



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## **COMMUNITY AND TOWN COUNCIL UPDATE DECEMBER 2018**

The former Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services recently issued a Written Statement setting out the Welsh Government's policy approach for the Community and Town Council sector, a statement of ambition which recognises the diversity of the sector and the communities they serve:

<https://beta.gov.wales/written-statement-future-role-community-and-town-council-sector-wales>

This update sets out in more detail the next steps in implementing the policy approach.

The policy approach is informed by the cross-party Independent Review Panel's work findings and the majority of their recommendations are being taken forward in some way.

The Welsh Government will not be issuing a detailed response to the Review – the former Cabinet Secretary was clear that he sees this as a start of a conversation about how an expanded role for community councils can be achieved and we want to explore this with you rather than predetermine what the Welsh Government position should be.

What we have done instead is identify a set of actions that the Welsh Government intends to take over the remainder of this Assembly term; a table of these actions is attached.

The emphasis of the approach is one of encouraging and enabling the sector to develop, and providing an element of choice for you to decide how far and how



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quickly your council may decide to move forward, particularly around the role your council may wish to play in commissioning and delivering services.

There is action which we can, and will, take immediately to strengthen and support community councils.

During the remainder of this financial year we will consult with One Voice Wales on improving access to core training for councillors, and consider how a core package of training could be delivered.

We also intend to conduct a survey to understand more about how you use social and digital mediums to engage your communities, and what scope there might be to support you to expand in this area.

We are mindful that improving relationships between community and town councils and principal councils was a key finding of the Review Panel's report, particularly on areas of common ground such as how services are sustained and funded. We have already started work with One Voice Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association to consider what practical action we can take together in 2019 to address this. There is also longer term work required to ensure relationships continue to build over time – we will engage with you on how this can be achieved.

The remainder of the actions which are identified as for immediate action in the table will be taken forward in 2019-20, for example:

- We will be expanding the bursary scheme for smaller councils to subsidise training for both councillors and clerks;
- We will be continuing to support the formation of new joint arrangements for service delivery – and encourage you to put forward a bid. Details of the



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grant will be issued to community and town councils in February 2019, for bids by 31 March 2019.

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Alongside this we want to begin a conversation with you about the way forward for areas falling under “Further Consideration”. These areas are more complex than those identified for “Immediate Actions”, and we have no fixed view on them now. We will undertake early exploratory work and begin consultation with the sector during 2019.

Some of the issues identified by the Review Panel merit further consideration and consultation on how to proceed. For example, further consideration is required as to whether a clearer distinction between what communities councils are responsible for and what principal councils are responsible for would help clarify the role of the sector; and whether additional, proportionate, intervention and support arrangements should be put in place.

The Review Panel recommended Welsh Government legislate in number of areas. With the exception of introducing a duty on community and town councils to report annually we do not intend to legislate at this time. Our preference is to support the sector to achieve the desired outcomes without introducing new duties through imposed legislative change.

This means, for example, that we will not look to legislate for a comprehensive review of community and town boundaries to address changes in localities at this time. Instead we intend to use existing powers to ensure local authorities conduct Community Reviews on a regular basis. We will also continue the conversation with you about whether a more fundamental review is needed.



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Other areas we know are of particular interest to you that we want to explore further before taking action include the merits of retaining “dual hatted “ councillors and to test with you the recommendation that councillors should not be able to be co-opted for more than one term, consecutively.

The Review Panel’s work has raised expectations within the sector – and we welcome this. It is important that we now maintain momentum, but do so in a way that ensures we deliver the right outcomes.

We are sharing how we intend to support you in 2019-20, and how we want to work with you to explore the more complex areas requiring “ further consideration”, but it is ultimately for you to raise visibility, improve engagement, and determine what service delivery role you could/should play in your local area.

Hopefully, this update has helped clarify and confirm for you the next steps Welsh Government intends to take to implement its policy to support the sector.

If you have any queries about this update please email: [LGPartnerships@gov.wales](mailto:LGPartnerships@gov.wales)