

**CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE:**

**6 NOVEMBER 2009**

**REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

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**COUNCILLORS COMMISSION EXPERT PANEL REPORT**

**AGENDA ITEM: 2**

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**Reason for this Report**

1. To consider the views of Members on the report and recommendations of the Councillors Commission Expert Panel in Wales, which was tabled previously at the meeting on 11 September 2009.

**Background**

2. In December 2007, the Councillors Commission set up by the UK Government published a report entitled, "*Representing the Future*", which made a total of 61 recommendations. A significant number of those recommendations related to non-devolved matters, but many applied equally to Wales.
3. Further to the report of the Councillors Commission, in March 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) established a panel of experts to consider the report of the Councillors Commission and the position of local government in Wales. The Expert Panel included two current Cardiff Councillors (Cllrs Lansdown and Patel) and was also chaired by a former Cardiff Councillor.
4. The terms of reference for the Councillors Commission Expert Panel were as follows:
  - to consider the recommendations of the Councillors Commission and their appropriateness for implementation in Wales;
  - to consider whether there are any other issues relevant to widening participation in local government in Wales, which have not been considered by the Councillors Commission; and
  - to make recommendations to the Minister by November 2008.

5. As part of its work, the Expert Panel considered the following specific themes that were linked to the themes considered originally by the Councillors Commission:
  - the role of councillors;
  - public perception and understanding of councillors and the role of the media;
  - balancing working and family life with being a councillor;
  - supporting, recognising and rewarding councillors; and
  - recruiting and retaining a diverse range of councillors.

### **Issues**

6. The WAG Minister for Social Justice and Local Government is currently seeking views primarily on those recommendations contained within the report that are aimed at the Welsh Assembly Government, but would also welcome views on any of the 35 recommendations made by the Expert Panel, which are set out in **Appendix A** to this report. Any comments should be returned to the Local Government Democracy Team at the Welsh Assembly Government by Friday 27 November 2009. This closing date has been extended from the original closing date of 6 November 2009.
7. Following previous consideration of a report on this issue by this Committee, it was agreed that copies of the Expert Panel's report and recommendations should be circulated to all Members to enable individual Members or Groups to submit any comments to the Clerk to the Council by the next scheduled meeting on 16 October 2009. However, this meeting was cancelled subsequently.
8. Members therefore have a further opportunity to debate this matter and to consider any comments that have been submitted by Members or Groups to date. The comments which have been received from the Council's Independent Group are set out in **Appendix B** to this report. In addition, Members are also provided, for information, with a copy of a draft report (see **Appendix C**) that was considered recently by the WLGA Coordinating Committee on 23 October 2009, which outlined a draft response on behalf of Welsh local government. Following consideration of the Expert Panel recommendations and the potential future implications for Cardiff, the Committee may wish to consider whether the Council should submit a formal response to the Welsh Assembly Government.

### **Finance Implications**

9. There are none arising directly out of this report.

### **Legal Implications**

10. There are none arising from the report.

## **Recommendations**

11. The Committee is asked to:

- i) note the summary of recommendations made by the Councillors Commission Expert Panel in Wales and any other related information and/or comments which have been received to date, and;
- ii) consider whether the Council should submit a formal response to the Welsh Assembly Government by 27 November 2009.

**KATE BERRY**  
**Monitoring Officer**  
**2 November 2009**

**Appendix A:** Summary of the Expert Panel's Recommendations

**Appendix B:** Comments received from the Council's Independent Group

**Appendix C:** WLGA Coordinating Committee, 23 October 2009 (Item 4) – 'Are we being served? The Report of the Councillor Commission Expert Panel Wales'

# **Councillors Commission Expert Panel Report – “Are we being served?”**

## **Summary of Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1**

As part of their statutory duties, local authorities should undertake equality monitoring amongst candidates standing for election and all newly-elected councillors. The same should be done for community and town councillors and in the meantime the census of county councillors should also be extended to community and town councillors.

### **Recommendation 2**

Consideration should be given to introducing a legal separation of the executive and non-executive functions of the council with separate funding streams that would protect the central provision of members' services.

### **Recommendation 3**

One Voice Wales should in conjunction with community and town councils and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) develop role descriptions for community and town councillors

### **Recommendation 4**

The WLGA should place a stronger emphasis and focus on the role of a Councillor in representing their community - the ward role, in the Wales Member Support and Development Charter.

### **Recommendation 5**

Work should be undertaken within local authorities to further raise the awareness and recognition of the different roles that councillors undertake, in particular ward representation in their communities. This could be achieved by involving members in officer training and induction and including this aspect of their role in the induction and development programmes for council officers.

### **Recommendation 6**

Political parties should:

- (a) make better use of the Candidates' Guide developed by the WLGA amongst candidates and potential candidates
- (b) consider developing or, where they already exist, standardising their own role descriptions to match with the WLGA role specifications to inform the candidate selection process (although the part of the councillor role related to representing their political party would remain the responsibility of each party)

### **Recommendation 7**

The National Assembly, Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and One Voice Wales should lead a Governance Wales Campaign which would seek to clarify and explain to the public the responsibilities of the different tiers of government in Wales and what different types of representatives do.

**Recommendation 8**

Local authorities should be charged with a statutory duty to facilitate local democratic engagement. This should be supported by the production of guidance from the WLGA.

**Recommendation 9**

Local authorities should put in place arrangements which ensure that council officers recognise the importance of working with and supporting councillors to engage with their communities and particular, where appropriate, with marginalised, seldom heard or so called “hard-to-reach” groups.

**Recommendation 10**

The Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity should be reviewed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

**Recommendation 11**

Local authorities should make arrangements to support councillors to publish (as a minimum on the website) an annual report of their work both in their communities and within the council.

**Recommendation 12**

The Independent Remuneration Panel should consider making a communication allowance available to councillors which could be used to fund communication with their electorate. This expenditure should be accounted for in an annual report and any communication would need to adhere to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.

**Recommendation 13**

Councillors should be actively encouraged to embrace the digital age in communication with their communities. In line with the WLGA Charter, local authorities should provide all elected members with training opportunities on using appropriate IT packages and communicating through digital media (such as developing websites and blogging), as well as ongoing IT support. Wherever possible, such training should be opened up to community and town councillors.

**Recommendation 14**

Local authorities should provide training and ongoing support in dealing with the press and broadcasters for all their elected members. Wherever possible, such training should be opened up to community and town councillors.

**Recommendation 15**

The Welsh Assembly Government, WLGA and One Voice Wales should initiate discussions with the public service broadcasters in Wales and Ofcom to identify what role these broadcasters could play in enhancing the coverage of local government, and, in particular, how the BBC will carry out the commitment given by the Director General in January to improving coverage of local government.

**Recommendation 16**

The UK Government should consider including a provision in the forthcoming Equality Bill which will allow political parties to use special measure for the selection of black and minority ethnic candidates. Political parties should be encouraged to use special measures for women which are already permissible in their selection processes in order to ensure that a balanced list of candidates are standing for election.

**Recommendation 17**

The Electoral Commission should assist Political parties in Wales to identify and take account of good practice from other parts of the UK and learn from other parties in measures to engage with under-represented groups and support them through the process of selection and candidacy.

**Recommendation 18**

The Candidates' Guide produced by the WLGA should be available to potential candidates prior to every local government election and steps should be taken by the Electoral Commission to promote the guidance which is available to all candidates, particularly to independent candidates who do not have practical support provided by a political party.

**Recommendation 19**

The possibility of establishing a fund to support the specific needs of people from under-represented groups to become candidates (such as meeting accessibility needs, communication support where English is not a first language etc) should be explored by the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.

**Recommendation 20**

The Welsh Assembly Government should work in partnership with the Assembly Commission, the WLGA and other relevant organisations to develop an all Wales shadowing scheme which would provide opportunities for shadowing and mentoring people from under represented groups by councillors and AMs.

**Recommendation 21**

Schools and council officers working with children and young people or in promoting democracy should be encouraged to actively seek opportunities to engage councillors (both county and community and town) in meeting and working with children and young people, both at county and ward level.

**Recommendation 22**

A comprehensive review of the role of a councillor role and the time commitment required to fulfil it should be undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel in the course of their fundamental review of Members' Remuneration this year.

**Recommendation 23**

Local authorities should consider ways in which time commitments for councillors and cost burdens for local authorities can be reduced, for example through the use of video conferencing facilities, remote voting and paperless working. In addition, One Voice Wales, the WLGA and the Welsh Assembly Government should jointly consider how to promote greater use of ICT by community and town councils.

**Recommendation 24**

The WLGA should develop an employer's pack in conjunction with employer organisations which sets out the benefits to supporting employees who wish to become, or are, councillors. The pack could include examples of good practice.

**Recommendation 25**

Consideration should be given to how public sector employers can be encouraged to actively support employees to participate in public life and whether it is possible to use procurement to achieve the same outcome amongst private sector employers.

**Recommendation 26**

Guidance should be issued to local authorities to encourage them to put in place policies for maternity, paternity (including adoptive) and caring leave for councillors. Similarly, policies for time management, including cover in periods of absence, flexible working and support should be developed.

**Recommendation 27**

The forthcoming consultation being conducted by the Independent Remuneration Panel on a review of councillors' allowances should engage members of the public in a meaningful way, possibly through the use of a Citizens Panel.

**Recommendation 28**

Councils should be required to undertake a bi-annual survey of members in order to identify their support needs. This survey should be reported to full council and shared with the WLGA.

**Recommendation 29**

Investors in People UK should ensure that the Investor in People Standard assesses a council's commitment to developing their councillors as well as their employees. Investors in People status should only be awarded to councils who have been successful in being awarded the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development

**Recommendation 30**

All local authorities should ensure that training and development opportunities are available to their elected members and ensure that consideration is given to ways in which these programmes can be delivered in a way which minimises the time commitment required for members. The development of training packages should be done in association with community and town Councils, whose councillors could also benefit from training and development opportunities.

**Recommendation 31**

The WLGA should consider the development of accredited training which could be taken up by councillors on a voluntary basis.

**Recommendation 32**

Consideration should be given to allocating some funding, with an appropriate audit mechanism attached, to individual councillors through the remuneration framework to allow members to meet some support needs. This could be explored further by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

**Recommendation 33**

Councils should consider the needs of individual members when determining what technological support is provided. In doing this they should be mindful of addressing the specific need for councillors to combine their role with other commitments.

**Recommendation 34**

The WLGA should issue guidance to local authorities in consultation with the Equality and Human Rights Commission on meeting their obligations to councillors in respect of the equality enactments and councils should be encouraged to provide support over and above their statutory obligations as a way of encouraging the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups. All councillors should be offered an assessment which would identify any accessibility needs, language support requirements or caring needs. Local Authority Members support officers should in conjunction with the individual councillor and where appropriate party group officers draw up a plan to identify how these needs can be met.

**Recommendation 35**

Political parties should ensure that support for councillors extends beyond candidacy and should consider ways in which mechanisms for supporting their councillors can be developed.



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Independent Group Comments on the Expert Panel Recommendations**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Independent Group Comments</b>
1	As part of their statutory duties, local authorities should undertake equality monitoring amongst candidates standing for election and all newly-elected councillors. The same should be done for community and town councillors and in the meantime the census of county councillors should also be extended to community and town councillors.	We support recommendation 1. This monitoring should be very easy to achieve.
2	Consideration should be given to introducing a legal separation of the executive and non-executive functions of the council with separate funding streams that would protect the central provision of members' services.	We would question recommendation 2. If there is central funding, then will Councils have to provide the same level of member services for each local authority? This may not be appropriate as, for example, Cardiff Councillors are probably more likely to pop into County Hall to collect post than Powys Councillors, who may have to travel some distance to County Hall.
3	One Voice Wales should in conjunction with community and town councils and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) develop role descriptions for community and town councillors	We support recommendation 3.
4	The WLGA should place a stronger emphasis and focus on the role of a Councillor in representing their community - the ward role, in the Wales Member Support and Development Charter.	We strongly support recommendation 4. As Independents, the link to our community is the most important part of our role.
5	Work should be undertaken within local authorities to further raise the awareness and recognition of the different roles that councillors undertake, in particular ward representation in their communities. This could be achieved by involving members in officer training and induction and including this aspect of their role in the induction and development programmes for council officers.	We strongly support recommendation 5 for the same reasons as recommendation 4.

6	<p>Political parties should:</p> <p>(a) make better use of the Candidates' Guide developed by the WLGA amongst candidates and potential candidates</p> <p>(b) consider developing or, where they already exist, standardising their own role descriptions to match with the WLGA role specifications to inform the candidate selection process (although the part of the councillor role related to representing their political party would remain the responsibility of each party)</p>	<p>We support recommendation 6 (a), but do not support 6 (b) as we feel that there should be a standard WLGA guide for each candidate, whether they stand for election as a member of one of the major political parties, one of the smaller parties, or without a party.</p>
7	<p>The National Assembly, Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and One Voice Wales should lead a Governance Wales Campaign which would seek to clarify and explain to the public the responsibilities of the different tiers of government in Wales and what different types of representatives do.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 7.</p>
8	<p>Local authorities should be charged with a statutory duty to facilitate local democratic engagement. This should be supported by the production of guidance from the WLGA.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 8.</p>
9	<p>Local authorities should put in place arrangements which ensure that council officers recognise the importance of working with and supporting councillors to engage with their communities and particular, where appropriate, with marginalised, seldom heard or so called "hard-to-reach" groups.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 9.</p>
10	<p>The Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity should be reviewed by the Welsh Assembly Government.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 10.</p>
11	<p>Local authorities should make arrangements to support councillors to publish (as a minimum on the website) an annual report of their work both in their communities and within the council.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 11.</p>

12	The Independent Remuneration Panel should consider making a communication allowance available to councillors which could be used to fund communication with their electorate. This expenditure should be accounted for in an annual report and any communication would need to adhere to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.	We do not support recommendation 12. We feel that there could be the potential for newsletters to be political and that this should not be at the taxpayers' expense and that it is down to the individual Councillor to pay for and, therefore, decide what goes in their literature. However, the production of non-political surgery notices (as per the status quo) should continue.
13	Councillors should be actively encouraged to embrace the digital age in communication with their communities. In line with the WLGA Charter, local authorities should provide all elected members with training opportunities on using appropriate IT packages and communicating through digital media (such as developing websites and blogging), as well as ongoing IT support. Wherever possible, such training should be opened up to community and town councillors.	We support recommendation 13.
14	Local authorities should provide training and ongoing support in dealing with the press and broadcasters for all their elected members. Wherever possible, such training should be opened up to community and town councillors.	We support recommendation 14.
15	The Welsh Assembly Government, WLGA and One Voice Wales should initiate discussions with the public service broadcasters in Wales and Ofcom to identify what role these broadcasters could play in enhancing the coverage of local government, and, in particular, how the BBC will carry out the commitment given by the Director General in January to improving coverage of local government.	We support recommendation 15.
16	The UK Government should consider including a provision in the forthcoming Equality Bill which will allow political parties to use special measure for the selection of black and minority ethnic candidates. Political parties should be encouraged to use special measures for women which are already permissible in their selection processes in order to ensure that a balanced list of candidates are standing for election.	We do not support recommendation 16. We are not in favour of positive discrimination as we believe there are many candidates who have achieved success on their own merits.

17	The Electoral Commission should assist Political parties in Wales to identify and take account of good practice from other parts of the UK and learn from other parties in measures to engage with under-represented groups and support them through the process of selection and candidacy.	We strongly support recommendation 17. If this engagement is done successfully, then there should be no need for recommendation 16.
18	The Candidates' Guide produced by the WLGA should be available to potential candidates prior to every local government election and steps should be taken by the Electoral Commission to promote the guidance which is available to all candidates, particularly to independent candidates who do not have practical support provided by a political party.	We strongly support recommendation 18.
19	The possibility of establishing a fund to support the specific needs of people from under-represented groups to become candidates (such as meeting accessibility needs, communication support where English is not a first language etc) should be explored by the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.	We support recommendation 19.
20	The Welsh Assembly Government should work in partnership with the Assembly Commission, the WLGA and other relevant organisations to develop an all Wales shadowing scheme which would provide opportunities for shadowing and mentoring people from under represented groups by councillors and AMs.	We support recommendation 20.
21	Schools and council officers working with children and young people or in promoting democracy should be encouraged to actively seek opportunities to engage councillors (both county and community and town) in meeting and working with children and young people, both at county and ward level.	We strongly support recommendation 21.
22	A comprehensive review of the role of a councillor role and the time commitment required to fulfil it should be undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel in the course of their fundamental review of Members' Remuneration this year.	We support recommendation 22.

23	Local authorities should consider ways in which time commitments for councillors and cost burdens for local authorities can be reduced, for example through the use of video conferencing facilities, remote voting and paperless working. In addition, One Voice Wales, the WLGA and the Welsh Assembly Government should jointly consider how to promote greater use of ICT by community and town councils.	We strongly support recommendation 23.
24	The WLGA should develop an employer's pack in conjunction with employer organisations which sets out the benefits to supporting employees who wish to become, or are, councillors. The pack could include examples of good practice.	We strongly support recommendation 24.
25	Consideration should be given to how public sector employers can be encouraged to actively support employees to participate in public life and whether it is possible to use procurement to achieve the same outcome amongst private sector employers.	We support recommendation 25.
26	Guidance should be issued to local authorities to encourage them to put in place policies for maternity, paternity (including adoptive) and caring leave for councillors. Similarly, policies for time management, including cover in periods of absence, flexible working and support should be developed.	We support recommendation 26.
27	The forthcoming consultation being conducted by the Independent Remuneration Panel on a review of councillors' allowances should engage members of the public in a meaningful way, possibly through the use of a Citizens Panel.	We support recommendation 27, but wonder whether the Citizen's Panel is the best way to engage with members of the public.
28	Councils should be required to undertake a bi-annual survey of members in order to identify their support needs. This survey should be reported to full council and shared with the WLGA.	We support recommendation 28.

29	Investors in People UK should ensure that the Investor in People Standard assesses a council's commitment to developing their councillors as well as their employees. Investors in People status should only be awarded to councils who have been successful in being awarded the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.	We support recommendation 29.
30	All local authorities should ensure that training and development opportunities are available to their elected members and ensure that consideration is given to ways in which these programmes can be delivered in a way which minimises the time commitment required for members. The development of training packages should be done in association with community and town Councils, whose councillors could also benefit from training and development opportunities.	We support recommendation 30.
31	The WLGA should consider the development of accredited training which could be taken up by councillors on a voluntary basis.	We support recommendation 31.
32	Consideration should be given to allocating some funding, with an appropriate audit mechanism attached, to individual councillors through the remuneration framework to allow members to meet some support needs. This could be explored further by the Independent Remuneration Panel.	We support recommendation 32; however, we would urge that the funding for a specific care need of an individual Councillor should be provided by Westminster or the Welsh Assembly Government.
33	Councils should consider the needs of individual members when determining what technological support is provided. In doing this they should be mindful of addressing the specific need for councillors to combine their role with other commitments.	We support recommendation 33.

34	<p>The WLGA should issue guidance to local authorities in consultation with the Equality and Human Rights Commission on meeting their obligations to councillors in respect of the equality enactments and councils should be encouraged to provide support over and above their statutory obligations as a way of encouraging the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups. All councillors should be offered an assessment which would identify any accessibility needs, language support requirements or caring needs. Local Authority Members support officers should in conjunction with the individual councillor and where appropriate party group officers draw up a plan to identify how these needs can be met.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 34; however, we would again urge that funding for going “above and beyond” statutory obligations is from Westminster, the National Assembly for Wales or another appropriate organisation.</p>
35	<p>Political parties should ensure that support for councillors extends beyond candidacy and should consider ways in which mechanisms for supporting their councillors can be developed.</p>	<p>We support recommendation 35, but are concerned that it leaves out Independent Councillors who will need to rely on the Local Authority for support and development.</p>

## **APPENDIX C**

**WLGA Coordinating Committee**

**Item 4**

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009

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### **Are we being served? The Report of the Councillor Commission Expert Panel Wales**

#### **Purpose**

1. To seek members' views on the Report of the Councillor Commission Expert Panel Wales and to seek endorsement of the draft WLGA response (Annex 1).

#### **Background**

2. The Councillor Commission Expert Panel Wales [the Panel] was set up by the Assembly Government in 2008 to consider the (English) Councillor Commission' recommendations around member recruitment, retention, remuneration and support.
3. The Panel was independent of the Assembly Government, and included serving and former councillors and representatives of political parties, the media and business.
4. The Panel was chaired by Sophie Howe, then of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (now Special Advisor to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government). Cllr Meryl Gravell was a member of the panel in her capacity as an independent councillor (not as a representative of the WLGA or Carmarthenshire County Council). WLGA officials also acted in an advisory capacity to the Panel. The WLGA Liberal Democrat Group has previously expressed concern that, due to an administrative oversight on the part of the Assembly Government, the party was not given an opportunity to participate in the Panel.
5. The Panel's report 'Are we being served?' does not represent Assembly Government policy, however, the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government issued the report for consultation in August 2009 to seek views to help shape any future local government policy statement.
6. The WLGA will therefore have further opportunity to work with the Assembly Government to influence any subsequent policy statement on members' issues, and will be a key consultee throughout the course of any resultant Local Government Measure.



7. The Panel's report adds to the considerable policy debate currently ongoing in Wales around the evolving role of the councillor. The Assembly Government, and the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government in particular, has demonstrated a consistent ambition to further empower and support councillors in their community leadership role. This was first articulated in the local government policy statement 'A Shared Responsibility' in 2007.
8. The Independent Remuneration Panel, whose Chair Richard Penn was also a member of the Expert Panel, has already reported and made some significant recommendations around members' remuneration, as well as recommendations around improving transparency and accountability.
9. As reported to members at WLGA Council in September, the Assembly Government is already seeking legislative competence over local democracy matters, which would allow the Assembly Government to implement many of the Expert Panel and Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations through the Local Government LCO.

## **Panel Report**

10. The Expert Panel's report includes 35 recommendations covering a range of organisations including local authorities, the WLGA, the Assembly Government, political parties and other bodies. The recommendations are wide-ranging, from member training and promotional activity through to proposals for a legal separation and separate funding of the executive and non-executive functions of councils.
11. Views have been sought on the Panel's recommendations from local authorities and the report has been discussed at a joint meeting of Elected Member Champions and Members Support Officers. The consultation deadline has been extended to 27<sup>th</sup> November 2009.
12. It is recommended that the WLGA broadly welcome the report as a clear endorsement and recognition of the central role of the councillor and is a valuable contribution to the policy debate around the future role of councillors in Wales.
13. The WLGA is a member-led organisation and was established to promote local democracy and the interests of local government. As a result, it has long championed the pivotal role of councillor in Welsh public life and in the governance of Wales.
14. As part of its improvement remit, the WLGA works closely with authorities providing extensive guidance and support for member development, induction and training as detailed in the draft response (Annex 1).
15. Whilst a number of the Panel's recommendations can be endorsed by the WLGA and largely build on existing good practice within authorities, some recommendations can be interpreted as being too prescriptive and others would

require potentially significant additional investment during a period of financial contraction.

16. The report's publication and subsequent debate occurs at a time of intense public scrutiny in the cost of our elected representatives and public institutions and the unheralded tightening of public finances and the impact on front-line services.
17. The report inevitably generates the 'what price democracy?' debate. There are varying personal and political views about the appropriate running costs and size of governmental institutions. This debate is particularly challenging within local government, given it has both a representative and a service delivery/commissioning remit. Resource allocation inevitably requires a sensitive balancing act between investing in administration and supporting democratic representation and engagement on the one-hand and investment in core front-line services on the other. Despite national guidance, the allocation of scarce resources has to remain at the discretion of local decision-making.
18. Clearly there is a place for national guidance and support around promoting local democracy; national activity encourages the sharing of good practice and expertise, provides economies of scale for the development of and delivery of training programmes and promotes incremental standards around member development and support. The WLGA in particular, working with Member Champions and Members Services Officers, plays a central role in this national improvement and support work.
19. However, local determination is fundamental; the improvement agenda has to be owned at a local level and personal development is particularly sensitive to an individual's personal needs, requirements and commitments. Whilst it is possible to provide overall frameworks or programmes of support, personal development by definition is inherently individual and any developmental or support needs must be identified and agreed by those concerned and any programmes of development and support designed and owned accordingly.
20. Whilst additional support for members in some authorities may be desirable, those members often have to balance the financial implications of those priorities in the context of the wider community and service priorities faced by the authority.

## **Recommendations**

### **21. It is recommended that members:**

- 21.1 consider the Expert Panel's recommendations (detailed in Annex 1); and**
  - 21.2 subject to discussions and amendments agreed during the meeting, endorse Annex 1 as the WLGA response to the Expert Panel's Report.**
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**ANNEX 1**

## **Draft WLGA Response**

### **Are we being served? The Report of the Councillor Commission Expert Panel Wales**

1. The WLGA welcomes the Panel's report as a clear endorsement and recognition of the central role of the councillor and is a valuable contribution to the policy debate around the future role of councillors in Wales.
2. The WLGA is a member-led organisation and was established to promote local democracy and the interests of local government. As a result, it has long championed the pivotal role of the councillor in Welsh public life and in the governance of Wales.
3. As part of its improvement remit, the WLGA works with authorities providing guidance and support for member development, including:
  - a. Providing support to authorities on member development and training, including commissioning and delivering training sessions, including induction, equalities and diversity, community leadership, chairing and scrutiny skills and policy specific sessions, through to executive support and Leadership Academies.
  - b. Facilitating a member support officers and member champions network to encourage joint working and practice sharing on all aspects of member support and development
  - c. Providing support and guidance materials such as model strategies, briefings, role descriptions, development frameworks, induction and training modules
  - d. Promotion of the Charter for Member Support and Development to provide a guide, impetus and recognition for authorities wishing to provide high standards of support for their members. To date, 11 authorities (including some national park and fire and rescue authorities) have been awarded charter status.
4. Many of the Panel's recommendations can be endorsed by the WLGA, and largely build on existing good practice within authorities, however, some recommendations can be interpreted as being too prescriptive and others would require potentially significant additional investment during a period of financial contraction.
5. Therefore, although the Panel's recommendations are well intentioned, the report's publication and subsequent debate occurs at a time of intense public

scrutiny in the cost of our elected representatives and public institutions and the unheralded tightening of public finances and the impact on front-line services.

6. The report inevitably generates the 'what price democracy?' debate. There are varying personal and political views about the appropriate running costs and size of governmental institutions. This debate is particularly challenging within local government, given it has both a representative and a service delivery/commissioning remit. Resource allocation inevitably requires a sensitive balancing act between investing in administration and supporting democratic representation and engagement on the one-hand and investment in core front-line services on the other. Despite national guidance, the allocation of scarce resources has to remain at the discretion of local decision-making.
7. Clearly there is a place for national guidance and support around promoting local democracy; national activity encourages the sharing of good practice and expertise, provides economies of scale for the development of and delivery of training programmes and promotes incremental standards around member development and support. The WLGA in particular, working with Member Champions and Members Services Officers, plays a central role in this national improvement and support work.
8. However, local determination is fundamental; the improvement agenda has to be owned at a local level and personal development is particularly sensitive to an individual's personal needs, requirements and commitments. Whilst it is possible to provide overall frameworks or programmes of support, personal development by definition is inherently individual and any developmental or support needs must be identified and agreed by those concerned and any programmes of development and support designed and owned accordingly.
9. Whilst additional support for members in some authorities may be desirable, those members often have to balance the financial implications of those priorities in the context of the wider community and service priorities faced by the authority.

**Recommendation 1 - As part of their statutory duties, local authorities should undertake equality monitoring amongst candidates standing for election and all newly-elected councillors. The same should be done for community and town councillors and in the meantime the census of county councillors should also be extended to community and town councillors.**

10. The current statutory duties do not extend to requiring equality monitoring of councillors nor those who are standing for election. Whilst equality monitoring has its uses and it is agreed that this would be useful in gaining an overview of the personal characteristics of councillors, the important issue is in relation to analysing and using any data gained to make improvements/changes where required.

11. It should also be noted that it is extremely difficult to gain a 100% return rate for equality monitoring forms and the reason for seeking such information would need to be clearly communicated.
12. As in the main political parties are responsible for identifying candidates, any data collected would need to be shared with them as they will need to take any action required to redress any imbalances rather than the councils themselves.
13. The proposal to extend the Councillor Census to community and town councils is a matter for One Voice Wales.

**Recommendation 2 - Consideration should be given to introducing a legal separation of the executive and non-executive functions of the council with separate funding streams that would protect the central provision of members' services.**

14. It is a matter for individual local authorities to determine appropriate levels of support for elected members in their non-executive role in accordance with local needs.
15. Whilst the principle of an executive/non-executive split has been a feature of the National Assembly following the Government of Wales Act 2006, such a move would have profound implications on the governance of local authorities and would divert focus and funding away from frontline services in a period of severe financial and service pressures.
16. Such a split in governance arrangements and local government structures would create bureaucracy and would further complicate and confuse the democratic infrastructure in Wales. The WLGA has long called for greater clarity and the codification of governance arrangements in Wales. The creation of 22 new local government structures would do little to improve public clarity and accountability and could cause confusion.
17. Notwithstanding the initial set-up costs of such new arrangements, the level of administrative resources required to implement this model would require significant additional investment in most if not all authorities. It is unlikely that the creation of 22 new 'chief executives' and associated bureaucracies would be publicly acceptable during this era of enhanced public scrutiny around public institutions and would risk further undermining public confidence and trust.
18. The proposal could also serve to undermine the benefits of the existing structures and relationships between officers supporting the executive and scrutiny. In many authorities the officer core as a whole provides support to scrutiny and in most authorities scrutiny officers are based within corporate performance or policy teams, where they are able to use the expertise of colleagues around performance management policy development, research

and engagement to support the work of scrutiny. A formal, institutional split would result in access to this expertise and capacity being lost.

**Recommendation 3 - One Voice Wales should in conjunction with community and town councils and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) develop role descriptions for community and town councillors**

19. The development of role descriptions for community and town councillors is a matter for One Voice Wales.

20. The WLGA has however previously given advice and support to One Voice Wales around member development and will continue to provide advice when requested and would support One Voice Wales and Community and Town Councils to develop role descriptions if requested.

**Recommendation 4 - The WLGA should place a stronger emphasis and focus on the role of a Councillor in representing their community - the ward role, in the Wales Member Support and Development Charter.**

21. This recommendation was discussed at length by the Member Champions and Member Support Officers networks, both of which were instrumental in establishing and updating the Charter.

22. It was agreed that the current Charter is fit for purpose and already includes the 'ward role' of members in the requirements for members' role descriptions.

23. In addition to the Charter, the 'ward role' is promoted through the WLGA's Member Development Framework which provides a suggested 'curriculum' upon which members might want to base their learning and development, has now been updated to include a greater emphasis on community Leadership and representation.

24. The community leadership role is also a feature of many induction and training sessions for members and will be the central theme of the WLGA's Member Development conference in November.

**Recommendation 5 - Work should be undertaken within local authorities to further raise the awareness and recognition of the different roles that councillors undertake, in particular ward representation in their communities. This could be achieved by involving members in officer training and induction and including this aspect of their role in the induction and development programmes for council officers.**

25. Many authorities already involve members in the induction of new officers as well as ongoing officer development programmes. Leadership and Management training usually includes an emphasis on 'working in a political context'.

26. However, officer induction and training practice does vary across Wales. Sometimes this is undertaken in service areas/professions rather than as a corporate approach. Currently some authorities do include the role of the ward member in general staff induction. Members are occasionally involved in delivering this but this varies depending on members' availability.

27. The Member Champions and Members Support Officers networks were broadly supportive of encouraging a more consistent approach across Wales to ensure that members' various roles were highlighted during officer induction and training. This work could be promoted via the Members Support Officers within their authorities and, where necessary, the WLGA could work with training managers and HR Directors to develop guidance or approaches to support strong member content and involvement in induction and ongoing training. This work could be linked to the Local Government Leadership Competencies Framework produced by the WLGA.

**Recommendation 6 - Political parties should:**

- a. make better use of the Candidates' Guide developed by the WLGA amongst candidates and potential candidates**
- b. consider developing or, where they already exist, standardising their own role descriptions to match with the WLGA role specifications to inform the candidate selection process (although the part of the councillor role related to representing their political party would remain the responsibility of each party)**

28. These are matters for political parties, but information about the last candidates' guide produced by the WLGA was sent to political parties and the guide is freely available online. The WLGA would be prepared to share information around role descriptions, and much information is already available on WLGA website.

**Recommendation 7 - The National Assembly, Welsh Assembly Government, the WLGA and One Voice Wales should lead a Governance Wales Campaign which would seek to clarify and explain to the public the responsibilities of the different tiers of government in Wales and what different types of representatives do.**

29. The WLGA would support any promotional campaign that promotes local democracy and local government, and has previously carried out campaigns to raise the awareness and understanding of local government.

30. However, the WLGA has long called for greater clarification and codification of governance, relating to the various tiers of government and democratic representation. Whilst the proposed new 'Understanding between local and the Assembly Government' goes some way towards this, there should be a full national debate to codify roles and responsibilities of governance and representation at all levels in Wales.

**Recommendation 8 - Local authorities should be charged with a statutory duty to facilitate local democratic engagement. This should be supported by the production of guidance from the WLGA.**

31. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill proposes a new duty on local authorities to promote local democratic engagement. This is a broad duty which not only relates to council activities (such as functions of the council, democratic processes, how to become a member etc.) but also those of other local bodies, including the functions of and how the public can get engaged with a range of bodies such as community councils, fire and rescue authorities, national parks, Local Health Boards etc.
32. Whilst authorities already promote local democracy as a matter of course, and some of this will be business as usual, it does beg the question why local government should be charged with a duty to promote other public organisations.
33. Whilst discharging this proposed new duty may require little more than information being published on councils' websites or occasional features in council newspapers, this will not only be an additional burden on local authorities, but fundamentally risks absolving those other public organisations of their own responsibilities to engage with the public themselves.

**Recommendation 9 - Local authorities should put in place arrangements which ensure that council officers recognise the importance of working with and supporting councillors to engage with their communities and particular, where appropriate, with marginalised, seldom heard or so called "hard-to-reach" groups.**

34. There is no evidence to suggest that council officers do not currently recognise the importance of working with councillors in engaging with their communities. Indeed, it is a key part of relationships in many roles, for example coordinators work closely with Older Peoples' Champions to support their engagement work with older people in the community.
35. However, the level of support is a matter for individual local authorities to determine.
36. Some councillors may not wish to be supported by officers or the authority and see it as their role to engage with communities and, in particular, marginalised groups. Indeed, a member working independently of the authority may be more effective at engaging with 'hard-to-reach' individuals or groups, particularly there is a perception of suspicion or mistrust of the local authority or public authorities in general.

**Recommendation 10 - The Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity should be reviewed by the Welsh Assembly Government.**

37. The WLGA would be prepared to work with the Assembly Government in reviewing the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.



38. Whilst the WLGA notes the Panel's ambitions to support councillor communications and press work and hence the recommendation to review the Code, it is important that there are appropriate checks and balances in the system to ensure that there is a clear separation between corporate council activity and anything that could be deemed to be supporting party political activity.

**Recommendation 11 - Local authorities should make arrangements to support councillors to publish (as a minimum on the website) an annual report of their work both in their communities and within the council.**

39. A similar recommendation around the publication of annual reports was also made by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

40. This recommendation raises a point of principle: why should councillors have to produce annual reports when Assembly Members and Members of Parliament do not?

41. Notwithstanding this point of principle, whilst the rationale around improving transparency, accountability and the public's understanding of the role of councillor is supported, the publication of annual reports presents a number of challenges, despite appearing a relatively straightforward proposal. The implementation of this recommendation requires careful consideration:

- a. The production of annual reports would require allocation of additional resources, even if annual reports were only published to websites
- b. Who would monitor and approve the content of the report? Feedback has suggested that this could prove a sensitive issue and place additional burdens and pressures on officers should a member include inappropriate or misleading information about his/her contribution throughout the year.
- c. Even if information was provided in good faith, there may be opposing personal or political opinions around statements made in a member's annual report.
- d. It was also suggested that such a report could be perceived as political communication, and would be particularly sensitive during election years.

42. Whilst the simplest approach for an annual report could be a standardised format for a very basic report on formal activities such as attendance at council meetings, this would not be of value in informing the public nor highlighting the valuable role of councillors as it would not highlight the considerable contribution councillors make in their communities.

**Recommendation 12 - The Independent Remuneration Panel should consider making a communication allowance available to councillors which could be used to fund communication with their electorate. This expenditure should be accounted for in an annual report and any communication would need to adhere to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity.**

43. The Independent Remuneration Panel has published its report on members' allowances, which does not include any definitive recommendation on communication allowances. It does however recommend that councils 'in association with the WLGA' consider the implementation of annual reports (para 4.19).

44. Clearly, any new communication allowance would require additional investment during a period of severe financial constraints and pressures on front-line services. It is therefore unlikely that such a move would be supported by members.

**Recommendation 13 - Councillors should be actively encouraged to embrace the digital age in communication with their communities. In line with the WLGA Charter, local authorities should provide all elected members with training opportunities on using appropriate IT packages and communicating through digital media (such as developing websites and blogging), as well as ongoing IT support. Wherever possible, such training should be opened up to community and town councillors.**

45. Most authorities provide some level of IT training to their members as well as ongoing IT support if equipment is provided by the authority. The level of training and level of any IT support is determined locally according to members' needs and priorities.

46. Currently the WLGA's Charter encourages authorities to ensure members should have access to ICT, either at home or in the authority and be able to communicate with their communities in the most appropriate manner.

47. The approach taken by the Charter suggests that authorities should develop their offer to councillors in line with emerging technology. Therefore supply and training is advocated for equipment and packages that sufficient numbers of members have expressed a need for.

48. However, as authorities and members have differing requirements we would wish to maintain the flexibility of the Charter to recognise a response to expressed needs, balanced with financial expediency and other priorities rather than set standards across the board.

49. Joint training with community and town councils should be considered where it is of benefit to both tiers or fosters collaboration, doesn't increase costs to the principal authority and is not duplicated in the existing programme of training for community and town councillors.

**Recommendation 14 - Local authorities should provide training and ongoing support in dealing with the press and broadcasters for all their elected members. Wherever possible, such training should be opened up to community and town councillors.**

50. It is a matter for local authorities to determine how their training and development resources are most effectively deployed to meet local needs and requests from members.

51. Many authorities already provide some media training particularly for senior members. Where media training is provided care needs to be taken to ensure that training does not in effect provide existing members with an unfair advantage in promoting political views/issues.

52. Feedback from the Members Champion and Members Services Officers networks has suggested that whilst front-line members could benefit from media training, any effective training which includes interview and on camera experience would be too expensive for most authorities.

53. Training for community and town councillors is a matter for community and town councils, although joint training could be arranged where appropriate and convenient.

**Recommendation 15 - The Welsh Assembly Government, WLGA and One Voice Wales should initiate discussions with the public service broadcasters in Wales and Ofcom to identify what role these broadcasters could play in enhancing the coverage of local government, and, in particular, how the BBC will carry out the commitment given by the Director General in January to improving coverage of local government.**

54. The WLGA already holds regular meetings with broadcasters around their role in providing public information, particularly relating to local democracy and local government.

**Recommendation 16 - The UK Government should consider including a provision in the forthcoming Equality Bill which will allow political parties to use special measure for the selection of black and minority ethnic candidates. Political parties should be encouraged to use special measures for women which are already permissible in their selection processes in order to ensure that a balanced list of candidates are standing for election.**

55. This is a matter for the UK Government and political parties.

**Recommendation 17 - The Electoral Commission should assist Political parties in Wales to identify and take account of good practice from other parts of the UK and learn from other parties in measures to engage with under-represented groups and support them through the process of selection and candidacy.**

56. This is a matter for the Electoral Commission and political parties.

**Recommendation 18 - The Candidates' Guide produced by the WLGA should be available to potential candidates prior to every local government election and steps should be taken by the Electoral Commission to**

**promote the guidance which is available to all candidates, particularly to independent candidates who do not have practical support provided by a political party.**

57. The WLGA's candidates guide was freely available to all potential candidates ahead of the 2008 election. It was available online and was distributed by electoral officers to candidates when they completed their registration.

58. It is anticipated that such a guide will be developed and distributed in advance of the 2012 local elections. The Electoral Commission could be approached to include a link from its website, within the section of information for prospective candidates.

**Recommendation 19 - The possibility of establishing a fund to support the specific needs of people from under-represented groups to become candidates (such as meeting accessibility needs, communication support where English is not a first language etc) should be explored by the Welsh Assembly Government in conjunction with the Electoral Commission.**

59. Whilst it is accepted that some under-represented groups face real barriers in standing for political office, the issue should focus on how we challenge and remove those wider barriers from society (e.g. poor access to buildings, stereotyping of individuals etc).

60. There is also a risk that such a recommendation will alienate people who do not fall within 'under-represented groups' but still wish to stand for political office who may feel that 'special treatment' has been afforded to potential opposition candidates if a fund is available that they cannot access. This will not be helpful in building cohesive communities.

61. This recommendation therefore requires further consideration to identify and assess the potential implications. If such a recommendation is accepted, there will need to be wide debate about how such a fund would operate and the conditions that would need to be met for it to be accessed.

**Recommendation 20 - The Welsh Assembly Government should work in partnership with the Assembly Commission, the WLGA and other relevant organisations to develop an all Wales shadowing scheme which would provide opportunities for shadowing and mentoring people from under represented groups by councillors and AMs.**

62. A pilot shadowing scheme has already been established in Wales. Step Up Cymru is run by the National Assembly for Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government and the WLGA and was established in July and formally launched on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

63. Step Up Cymru is a joint mentoring/shadowing pilot aimed at groups currently under-represented at political level in Wales, based on the successful Scheme run by the National Assembly and Operation Black Vote in 2007-08.

**Recommendation 21 - Schools and council officers working with children and young people or in promoting democracy should be encouraged to actively seek opportunities to engage councillors (both county and community and town) in meeting and working with children and young people, both at county and ward level.**

64. A number of authorities already have active local democracy programmes, where councillors and the council engage with youth forums and school councils, host joint school council-county council meetings, shadowing and facilitate elections to school councils. The Expert Panel report included a range of case studies which highlighted current good practice. Many authorities also participate in the LGA run 'Local Democracy Week' promoting engagement with young people, including councillor 'speed dating' and 'I'm a Councillor Get me out of here!' sessions.

65. A number of local authorities have already signed up to the Children and Young People's Participation Standards which encourages corporate council commitment to effective engagement with children and young people.

**Recommendation 22 - A comprehensive review of the role of a councillor and the time commitment required to fulfil it should be undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel in the course of their fundamental review of Members' Remuneration this year.**

66. The Independent Remuneration Panel undertook research examining the time-commitments of councillors in Wales, and concluded that the average time-commitment was 25-27 hours per week or the equivalent of 3 full-time working days.

**Recommendation 23 - Local authorities should consider ways in which time commitments for councillors and cost burdens for local authorities can be reduced, for example through the use of video conferencing facilities, remote voting and paperless working. In addition, One Voice Wales, the WLGA and the Welsh Assembly Government should jointly consider how to promote greater use of ICT by community and town councils.**

67. Local authorities continually review processes to consider efficiencies in the way they carry out their activities, and as a result a number make extensive use of ICT and some have moved towards paperless working.

68. However, council procedures, working practices and the use of IT and video-conferencing is a matter for each authority based on members' requirements, current levels of IT infrastructure and available resources for additional investment.

69. Many local authorities have made significant progress in this area already for example through the provision of ICT equipment for members. Any moves towards use of remote voting and video conferencing would need to take into

account existing statutory requirements and issues such as probity, transparency and accountability.

70. The WLGA will continue to work with authorities to identify improvements to ways of working including through the greater use of ICT where appropriate.

**Recommendation 24 - The WLGA should develop an employer's pack in conjunction with employer organisations which sets out the benefits to supporting employees who wish to become, or are, councillors. The pack could include examples of good practice.**

71. The WLGA is currently considering the feasibility of producing an employer's pack to promote the role of the councillor to employers and the benefits of employing councillors. The WLGA is considering similar promotional materials produced by the Ministry of Defence (Territorial Army recruitment) and the Ministry of Justice (Magistrates recruitment).

**Recommendation 25 - Consideration should be given to how public sector employers can be encouraged to actively support employees to participate in public life and whether it is possible to use procurement to achieve the same outcome amongst private sector employers.**

72. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that some parts of the public sector in Wales could do more to encourage staff to consider becoming councillors.

73. There have for example been recent drives in encouraging volunteering, which could be replicated to promote democratic participation. Whilst the availability of information and promotional materials and a consistent corporate commitment to supporting civic and public service would be beneficial, it may also be necessary to explore whether and how becoming a councillor would impact on pay, leave and pensions entitlements.

74. The WLGA does not currently have figures for the number of elected members who are public sector employees. The WLGA will however, be conducting a full councillor census in 2010 where we will seek to establish how many councillors are employed by and in which parts of the public sector.

75. The wider public sector represents a rich source for potential future elected representatives given the common shared ideals around public service. In turn it could result in 'cross-fertilisation' and lead to improved awareness of the role of councillors and councils within the corporate cultures of other public service organisations.

76. However, it is important to note that a balance needs to be struck within Wales' council chambers to ensure that people from a wide range of backgrounds and employment are involved in local democracy, and it is equally important that we engage with people with business experience, as well as people representing other sectors and parts of the community.

**Recommendation 26 - Guidance should be issued to local authorities to encourage them to put in place policies for maternity, paternity (including adoptive) and caring leave for councillors. Similarly, policies for time management, including cover in periods of absence, flexible working and support should be developed.**

77. The WLGA encourages authorities to be responsive to the needs of councillors wherever possible in carrying out its business. For example the Member Support and Development Charter make reference to this with regard to the timing of meetings and training sessions.

78. Whilst cabinet roles are generally regarded as full-time, the role of front-line councillor is already flexible, requiring a balance of work from home, in the community as well as attending meetings in council buildings. Members' statutory requirements around minimum attendance at meetings is similarly flexible allowing a significant amount of discretion should a member require an extended period of absence.

79. It is unclear, however, what arrangements an authority could corporately provide for members who require maternity, paternity or caring leave. The representative role of the elected member is unique and cannot be compared to the professional role of an officer, where colleagues or temporary staff can provide cover.

80. In practice, many members provide support and some cover for colleagues when required either within the same ward (in multi-member wards) or from within the same group, although this is an informal, voluntary arrangement which relies on goodwill and the capacity of fellow-councillors. Similarly, family, friends or political party supporters often provide some ward support for councillors.

**Recommendation 27 - The forthcoming consultation being conducted by the Independent Remuneration Panel on a review of councillors' allowances should engage members of the public in a meaningful way, possibly through the use of a Citizens Panel.**

81. This is a matter for the Independent Remuneration Panel.

**Recommendation 28 - Councils should be required to undertake a bi-annual survey of members in order to identify their support needs. This survey should be reported to full council and shared with the WLGA.**

82. The WLGA would not endorse a 'requirement' being placed on authorities to conduct bi-annual surveys.

83. Needs assessments should however be undertaken by authorities at regular intervals and perhaps an annual or biennial survey of support needs would be more appropriate to inform business planning for the year ahead.

**Recommendation 29 - Investors in People UK should ensure that the Investor in People Standard assesses a council's commitment to**

**developing their councillors as well as their employees. Investors in People status should only be awarded to councils who have been successful in being awarded the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development**

84. Making an Investors in People award dependent on the Charter might well set member development on a par with that of officers, however it might prove problematic for authorities who are taking time to progress towards the award but are more advanced in meeting the Investors in People criteria.

85. It may not be possible for Investors in People to make one award dependent on another made by another body. Also Investors in People UK provides global standards outside public sector where there are no elected members, so it is unlikely that it would be able to incorporate awards specific to one type of employer.

86. Currently the Investors in People Standard expects that anyone contributing to the work of an organisation, even if not employed by that organisation, such as elected members, should be able to understand their role and perform their duties in a way that contributes to the success of the organisation. Therefore the HR strategy setting out the approach to organisational development should include members, showing how members are developed and supported in undertaking this role. The requirements of the WLGA's Charter for role descriptions, member development strategies and training programmes, together with personal development plans would provide a sound methodology for making this happen.

**Recommendation 30 - All local authorities should ensure that training and development opportunities are available to their elected members and ensure that consideration is given to ways in which these programmes can be delivered in a way which minimises the time commitment required for members. The development of training packages should be done in association with community and town Councils, whose councillors could also benefit from training and development opportunities.**

87. The WLGA through the Charter encourages councils to discuss with members the most effective and timely method of receiving development. Formal training may not always be appropriate or relevant, as guidance or informal briefings, seminars or e-learning may be more convenient and more effective. Delivery of training should be flexible and responsive to collective and individual needs.

88. Joint training with community and town councils should be considered where it is truly of benefit to both tiers or fosters collaboration, doesn't increase costs to the principal authority and is not duplicated in the existing programme of training for Community and town councillors.



**Recommendation 31 - The WLGA should consider the development of accredited training which could be taken up by councillors on a voluntary basis.**

89. The WLGA has already undertaken a consultation on this and considered it at length with the Member Champions and Members Services Officers.

90. Whilst there is strong support from some members, opinion is still divided on the worth of accredited training for members. The results of the WLGA consultation are inconclusive but suggest that qualifications which are worth having would be too time consuming to achieve and conversely those which require little investment are not worth having.

91. It should be noted that members are generally happy with the quality of training already provided and that accreditation would be seen as evidence of achievement rather than quality of training, making training in some disciplines such as planning and licensing mandatory is more of a priority than accreditation.

92. There were also concerns that the possession of qualifications may lead to inequalities at the ballot box unless these are also open to candidates.

93. The WLGA is continuing to discuss with potential providers of accredited training to develop solutions that would strike a balance of credible qualifications for training and development which is already currently being delivered.

**Recommendation 32 - Consideration should be given to allocating some funding, with an appropriate audit mechanism attached, to individual councillors through the remuneration framework to allow members to meet some support needs. This could be explored further by the Independent Remuneration Panel.**

94. The Independent Remuneration Panel in its report has recommended that the 'support' element of members' allowances be removed as it was included within the Basic Allowance and therefore liable to tax. Instead, it has placed the onus on local authorities suggesting 'that councils note the discontinuation of support expenses included in councillors' Basic Allowance and arrange direct provision of support as is necessary for the efficient discharge of councillor duties'.

**Recommendation 33 - Councils should consider the needs of individual members when determining what technological support is provided. In doing this they should be mindful of addressing the specific need for councillors to combine their role with other commitments.**

95. Councils already give consideration to the individual needs and requirements of councillors with regards the use of ICT support. However, financial and infrastructure constraints also need to be taken into consideration.

**Recommendation 34 - The WLGA should issue guidance to local authorities in consultation with the Equality and Human Rights Commission on meeting their obligations to councillors in respect of the equality enactments and councils should be encouraged to provide support over and above their statutory obligations as a way of encouraging the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups. All councillors should be offered an assessment which would identify any accessibility needs, language support requirements or caring needs. Local Authority Members support officers should in conjunction with the individual councillor and where appropriate party group officers draw up a plan to identify how these needs can be met.**

96. The WLGA currently encourages councils to identify any support needs councillors may have to ensure they are able to undertake their roles, including issues around access and caring responsibilities, as a matter of good practice.

97. It is agreed that some additional guidance for councils, providing clarity on their legal responsibilities and advice on how support needs can best be identified and met would be helpful however it is important to stress that all councils operate in different ways and any guidance produced should not be good practice guidance and not prescriptive or binding upon any council.

**Recommendation 35 - Political parties should ensure that support for councillors extends beyond candidacy and should consider ways in which mechanisms for supporting their councillors can be developed.**

98. This is a matter for political parties, however, many WLGA resources such as role descriptions, competency frameworks, member development frameworks and e-learning resources are freely available on the web.