



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales

## Annex A - Case Studies



Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.  
This document is also available in Welsh.

Over the course of the review we have issued calls for Case Studies to all Community and Town Councils and considered the recent examples from the One Voice Wales Innovative Practice Awards. We have considered each case study and have selected a few below that we feel best describe some of our recommendations.

## **Theme 1:** Community and Town Councils - What they are

### **Case Study 1: Other governance models**

In other parts of the world local governance looks and feels quite different. For example, the French Commune (made up of a deliberative or decision-making body (the municipal council) and an executive (the Mayor)) is elected for six years. They lay down guidelines for municipal policy, adopt the budget, manage municipal assets, notably primary school buildings and equipment, and decide how the municipal administration is to operate.

Germany has an openly citizen centred approach, with citizen's having a co-production and commissioning role. German councils can decide on the boundaries of the community unit, local bylaws, budget and personnel plans, business plans, land use planning and town planning issues, as well as decision-making in local social, youth, senior citizens, cultural, sports and green space policies; equally infrastructure, energy and economic policy as far as it is a localised issue.

The United States of America has one of the greatest complexity of local government laws in the world. While municipal systems among many states are similar in policy, method, and practice, there are numerous variations, exceptions, and differences in form and function. These differences may even exist within states. In general, American local 'city' governments are modelled on the British system (going back to 'shires') of elected councils. People's needs – from police to sanitation, education to fire protection, housing and public transportation – are seen to, most directly, by city governments.

The Netherlands does not have a Local Government tier at the community level but has over 400 municipalities. Municipal councils within the Netherlands perform a seemingly similar function of Welsh Local Authorities.

Closer to home, across the UK, differences are equally clear. For example, Community Councils in Scotland<sup>1</sup> have fewer powers than their English or Welsh counterparts. Their specific role can vary according to their local area's needs with many Scottish Community Councils involving themselves in a wide range of activities including fundraising, organising community events, undertaking environmental and educational projects. Scottish Community Councils do not have the right to raise funds by setting a precept on local taxes, and are instead dependent upon Local Authority funding, which is usually received for running costs only (around £400/annum).

English Parish and Town Councils, seem the closest example to Welsh Community and Town Councils. They mainly operate in rural areas but varying greatly in size, activity and resources. Whilst typical activities include managing/maintaining roadside verges, footpaths, play areas and allotments, there are powers allowing them to undertake a wide range of duties. Parish and Town Councils receive no central Government grant funding, though they can (and generally do) raise a precept on the Council Tax bill.

## Theme 2: Community and Town Councils - What they do

### Case Study 1: Place Based Services

We know that many Community and Town Councils across Wales already deliver a range of place based services. This is not related to size with examples of smaller 'micro' councils and larger 'macro' councils all delivering place based services.

For example, Caerwys Town Council, together with Community Councils of Halkyn and Whitford, agreed to jointly review street lighting. With almost 400 lights between them, joint meetings were held with sub-committees from each Council: quotations obtained and subsequently agreed by full Council - with all three Councils entering into a contract to replace current lights with energy efficient lighting. The new lights are guaranteed for a period of 10 years and electricity consumption will be reduced by approximately 40%. This will reduce the carbon footprint, no longer require costly replacement bulbs and reduce maintenance costs. Between the Councils, there will eventually be a saving of between £6,000 and £7,000 each year in their electricity supply and repair budgets.

In response to demand from residents Llandudoch Community Council worked in partnership to identify possible land for allotments. 27 individuals expressed an interest in renting a plot and set up the St Dogmaels Allotment Association. The Community Council negotiated a ten-year lease for the Allotment Association on private agricultural land and mentored the Allotment Association while the Community Association secured two grants to fund the ploughing/harrowing of the land, construct a rabbit-proof fence and establish a water supply.

## Case Study 2: Well-being

We know Community and Town Councils already go above and beyond, in order to meet a need or want from their community. For example, Monmouthshire Town Council is working in partnership with Monmouthshire County Council and Monmouthshire Museums Service to support people living with dementia and their carers. Alongside their themed reminiscence Memory Boxes, they have been piloting memory cafes. These monthly cafes offer an immersive experience for people living with dementia and their carers. Themed afternoon teas, reminiscence sessions, music and fashion are all used as triggers to stimulate memory and conversation.

Significantly these cafes have been developed and delivered with young people from Monmouth Comprehensive School as part of their Welsh Bacallaureate Community Challenge. The young people attended Dementia Friends awareness sessions and Reminiscence training, identified and researched themes for the cafes, developed appropriate menus and identified reminiscence objects and costume, as well as running the cafes on the day.

The sessions provide an inexpensive and beneficial programme to helping address loneliness, isolation and dementia. The young people also developed their knowledge and interpersonal skills.



## Case Study 3: Public Service Boards who benefit from the voice of Community and Town Councils

We know there are good examples of Public Service Boards who already engage with Community and Town Councils in their areas, to include the voice of their communities in the work of the PSB.

For example, since the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, Carmarthenshire Public Service Board have utilised the Act as a different way to engage with Community and Town Councils. There are 72 Community and Town Councils within Carmarthenshire, which can make it difficult engaging with all councils. However, a good working relationship has been established with the seven councils which come under the duty of the Act and meet regularly with them. Community and Town Councils have also demonstrated their commitment to working with the PSB by requested a template to use for annual reporting, based on the PSBs' objectives. This will help Community and Town Council to all report on the same thing and be able to feed into the PSBs' annual report.

## Case Study 4: Engagement

There are examples of Community and Town Councils in engaging their communities, and involving their communities in local decisions. For example, in recent years in Monmouth the annual Christmas event had lost its sparkle. A working group was established jointly with Councillors and volunteers. Using a small budget from Monmouth Town Council, an event was devised whereby the community created lanterns to proudly display during an evening parade. The overarching aim was to encourage active participation.

The council connected with a wide range of groups and individuals, with volunteers and Councillors holding workshops to teach the process of making a pyramid lantern. Engagement was via email, Social Media, word-of-mouth and traditional methods (local newspaper and noticeboards). Two additional public and three after-school workshops were also hosted by the working group.



Participation in all workshops was high. In total, over 684 people attended the group leader workshops, with 110 at the public sessions and 81 at schools. Approximately 2000 people attended the Monmouth Christmas Lantern Parade on the 8 December 2017. Furthermore, fifteen new community members, who had not previously volunteered for Town Council, signed up joined the Town Council working group in anticipation of the 2018 Christmas event and support continues to grow throughout the Town.



In Llandough the council were aware of services and facilities within the community but wanted to find out how often they were used; and ask the community how to improve and develop these services and facilities. They established a Community Engagement Working Party gathering information and views from Vale of Glamorgan Engagement Team, Llandough Primary School, Scout & Guides and service users. Through initial dialogue a short, two page (double sided) survey was developed and distributed to all households. An online survey was also set up and publicised on the paper survey. 227 valid responses were received in total (25% of households). The data was analysed by a councillor and an action plan / schedule was produced to target use of current and potential future resources. The plan includes engaging with service users and actively looking for more users in the community.

## Theme 3: Community and Town Councils - How they do it

### Case Study 1: Delivery Models

Across Wales, where Community and Town Councils are clustering, there are different governance and arrangements in place. It is not yet known why Community and Town Councils chose certain models however chose what model suits them best.

During the course of the review, we have found several examples including:

- Llanelli Rural Community Council are working with Llanelli Town Council to support local ground maintenance and the management of Llanelli District Cemetery. Recognising the need to pool resources and formalise previous joint working through a committee, Llanelli Rural and Llanelli Town Councils have developed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**. The MoU better regulates the activities of the joint committee and the relationship of the councils going forward. The two service areas are governed by separate service level agreements which form part of the MoU and define each council's role and contribution.
- Penllyn Partnership established a **limited not-for-profit company** (Cwmni Pum Plwy Penllyn cyf), to apply for grant and work in areas outside the remit of Gwynedd Council. The Penllyn Partnership itself was established in 2009 because of concern that services were being provided from a distance or not at all – and not meeting the needs of users. The partnership brings together five Community and Town Councils to enable collaboration and strengthen the role of Community and Town Councils in the area.
- Ogwen Partnership established a **social enterprise** (Ynni Ogwen) - a community benefit society, operating for the community and environmental benefit of Dyffryn Ogwen. Funded by three Community and Town Councils in the area, the model serves as a way of delivering services collaboratively whilst maintaining individuality and local representation for each council. Each council pays proportionately into the partnership, using an agreed formula.
- North Montgomeryshire have established a **Community Interest Company** to assist their shared governance arrangements, ensuring each council has an equal say in collaboration matters.
- Solva Community Council has established a **non for profit social initiative** (Solva Care) to offer friendly, local support and help to those who need it in Solva and the surrounding areas. It is a community based project focusing on social care set up in 2015, in response to wishes of local residents.
- Cowbridge Town Council currently has **Service Level Agreements** with the Vale of Glamorgan in relation to ICT \ Website Management and Payroll. Hawarden Community Council, Broughton and Bretton Community Council also have Service Level Agreements with Shotton Town Council for administration and maintenance services.
- In 1996, Llandudoch Community Council established a **community organisation** to deal with issues surrounding footpaths (registration, re-opening and maintenance). 'Llwybrau Llandudoch' (St Dogmaels Footpath Association) remains a thriving organisation which undertakes footpath surveys, maintenance, social walks and recently organises events in partnership with other village organisations.

## Case Study 2: Digital

We know there are good examples of Community and Town Councils who utilise websites and social media to engage with their community. For example, New Radnor Community Council has recently renewed, restyled and modernised its website. During this, new features were introduced including google translate into Welsh, a news and events page and council pages including:

- Council Member information and Allowances
- Council Meeting Calendar and uploaded meeting papers
- Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest
- Council Minutes, financial documents (inc precept, accounts, audit)
- Council Regulations and Planning Applications
- Council News.

Pages are updated after each Council meeting with the newest information and throughout the month as required. The site also contains a useful links page with contact information for local police, MP etc. and a specific page for Music in New Radnor – a popular attraction which draws many visitors to the village. Local businesses can request a page and a number have to promote their products and services. News and event items can be programmed to remove automatically after a period of time, avoiding items remaining on the site after the date has passed.

Residents may also submit photographs for inclusion on the site and be added to an email list to receive notification when news items are added. The Council are exploring costs on improving the site for the visually impaired and introducing translation into additional languages.

### **Case Study 3: Relationships between Local Authorities and Community and Town Councils**

We know there are examples of positive relationships between Local Authorities and Community and Town Councils. We also know some Local Authorities have noticed areas where this can be improved.

For example, in Wrexham a Forum was organised to bring representatives of Town and Community Councils together to discuss issues of common interest between the two tiers of Local Government. The first meeting of the Forum was held in October 2006 and was attended by 19 different Town and Community Councils. Proving successful, arrangements were made for the Forum to meet on a quarterly basis and continues to be well attended. In addition to a variety of presentations from Officers within the Council, a number of external organisations attend the Forum to give presentations, e.g. North Wales Police, One Voice Wales and Virgin Media etc. Wrexham CBC believes the Forum is a very effective means of engaging with their Town and Community Councils.

Flintshire County Council has jointly agreed a charter with its Town and Community Councils setting standards on issues such as communication, governance, ethics and partnership working. financial management. In addition, the County Council meets with its Town and Community Councils 3 or 4 times a year at the County Forum. The forum is hosted and chaired by a different Town or Community at each meeting. The meetings are an opportunity for the County Council to inform the councils of issues of interest/importance, increase understanding of town/community councillors on important issues and consult town and community councils on big local issues that might affect them all such changes to bus subsidies. The agenda includes slots for the Town and Community Councils to raise issues of concern or to showcase local activities of pride such as festivals and events. The Chief Executive and/or Monitoring Officer will always attend County Forum meetings along with the chief officers or senior managers who are presenting on specific issues.

Conwy County Borough Council has been undergoing a major Modernisation Programme aimed at driving change and continuous improvement to meet the changing needs of their communities. They are focussing on reviewing the way they engage, communicate and work with their communities. Conwy recognises that working in partnership with communities, Third Sector partners and Town and Community Councils will better enable and provide services that meet the needs of residents. As part of the modernisation journey, they have set up five Local Area Forums to make the most of opportunities for community leadership, partnership working and locally based initiatives. They recognise it is early days for the Local Area Forums and are piloting different models of working, but work is being undertaken to develop a more inclusive, engaging and strategic approach. For example, one of the Local Area Forums is already working on the profile of their area in terms of demographics and infrastructure, and has arranged an 'engagement event' with the Town and Community Councils to get a better understanding of common themes, objectives and priorities, involving communities in the process as well as in the delivery.

## **Theme 4:** Community and Town Councils - How they are held to account

### **Case Study 1: Encouraging diversity**

We know that a number of Community and Town Councils work with young people in their area and have a youth council. For example, Barry Youth Action (formed in November 2014) is managed by Vale Youth Action and funded through the Town Council. It sits within the Youth Democratic Structure the same way in which the Town Council does and aims to listen to the views and ideas of young people in Barry to ensure they are taken into account when decisions are made.

Two Town Councillors are nominated to attend Barry Youth Action meetings to ensure continued engagement. Each year, Barry Youth Action set three main priorities and in 2017 litter was voted. The group embarked on an extensive research project to identify issues, problem areas and ways to improve the issue. The group engaged with the Deputy Chief Officer of the Town Council due to the Council's own project of installing Talking Bins at Barry Island to improve litter.

Barry Youth Action have been extremely valuable to the Town Council encouraging engagement with a younger audience. The Town Council are continuing to engage with Barry Youth Action on its future works including the Draft Community Engagement Strategy.

## Case Study 2: Community and Town Councils who regularly report action to their community

We know there are many Community and Town Councils who regularly report action to their community and this action is reported through several different mechanisms. We asked for examples and have been told about:

### • Newsletters / Newspapers

- Marloes and St Brides Community Council has a Community newsletter which covering five or six Community Council areas. A Community Council article is supplied for every issue – usually ten a year. This draws attention to the important items discussed at the Council's last meeting, and issues which are ongoing.
- Lisvane Community Council regularly have articles in the monthly Lisvane magazine.
- Caldicot Town Council regularly issue press releases.
- Caerwys Town Council has a monthly community newspaper (circulation of almost 500 copies). The Council have a full page report on activities. Copies are delivered, by subscription to households and are also available to purchase in the local Café, shops, Post Office and Craft Centre.
- Chirk Town Council publishes articles in the quarterly Community newsletter. Articles provides updates on the latest council meeting as well as reporting on the work of the Council.
- Cowbridge Town Council keep the local community informed by way of local newspaper.

### • Websites / Social media

- Marloes and St Brides Community Council has a Community Website.
- Cowbridge Town Council website.
- Lisvane Council website provides updates from the Council and includes links to more than 40 community activities from partner organisations.
- Caldicot Town Council provides frequent publications on the website and social media.
- Caerwys Town Council have a Facebook Page.

### • Reports

- Caldicot Town Council regularly report activities through an annual report.
- Barry Town Council has developed a new Annual Report demonstrating impact to the community and providing information about the Town Council, what it does and how it spends the precept. The report is available online, in hard copy and was publicised widely through social media, website and issued at community events.
- Cwmbran Community Council has Annual Reports and Residents Handbook both available in hard copy and online. Hard copies are distributed via local schools and at community events.
- Blaenavon Town Council published its first ever Town Council Business Plan 2018-21, providing an understanding of what the council is trying to achieve and how it intends to deliver over the next four years. It has been publicised and distributed through the Council's Website, Facebook page, via email, Torfaen County Borough Council's weekly newsletter, distributed electronically to households across Blaenavon and Torfaen and articles in the Pontypool Free Press.
- Llanwrst Town Council, for the first time this year, published an Annual Report about the work of the Council. Covering a twelve-month period, the report describes the work of the Council over the past year and how this has contributed to and promoted the environment and well-being.

### • Public Meetings / Engagement sessions

- Cowbridge Town Council has recently organised a drop in session inviting members of the public to meet Councillors. They were invited to put suggestions in a box, which will be sifted through and considered by the Town Council in an attempt to try and resolve some local issues, report issues to Local Authority and assist in setting the precept next year based upon Community requests.
- Caerwys Town Council allows 'Public Time' at the commencement of every monthly Council meeting and also holds a Public Meeting in March. All residents are invited to attend and the Council Chair reflects on the past year and advises of the year ahead.
- Caerwys Town Council holds monthly chats with a Councillor, held on a Saturday morning.