

CTC 36

Ymgynghoriad ar rôl, llywodraethiant ac atebolrwydd y sector cynghorau tref a chymuned

Consultation on the role, governance and accountability of the community and town council sector

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Cymuned Llangynog

Response from: Llangynog Community Council

Inquiry into the role, governance and accountability of the Community Council - Comments from Llangynog Community Council, Powys

- **The role and value of community and town councils in Wales**

Llangynog Community Council covers 300 residents over a four mile radius and between the seven community councillors are fortunate to know all of the residents and are accessible, face-to-face, email and telephone, to help residents with their concerns, whether it be helping with community council matters which are included on the agenda, or to point residents to other services, such as social services or highways if it is not a community council matter. Where possible we will raise the matter as a community council and recommend a resident contacts the relevant organisation directly, or work collaboratively together.

We are able to keep our eyes and ears to the ground, listen to what the community wants and represent their views to local issues, whether it's to attempt to increase the bus service, reduce the speed limit or report potholes.

We deliver many services:

- Maintain the busy playpark,
- Maintain three burial grounds,
- Maintain the public toilets,
- Maintain public seating
- Maintain a village website
- Produce and distribute a newsletter
- Increase biodiversity: Plant trees and flowers where appropriate around the village.
- Lease the bowling green to Llangynog Bowling Club
- Work closely with our residents
- Work closely with other village organisations such as Llangynog Memorial Hall (the community meeting space for activities and events) the churches and the local WI
- Work closely with our local County Councillor

- Work closely with our local schools and businesses in the area
- Review finances and ensure strong governance
- Review planning permission applications
- Report potholes and any other problems to Powys Council
- Identify land that may be suitable for planning or allotments
- The community councillors also set-up a Tidy-Up Llangynog and actively work around the village in the spring and summer keeping it looking tidy.
- Keep up to date with changes to our Governance by attending One Voice Wales Meetings

We keep residents informed through newsletters which are delivered to every household in the village, as well as posting items of interest on facebook and publishing information on our website which we are currently in the process of redesigning. We make ourselves accessible to all our residents in Llangynog, providing newsletters to every household to update residents of village matters and information in the local area that may affect them.

During COVID, Community Councillors identified and worked with vulnerable residents to arrange for shopping and medication to be collected and made phone calls to residents living alone so they did not feel isolated. This service has continued for some residents that need a little extra support. We also supported Llangynog Entertainments Committee who delivered a small Christmas present to every household in the village whilst we were in lockdown so that it kept our community together.

The Community Council is elected with a high percentage of the residents voting – knowing the community councillors personally, helps their decision in voting for the right person. As a community council we are able to maintain the village identity with residents and are empowered to make the right decisions for the village on behalf of the village.

- **Whether the sector is fit for purpose in an evolving local government landscape;**

This consultation was only provided to us just over a week ago and we are disappointed that we have not had sufficient time to respond to this.

We believe that Community Councils as they are, are essential to our communities. We would like to be supported more by Powys Council, ie. more responsive to our requests, such as potholes that need to be fixed, response from the legal department for advice etc. A large part of our clerk's time is spent chasing up unresolved actions and issues sent to PCC, month after month.

We do think that the size of our community should be taken into consideration as to what we provide for the audit. We are a small community council and although we have many services the process for the audit is very lengthy and bureaucratic and question whether so much information submitted is necessary. It is also frustrating that the clerk had to send promptly but that it can take a long before receiving any feedback. If the audit was more proportionate to the community council, this would also free up some of the audit departments time.

The majority of our community councillors give-up their time for free including helping around the village and rarely claim any expenses and therefore is a low cost to the village. Village organisations that have closed in the past have also made donations to the village – if there was no community council then these donations would not be made to the community. If the community council were to be consolidated into a larger organisation then the village would not be maintained as it is, meetings would become cumbersome and would also be more costly. Given all the work that we are able to do, we feel that all community councils are important for each village, as each village has different facilities and demographics - without our community council, Llangynog would not thrive as it does.

Given that Powys Council is already struggling to provide all the services, they would struggle even more. If the number of Community Councils was reduced, there would be less councillors and the work that community councillors currently carry out for free would then come at a cost.

- **Governance and scrutiny arrangements and its impact on accountability and transparency**

One Voice Wales provided us with a toolkit which guides us through ensuring that we have strong governance. We are able to source templates for our policies and seek advice from One Voice Wales and SLCC where required and also councillors receive training from One Voice Wales and on the job training where required.. We are in the process of creating a new website to include all our meetings, agenda, accounts, our policies, newsletters and village information for everyone to be able to view our council operations.

- **Scope of digital and new technology to improve decision-making, service provision and participation in local democratic processes;**

Despite our rural location, we are fortunate to have excellent broadband connectivity in our village, and in Llangynog Memorial Hall, our meeting venue and are able to provide hybrid meetings when required. Meetings are much more personable when they are face-to-face and given councillors and residents are generally in the village, there is not much requirement for this – but is used when required.

- **How new powers and responsibilities for this tier of government are utilised to support communities.**

Councillors were voted for in 2022 and we believe that the five-yearly election for community councillors is sufficient. We believe that the cost of elections is very costly. For a small community, this is costly – 10% of the annual precept, time consuming and a disruption. Residents voted for who they wanted for the community council and trust their decision making for co-option.

Our community council welcomes new powers and responsibilities, however consideration of the size of the community council is important to be taken into consideration prior to issuing a further workload.

Kind regards,

Rhian Briscoe

Clerk to Llangynog Community Council