

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 9 October, 2017

Report of the Cabinet Member for Regulatory and Legal Services

The Council's Response to the Welsh Government Consultation: Electoral Reform in Local Government

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval for the proposed response to the Welsh Government's consultation paper on Electoral Reform in Local Government in Wales. (attached at the following link):

https://consultations.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultation_doc_files/electoral_reform_-_a_consultation_document_v2.pdf

Recommendation

1. That the proposed response attached to this report at [Appendix A](#) is submitted to Welsh Government.

Reason for the Recommendation

1. So that the Council apprises Welsh Government of its views on the matters included in the Consultation.

Background

2. The Consultation Paper (https://consultations.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultation_doc_files/electoral_reform_-_a_consultation_document_v2.pdf) is the latest in a series of consultations issued by Welsh Government in recent years proposing changes to local government. In the wake of the report of the Williams Commission a White Paper 'Reforming Local Government' was published in July 2014, followed by 'Reforming Local government: Power to Local People' in February 2015 and a Draft Local Government Bill in November 2015. These documents all contained varying proposals for the merger of Councils (as well as other changes to the running of Councils and elections) but none ever made it to the statute book.
3. Subsequent to the National Assembly elections in May 2016, Welsh Government changed its stance on the merger of Councils. The most recent White Paper

"Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed" set out proposals for regional working between Councils and how that might work in practice. It also covered issues relating to local democracy and Councils performance and governance, Community Councils, elections and voting. The White Paper was published in January 2017 and the Council responded through Cabinet in April of this year.

Relevant Issues and Options

4. The current consultation commenced on 18 July 2017 and closes on 10 October, and follows earlier rounds of consultation on reforming local government (as set out above.)
5. The consultation document seeks the views on modernisation of the local government electoral system and covers 6 main areas of voter eligibility, registration, the actual voting system, the process, standing for elections and the role of Returning Officers.
6. Elements of the proposal (such as lowering voting age) has been previously subject to consultation as part of the "Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed" White Paper in April of this year. Indications suggest that final electoral reform proposals would be introduced through a wider Local Government Bill in early to mid 2018.
7. [Appendix A](#) details the responses to a list of questions on the above subjects and Cabinet is asked to consider the responses set out to enable the Council to respond to the Consultation Paper.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

8. A key issue, which is covered in the proposed consultation response is that any changes to voter registration and the voting system may well have financial and resource implications. These would need careful consideration if progressed.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

9. None directly relevant to this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

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

Crime and Disorder Implications

11. None directly associated with this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

12. Any proposals to modernise the local government electoral system will have potential impacts on the electorate. Such changes include extending the vote to 16 and 17 year olds and improving voter registration.

Corporate/Service Objectives

13. None specific to this report, although the consultation on voting reform does link with the desire of this Council in positively engaging with communities and citizens.

Policy Framework and Budget

14. This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

15. As the matters raised in the consultation cover the whole of the Council's services and areas, it is not appropriate for Ward Members to be consulted direct.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

16. Corporate Performance and Resources

Background Papers

Consultation Paper: Electoral Reform in Local Government (18/7/2017)

Contact Officer

Head of Performance and Development

Officers Consulted

N/A

Responsible Officer

Head of Performance and Development