

Part 1 – Elections

Right to vote

16 & 17 years old being able to vote in Local Government Elections. This will follow on from the extension of the franchise for Welsh Assembly elections allowing 16 & 17 years olds to vote at the 2021 elections. Franchise will extend to elections that use the local government franchise (referendums for example) but not extend to elections outside the control of its devolved powers.

Nationality Extension

The local government franchise currently allows UK, EU and Commonwealth citizens to register and vote in local government. The bill will extend the franchise to allow any citizens lawfully resident in Wales to register and to vote in local government elections regardless of their nationality.

Changing the voting system for council elections

All local elections in Wales currently use the first past the post electoral system. The Bill allows each council to choose between a first past the post electoral system or Single Transferable Vote. Specific criteria regarding change such as two-thirds majority decision, electoral review and increase in multimember wards and being unable to revert back to FPTP for a set period.

Electoral Cycle

Confirmation of the change of the election cycle from 4 years to five.

Right to Stand

In line with the changes to eligibility to vote, extension will be made to the right to stand for election irrespective of nationality.

The bill will allow Council employees to stand for election to their employing council except for employees who hold politically restricted posts. They will need to resign their employment if they are elected.

Electoral Pilots

Ministers can instruct councils to conduct pilots in to different voting methods at local government elections. Previously councils needed to apply.

Part 2 – General Power of Competence

The general power will allow qualifying local authorities to act in their communities' best interests, generate efficiencies and secure value for money outcomes. They will also be able to raise money by charging for discretionary services and to trade in line with existing powers.

Part 3 –

Promoting Access to LG

Duty to encourage participation

Councils will be required to encourage participation in local democracy. They will also be required to prepare, consult on and review a public participation scheme with the aim of making it easier for people to understand how the council works, makes decisions and how they can get involved.

Petition scheme

In order to promote greater and more effective use of petitions within the local government sector, the Bill includes provisions to require a principal council to make a petition scheme setting out how it will handle and deal with petitions, including e-petitions. The bill will repeal the rules with regard to community polls and intend for the petition schemes to replace this.

Councillor Information

We will need to publish and email and written address on the website for every councillor so that members of the public can contact them. It does not have to be personal details though and could use County Hall as address.

Constitution Guide

Councils will be required to publish a simple easy to read guide on its constitution.

Webcasting

The bill will require all meetings that are open to the public to be live streamed with people being able to see and hear the participants and proceedings.

Already meeting the requirement except for area committees.

Awaiting further guidance from Welsh Government regarding standards with a large variance in practices and costs between authorities.

Remote Access to meetings

The bill amends the prescriptive provisions contained within the 2011 local government measure to make remote attendance at meetings more accessible and practical. Assurances need to be contained within the guidance from Welsh Government regarding failure or unavailability of technology for meetings and ensure that it does not impact on the decision making process.

Other factors around ability to chair meeting effectively, number of remote attendees and ability to live stream remote attendee need consideration.

Part 4 – LA Executives, Members, Officers and Committees

Chief Executive appointment and performance

Appointments will be made to Chief Executives of local authorities rather than head of paid service with specific duties and specified performance management arrangements.

Job-sharing in Cabinet;

The Bill will allow for Cabinet members to job share posts. The job share will not increase the number of senior remuneration salaries as set by the IRPW and remuneration would need to be split between members. Exact arrangements could depend on the type of job share members want to undertake. There would only be one vote in Cabinet per cabinet position and the job share would not create an additional vote.

Assistant to Cabinet Members

Cabinet members can appoint assistants/deputies to their posts to assist with casework and understand the portfolio as well as gain experience and understanding of the role of a cabinet member. Assistants/Deputies would not form part of the executive, have a vote or be remunerated for that post.

Absence entitlement for family reasons

Update of provisions to bring family absence rules in line with employees of the Council.

Standards Committee annual report to Council;

Standards committees will be required after the end of each financial year to make an annual report to the authority describing how the committee's functions have been discharged during the financial year and setting out an overview of conduct matters within the council. The council will be obliged

to consider the report and any recommendations made by the standards committee within 3 months of receipt.

Duty on group leaders to high standards of conduct

Political group leaders must take reasonable steps to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members of their group. In doing so they must co-operate with the councils standards committee in exercising its functions.

Part 5 – Collaborative Working

Power to require LAs to appoint joint overview committees

The Bill provides for local authorities and ministers to establish a Corporate Joint Committee (CJC) to encourage regional collaboration and improvements on specific topics as set by legislation including School Improvement, Economic Development, Strategic Planning and Transport.

Full details on functions, boundaries and governance arrangements will be made in regulations by the Minister. It is seen that the CJC will sit as a separate entity to that of the principal council with authorities contributing to the operation of the CJC.

Part 6 – Performance and Governance of LAs

Duty to keep performance under review;

Local authorities will be required to undertake an annual self assessment of performance and a periodic review to provide an external, expert perspective on performance.

The bill supports existing arrangements that are in place in terms of the WAO ability to carry out assessments and the power for Ministers to intervene where performance is not seen as satisfactory.

Audit Committees;

Audit committees to be renamed Governance and Audit Committees and prescribing that one third of members must be lay members and the chair should also be a lay member.

Part 7 – Mergers and Restructuring

Provisions allow for local authorities that wish to merge to be able to do so and sets out the process that would be followed in dissolving and establishing new Councils.

Misc

Head of Dem Services

The bill allows for the Head of Democratic Services role to be undertaken by the Monitoring Officer and treated as a Chief Officer previously not allowed by the 2011 measure.