

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	10 March, 2015
SUBJECT	CONSULTATION PAPER ON REFORMING LOCAL GOVERNMENT
PURPOSE	To seek members' observations on a consultation paper
AUTHOR	Geraint George Head of Democratic Services

1. Following considerable discussion over the past few months about local government re-organisation, Leighton Andrews, the Public Services Minister has now published a consultation document on Reforming Local Government. The document outlines a number of changes the Government is considering in terms of local government arrangements and structures in Wales
2. Observations on the document are sought by 28 April, 2015. A note was sent out to each member, through Rhaeadr, noting that individual members or political groups, of course, are welcome to send their comments directly. A copy of the short version of the consultation document (that is appended to this report) and the response form was sent to all members. A full copy of the report is also available on the Welsh Government website <http://gov.wales/docs/ds/jlg/consultation/150203-power-to-local-people-fullv2-en.pdf>.
3. The formal procedure within the Council is that the matter will be considered at this meeting of the Democratic Services Committee and also by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee on 26 March before it is presented to the Cabinet on 14 April where the formal response by the Council will be approved.
4. Members who are not members of the Democratic Services Committee or the Scrutiny Committee were given an opportunity to contribute in two ways:-
 - Sending written comments so that they can be addressed at the meetings;
 - Making a request to attend either one of the two meetings to contribute to the discussion
5. In terms of the document itself, whilst it is very wide-ranging in its scope, it is appropriate for this Committee to consider several elements of it. Therefore, in addition to having an opportunity to pass on general observations on the document to the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet, the Committee's observations are sought on the following issues that relate to councillor roles in particular:-

Paragraph 3.1 – Council Elections – a suggestion of a move to a system of phased elections or staying with the system of having full elections after four or five years

Paragraph 3.2 – The Role and Responsibilities of a Leader – a suggestion of placing a duty on a Leader that as many different people from as many different backgrounds as possible are selected for Cabinet so that many different views are represented

Paragraph 3.4 – The Role and Responsibilities of Councillors – a suggestion of a change in the law to ensure that Councillors produce an annual report

Paragraph 3.5 - Diversity among Councillors – there is a wish to put procedures in place to ensure diversity amongst the body of elected members and to ensure that Councils are open, welcoming and respect differences

Paragraph 3.6 – Remuneration for Councillors – there is mention of commissioning of a review of the best way to pay Councillors since the current system affects people differently

Paragraph 3.7 – The Number of Councillors – there is a question here whether the number of councillors should be reduced and what factors should be used in deciding on the correct number.

Paragraph 3.8 - Term limits for Councillors – this is the most controversial suggestion to have received public attention, that of a suggested limit of five terms for Councillors, and two terms for Leaders, Elected Mayors and Cabinet Members

Paragraph 3.9 – Recall of Councillors – a suggestion of introducing a system whereby a councillor must resign their position if 10% of the people in their area sign a petition and call for it.

Paragraph 3.10 – Electoral qualification – a suggested relaxation of the current rules around standing for election, for example so that a local government officer would be able to stand for election to be a councillor

Paragraph 4.2 - Councillor-led community governance a suggestion of establishing an system of Area Boards that would include charities, community bodies, social enterprises and other public services, including Community Councils with local county councillors leading those boards

Paragraph 4.6 - Community Councillors serving on more than one Council – views are sought on the possible prevention of a single person from serving on a main Council and a Community Council, and on more than one Community Council

6. The Committee's observations are sought.