council does?		
Yes	29	58%
No	15	30%
No answer	6	12%

Q4 - What would you like a council to do in your area?	
Provided suggestions	34
No answer	14
Don't know	2

The word cloud below shows verbatim answers to question 4.

Q5 - Before today have you been in contact or involved with your council?		
Yes	19	38%
No	26	52%
No answer	5	10%

Q6 - How would you like to see your council involve younger members of the community? The word cloud below shows verbatim answers.

Q7 - Have you ever considered being on a youth council or being a youth representative for your area?

Yes	5	10%
No	33	66%
No Answer	6	12%
Not answered by a youth	6	12%

If No, please tell us why? The below word cloud shows verbatim answers.

Q9 - Anything else you think we should know? The word cloud below shows verbatim answers.

Acknowledgements

We, as members of the Independent Review Panel, would like to thank all of the individuals, groups and organisations who supported the Review and engaged in some way. We are particularly grateful to those who took the time to provide us with evidence and attend the many events across Wales. Thank you to those who supported people to complete the surveys either as individuals or in groups, and to those organisations and groups who supported people to have their say as part of events & workshops or meetings.

Thanks are also due to all those who promoted the online surveys or events & workshops on their websites, newsletters or social media accounts. The number of the responses received, is testament to your support. We could not have achieved a truly evidence based review without your help.