

What you need to know about the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Bill



Chartered
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Background

The Bill comes following the Welsh Government's consultation on the Green Paper 'Strengthening Local Government: Delivering for People' in 2018. The Welsh Government and local government established the Working Group on Local Government. Its purpose was to work, through partnership and mutual respect, to develop a shared agenda for reform which ensures the sustainability of local government and local service provision.

Following the recommendations of the Welsh Government working group considering how to progress this work, recommendations were made on areas including voluntary mergers, powers and flexibilities and shared services.

This briefing largely considers provision in Part 5 (Collaborative working by Principal Councils) and Part 7 (Mergers and Restructuring of Principal Areas).

What are the proposed changes?

The Bill introduces a number of changes unrelated to the work of the housing sector including the extension of voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds, more freedom for local councils to select their voting system and a push to increase diversity amongst executive council members.

The Bill will enable Welsh Ministers to establish a corporate joint committee to exercise functions without a request from principal councils but only in relation to certain functions which are specified on the face of the Bill. The areas where Welsh Ministers can establish a corporate joint committee are transport, economic development, strategic planning for the development and use of land and improving education.

These areas in particular have been selected as they already have means of collaboration in place, and it is felt focusing on strengthening these areas further will increase consistency.

The Bill also provides power to allow voluntary mergers of principal councils and restructuring of a principal area.

A view from CIH Cymru

- Strongly welcome the indication from the Minister to explore ways to take steps towards providing a right to adequate housing
- Plans should make reference to and consider links with Welsh Government's placemaking agenda
- The expertise and insight of local authority housing professionals should be a key consideration in shaping collaborative and any proposed merger arrangements.
- Arrangements for collaboration should be conscious of the independent review of affordable housing supply in Wales's recommendations relating to land use, local authority capacity, and placemaking.

Further information

You can find further information about the bill on the bill homepage [here](#).

The Bill is currently being considered and scrutinized by the Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee.

CIH Cymru will be providing written evidence in response to this consultation by January 2nd 2020.

We would welcome any information from members to help inform and shape our contribution. Please contact matthew.kennedy@cih.org with any thoughts relevant to this work.