

WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION
Local Government (Wales) Bill

CONSULTATION

Introduction

This response to the consultation on the Local Government (Wales) Bill is presented by Welshpool Town Council of Triangle House Union Street Welshpool SY21 7PG
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The Bill was discussed at a meeting of the Council dated 18th February 2015.

Background

The Williams Report was published early in 2014 with recommendations with regard to both Principle and Local councils. Since that time there has been uncertainty as to what form local government will take in the future.

The Williams Report suggested 10-12 principle authorities in place of the current 22. Powys County Council was left as a single unit in those recommendations but linked with the Health Board.

There have been several statements by the Minister but to date there is no confirmation of the final plan expected.

This bill sets out the start point for local government reform.

Consultation

The consultation runs until 13th March following which the Bill will go forward towards enactment.

General Outline

The general outline and main points of note are:

1. The Minister has not yet issued any decision on the number or make up of principle authorities so this bill does not refer to any specific proposals with regard to the number of authorities there might be in Wales.
2. The bill gives the power to the Minister to implement proposed local government reform.



3. The bill sets out a programme for the implementation of any voluntary mergers and any imposed mergers of principle authorities which is:
 - i. Voluntary merges by 2018
 - ii. Compulsory mergers by 2020
4. Those authorities who merge voluntarily will have delayed elections from 2017 into 2018.
5. The bill contains provisions to control authorities' actions and finances in a lead up to a merger.
6. The boundary commission will be asked to advise on new boundaries once the decision has been made by the Minister on which authorities there are to be.
7. There are provisions for shadow authorities to enable the merging of principle authorities; however these are to be paid for by the merging authorities.
8. The remuneration panel will be adjusted to allow them to be involved in setting the salaries and expenses of principle authority Councillors and senior officers.

Proposed response

The proposed response on behalf of Welshpool Town Council is set out below:

1. The bill is generally supported subject to the comments below.
2. There is a need for clarity and a need to remove the uncertainty which current exists within both Principle and Local Councils.
3. The Minister is urged to make clear announcements on which authorities are to merger as soon as possible.
4. The Minister is urged to bring forward details of the future of Town and Community Councils at the same time.
5. The period of 2020 for new authorities is too long and should be brought forward following an early decision on mergers.
6. There should be help for merging authorities by the Welsh Government with regard to shadow authorities and transitional arrangements.
7. The new remit for the remuneration panel is supported.

R A Robinson FRICS AILCM

Town Clerk

18th February 2015