

# WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

## RESPONSE TO

# Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales

### Consultation Response Form

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Q1 – Do you agree that the qualifying age for voting in Welsh local government elections should be lowered to 16?

*Welshpool Town Council supports the idea of the voting age being reduced to 16 years of age.*

Q2 – Should EU citizens who move to Wales once the UK has left the EU continue to acquire the right to vote?

*Only when they have a legal status to reside in Wales for a prescribed period of say 12 months.*

Q3 – Should voting rights be extended to all legal residents in Wales, irrespective of their nationality or citizenry?

*Yes if they have a legal right to reside in Wales and have been so for a prescribed period, say 12 months.*

Q4 – EU and Commonwealth citizens can stand for election to local government in Wales, Should this continue and be extended to all nationalities made eligible to vote?

*Yes if they have a legal right to reside in Wales and have been so for a prescribed period, say 12 months.*

Q5 – Should Electoral Registration Officers have a greater range of sources available to them to assist citizens to be added to the register?

*Yes. However if electronic registration is used a full back up system need to be in place to protect peoples data and to ensure that any computer hacking or malfunction does not destroy any system in place.*

Q6 – Which data sources do you think should be used by Electoral Registration Officers?

*All that are available.*

Q7 – Should a wider range of local authority staff be empowered to assist citizens to obtain registration through access to the local government register and have the ability to amend it?

*The authorities have an electoral department and they should be able to cope without the need for others to be involved.*

Q8 – What controls should be put in place to ensure the Electoral Registration Officer maintains overall control of the register?

*Retain control within the electoral departments of authorities.*

Q9 – Should the individual registration rules be relaxed to allow for block registrations in certain circumstances, protecting the right to vote for populations otherwise at risk of exclusion?

*We can see some merit in this for special groups but not as a general approach.*

Q10 – Should we place a duty on Electoral Registration Officers to consider whether any individual groups within their electoral area should be specifically targeted in registration campaigns?

*Yes.*

Q11 – Should we introduce arrangements so that agencies that are aware of people moving have a duty to inform the Electoral Registration Officers?

*Yes.*

Q12 – What are your views on the development of a single electronic register for Wales?

*With safeguards, which we are sure will be put in place, yes.*

Q13 – Do you agree that individual principal councils should be able to choose their voting system?

*In principle yes. However, we are against multi-member ward representation and this should not be introduced to suit the system of voting system.*

Q14 – Do you agree that a constitutional change such as this should be subject to a two-thirds majority?

*Yes.*

Q15 – Do you agree that the term of local government in Wales should be set at five years?

*The resonant supports the proposal to have fixed terms for Councils of 5 years.*

Q16 – Do you agree in principle with the desirability of reforming the voting system to encourage greater participation?

*Possibly but this can be proved unless introduced.*

Q17 – Are there other initiatives not covered which might be taken to enable greater participation in elections in Wales?

*Politicians need to be more transparent and clear so that trust from the electorate is restored to a great extent to that experienced at present.*

Q18 – Should councils be able to choose to use all-postal voting at council elections?

*No. There should be a range of options for those wishes to cast their vote.*

Q19 – Should it be subject to pilot exercises first?

*No. Things take too long to implement now, if there are to be changes they should be progressed in a timely manner.*

Q20 – Should councils be able to operate all-postal voting in an individual ward or a number of wards within a council area?

*No.*

Q21 – Should electronic voting be enabled at local elections?

*Yes but only with the opportunity for paper voting alongside for a period of time, ie another 10 years. There are too many elderly entitled to vote who are not happy with computers and IT.*

Q22 – Should remote voting be enabled at local elections?

*We cannot see how this would work. There should be a single polling station; there are postal votes and proxy votes in place to cover those who cannot attend on the day. Mobile voting stations maybe difficult in some rural areas where broadband signals are all but non-existent.*

Q23 – Should electronic counting be introduced for local elections in Wales?

*There is no reason why not.*

Q24 – Should mobile polling stations be enabled at local elections?

*Yes but only if the votes are counted in one location after polling closes.*

Q25 – Should we enable returning officers to make use of polling places in addition to fixed polling stations?

*No.*

Q26 – Should we enable local elections to be held on more than one day and on days other than a Thursday?

*This is something to be considered.*

Q27 – Should consideration be given to simplifying postal voting procedures and literature?

*It is fairly clear now so in our view does not need changing.*

Q28 – How do you think the process could be simplified?

*We not think it can be simplified without affecting the integrity of the voting system.*

Q29 – Should electors attending a polling station be required to produce ID before they are allowed to vote?

*Yes, however there is a time issue involved and more staffing at polling stations may be needed to avoid queues.*

If so, what types of identification should be accepted?

*Any card with a photo on it. (ie driving licence, bus pass, passport etc).*

Q30 – Do the advantages of requiring ID outweigh the risk of deterring voters?

*We hold the view it would not make any difference.*

Q31 – Do you agree that it should no longer be necessary to publish a candidate's home address in election literature, including anything published electronically?

*The full address is not necessary but the ward in which they live should be identified. This is important as voters should be aware if a candidate is a local person or not.*

Q32 – Do you agree that each candidate should be required to provide a personal statement for inclusion on a website provided by the authority to which they are seeking election?

*Yes. This is important even they are elected un-opposed so that the electorate is aware of their ideas, policies and general views.*

Q33 – Do you agree that it should not be permissible to serve both as an Assembly Member and councillor?

*The respondent has never seen how an assembly member can also complete their duties as a County Councillor or vice versa.*

Q34 – Do you agree that candidates should be required to disclose a party affiliation if they have one?

*Only if they are standing for that party. Their own views beyond that are not relevant.*

Q35 – What sort of evidence should be required to suggest there is an undisclosed party affiliation? If they are not standing for that party any membership is possibly irrelevant.

*Not applicable due to answer to Q34 above.*

Q36 – Should any council staff below senior level be able to stand for election to their own authority?

*The respondent does not support any employee being able to serve as a Councillor for the authority which has them as an employee. This would be a giant conflict of interest and make it impossible for the Chief Officer to administer the Council. This particularly would apply to a Town or Community Council.*

Q37 – Is there still justification for councils to keep a list of those other than senior officers who should be politically restricted?

*Not applicable – see Q36 above.*

Q38 – Do you agree that the statutory chief executive role should include that of returning officer?

*Yes.*

Q39 – Do you agree that any addition to salary in recognition of returning officer duties should be a matter for the local authority to determine?

*The respondent holds the view that this is a matter for each electoral authority.*

Q40 – Should Welsh Government move to a system of calculating Assembly election costs on an agreed formula, based on the size of electorate?

*This would make it easier for Local Councils to budget for elections.*

Q41 – Should Welsh Government move to a system of calculating Assembly election costs on an agreed formula, based on the size of electorate?

See Q40.

Q42 – Should Welsh prisoners be allowed to register to vote and participate in Welsh local government elections?

*The respondent is of the view that only those sentenced to less than 3 months should be eligible to vote. (ie fairly minor offences only)*

If so, should it be limited to those sentenced to less than twelve months, four years, or any sentence length?

*The respondent feels that 3 months should be the maximum.*

Q44 – By what method should prisoners cast a vote?

*All votes from prisoners should be via the postal voting system.*

Q45 – At what address should prisoners be registered to vote?

*Not applicable.*

Q44 - We would like to know your views on the effects that Electoral reform would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

What effects do you think there would be?

*All material at polling stations should be bi-lingual as they are at present.*

How positive effects could be increased, or negative effects be mitigated?

*Nothing else needs to be done.*

Q45 - Please also explain how you believe the proposed options could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

*This is not relevant to the subject in hand. Bi-lingual information is all that is needed.*

Q46 - We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

*Just to re-inforce the point of not moving to full electronic voting at this time. In our view it is too early and would disenfranchise those who are not happy with this. In particular the elderly. Maybe in 10 years' time the climate would be different.*

*As we are a Town Council which does not co-opt as a matter of principle (we hold elections every time) we are prepared to give oral evidence at our level if it were felt that a Committee would benefit from that.*

*No further comments.*

Responses to consultations are likely to be made public, on the internet or in a report. If you would prefer your response to remain anonymous, please tick here: