

**Consultation Response Form**

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**Returning this form**

The closing date for replies is **9 November 2015**

Please send this completed form to us by email to:

**RLGProgramme@wales.gsi.gov.uk**

Or by post to:

Reforming Local Government Programme  
Welsh Government  
Crown Buildings  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

If you are sending your response by email, please mark the subject of your e-mail: **Directions to the LDBCW Consultation**

**Question 1. Do you think the suggested ratio provides for effective and convenient local government?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**If no, please explain:**

The proposed ratio of one Councillor to every 4,000 electors is entirely arbitrary. No justification is offered for it in the draft directions. The process of arriving at that number seems to have been to start from a wish to cut the number of Councillors in Wales in half (from the current 1248 to around 616), and then to work backwards from that number, arriving at a spurious Councillor/elector ratio of 1:4000 as a retrospective rationale. Removing the previously announced cap on the number of Councillors per authority is an irrelevance since the end result is in effect the same. We believe that a more considered approach to the ratio should be adopted, addressing such issues as the workload of Councillors, the changing nature of Councillors' roles, and the characteristics, in terms of population but also of geography and other factors, of the area they represent.

The other basic flaw in the draft directions is that they are based on Welsh Government's "preferred configuration for the future of local authorities in Wales" – that is, the map announced by the Minister in June. This even though the promised consultation document on the number of Councils has yet to be published, which gives us serious concerns about the genuineness of that consultation, when it happens. We are therefore asked in the draft directions to comment on proposals which are based on much bigger Councils, proposals which have not yet been ratified and to which we will respond as we have consistently done in the past. Our stance has been and will continue to be that there is no need to create very big Councils, and that the Vale Council should continue as a Council in its own right. That being the case, the 1:4000 ratio make even less sense since it would leave the Vale Council with only 23 Councillors (as opposed to the current 47), a patently insufficient number.

The whole thrust of the draft directions, in drastically reducing the number of Councillors, seems to run counter to the principles set out in "Power to Local People", where the emphasis was on increasing the number of Councillors from a wider variety of backgrounds and achieving a more diverse mix. We would have thought that cutting the number of Councillors by half would achieve precisely the opposite.

**Question 2. Do you think there is a minimum number of councillors required to ensure the effective and democratic working of a local authority?**

Yes   
No

**If yes, what is it and why?**

Yes, there is a minimum number of Councillors needed. What that number is should be arrived at after careful analysis and research. The factors to take into account would be related to the nature of the work to be undertaken, and in particular the number and function of committees. Since the executive and scrutiny functions are separate ones, then the same Councillors cannot serve on both; and other quasi judicial committees will also need adequate Councillor membership. We cannot specify what the number is because this is a matter which Welsh Government and Councils need to look at in more detail.

**Question 3. Do you think a minimum number of elected members per local authority should be specified in the Draft Directions?**

Yes   
No

**Give reasons for your response:**

No. It is inadmissible, as we set out above, to specify any number based on the proposed bigger authorities since those authorities do not yet exist, and it is far from certain that they will. And while there is still an argument about the size and number of future authorities, it is premature to base any calculations of the optimum number of Councillors per Council.

**Question 4. Do you think that there should be a cap on the maximum number of elected members per local authority?**

Yes   
No

**If yes, what do you think the maximum number should be and why?**

Yes. Clearly, there is a number beyond which the workings of any Council will become unwieldy. Given the size of the Vale's electorate (94,439), 47 Councillors is not an unreasonable number.

**Question 5. Do you agree that each ward within a local authority area should have roughly the same number of electors per elected member?**

Yes   
No

**Give reasons for your response:**

Roughly, yes – although in practice this will never be an exact science and will be influenced by factors such as those mentioned in Question 6.

**Question 6. What effect should the particular characteristics of an area have on the number of councillors needed to represent the population?**

The starting point should clearly be an equitable distribution according to population, but several other factors and characteristics are relevant, such as the levels of deprivation which is an indication of the need to provide critical local government services and demographics again which provides an indication of the pressure on key services.

**Question 7. Do you agree that commonly used Welsh language names for wards do not also need an English language equivalent?**

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If no, do you think that each ward should have an English and Welsh name?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

N/A

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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: