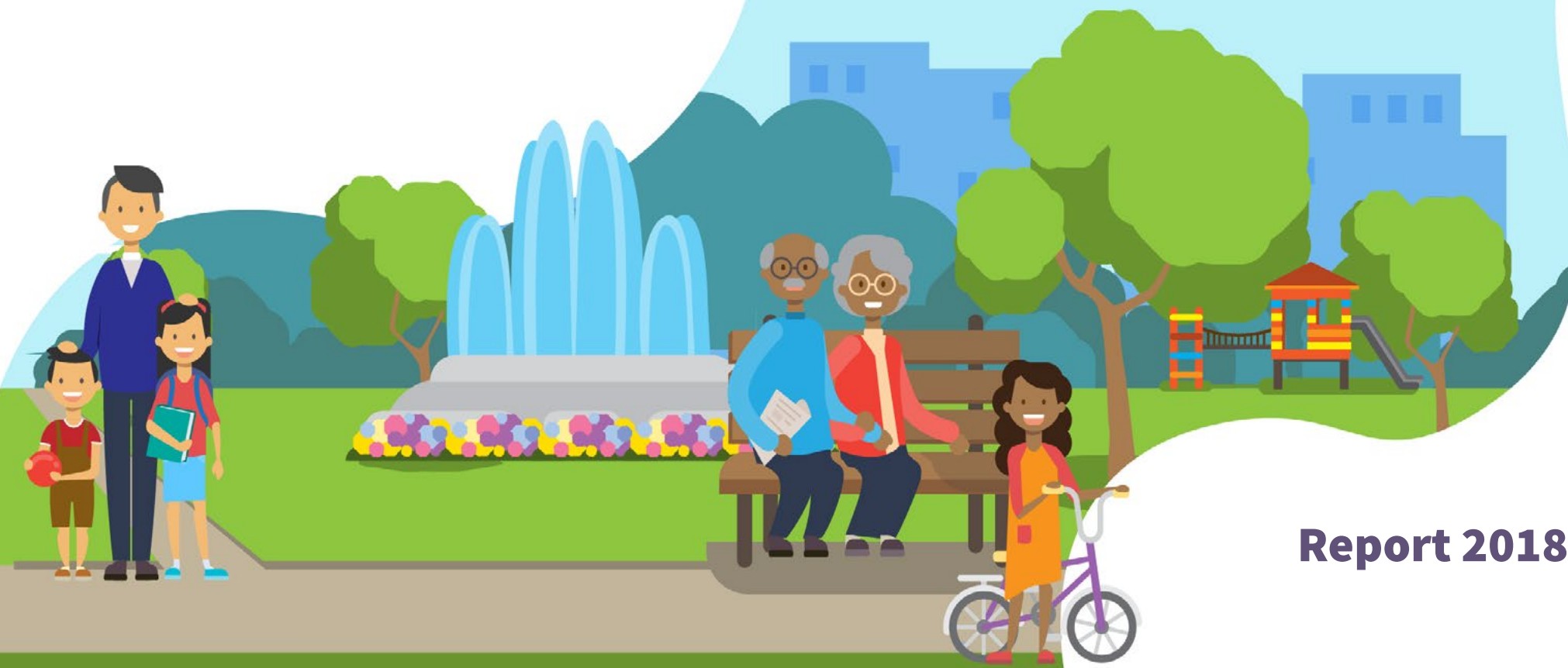


Looking at Community and Town Councils in Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Report 2018

Introduction

Community and Town Councils are important.

We have over 730 in Wales.

They work in different ways and do different things.

They represent communities from under **200** people

to **45,000** people.

The Welsh Government wanted to know more about what Community and Town Councils do and how they work.

Independent Review Panel

In 2017 they set up a panel with:

- people from different political parties
- people who work with Community and Town Councils
- people who work with communities.

The Review

Collecting Evidence

The panel looked at how Community and Town Councils worked in the rest of the UK and other countries: France, Germany, Netherlands, USA and Denmark.



We also asked all the Community and Town Councils to send us evidence of their work.

Involving people



Hundreds of people got involved.

We talked to:

- Community and Town Councils
- people who worked with Community and Town Councils
- Local Authorities, organisations and community groups
- people in the community
- children and young people.



We also:

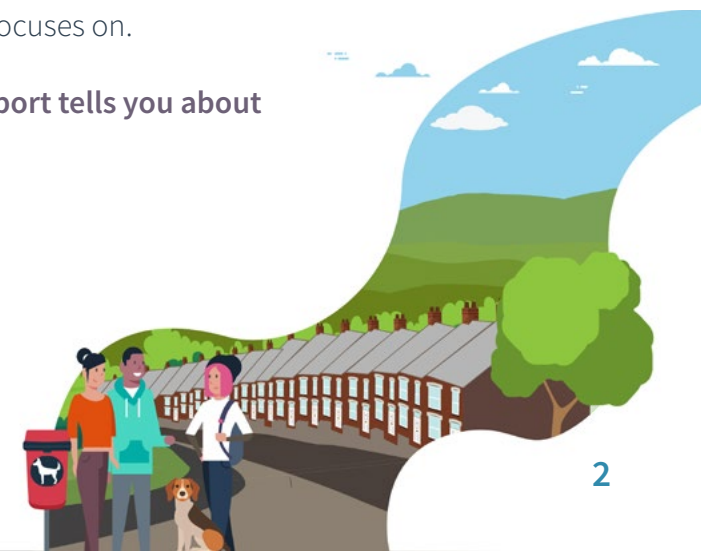
- ran four online surveys for groups
- including an online public survey and a Youth Survey
- held events for Councillors and people involved in councils
- held events for Local Authority staff
- held community events
- got Community and Town Councils to run events too.

We used this information to set out

the four clear areas this report focuses on.

This report tells you about

some of things we found. It also tells you what we want to happen in the future.



1 What they are

People told us what they think about Community and Town Councils.

We asked if Community and Town Councils are needed.

People told us Community and Town Councils worked well for their communities.

They're important because they:

- help communities have a say
- operate at local level
- answer to the community
- raise resources for the community
- lead change
- represent their communities
- make sure decisions benefit everyone.

But others said they:

- are old fashioned
- need to improve.

We want:

- to keep Community and Town Councils.

They help communities be heard.

Most areas have a Community and Town Council.

30% of the population in Wales don't. This makes it hard for them to be involved in decisions about their area.

We want:

- all areas to have a Community or Town Council.

They understand local needs.

Communities change all the time. Some grow – some get smaller. Community and Town Council's need to be able to change to support their local area.

We want:

- the size of communities to be checked so Community and Town Councils can change if they need to.

They work in different ways.

There are a lot of differences between Community and Town Councils across Wales.

They all do different things in different ways. Some of these ways work better than others.

We want:

- every Community and Town Council to work in the same things but they can choose how they do them.



2 What they do

Lots of people don't know what their Community or Town Council do.

Community or Town Councils look after lots of place-based services.

Lots of people knew they looked after parks, streets and litter. But, they also look after:

- burial grounds
- bus shelters
- village halls and community buildings
- toilets
- grass cutting
- local footpaths and pavements
- markets
- playing fields and open spaces
- allotments.

We want:

- all Community and Town Councils to be responsible for all place-based services in their area.
- Community and Town Council to be clear about what they do.

They improve communities.

Community and Town Councils can help people be safe, healthy and enjoy life in their area.

We want:

- Community and Town Councils to be able to do what their community needs them to do.

They need the power to do things.

Community and Town Councils must be able to take action. There will be a new legal framework to make sure this can happen.

We want:

- Community and Town Councils to make use of this new framework over the next 3 years.

Listening to Communities.

Some Community and Town Councils involve and listen to their communities very well. They hold events, send out newsletters and information online. Others don't.

We want:

- there to be rules about how to involve people.

They help local communities be heard.

Community and Town Councils are closest to their communities. They know what's happening and the resources they have.

They should be involved in local plans more including Public Service Board plans to improve well-being in the area.

We want:

- Community and Town Councils to be involved in planning for the future and link to their area Public Service Board more.



3 How they do it

Lots of Community and Town Councils have Councillors and staff who work to support their communities. But they told us they wanted more support, training and professional help sometimes.

They know about their community needs.

Community and Town Councils know they need to choose systems that work best for their area. This includes working with others and sharing resources.

We want:

- the Welsh Government to find more ways to help them work together.

They need support and advice.

There isn't enough support when they needed it.

We want:

- good quality advice and support available across Wales.

They must have the money and resources they need.

Community and Town Councils must be able to support their communities.

75% of their income comes from Council Tax.

They need to look at ways to get more funding.

We want:

- Community and Town Councils to be able get funding from a range of places.
- the Welsh Government to look at how place-based services are funded.

They need qualified and skilled staff.

There are lots of different people working to help councils. This includes people who work as Clerks.

Clerks give advice to their Community and Town Council and make sure they follow the law. They need the qualifications and skills to do their job well.

We want:

- the Welsh Government to look at ways clerks can work together and gain skills.
- all clerks to have or be working towards a professional qualification.



They have elected Councillors.

A Councillor is someone who is voted in by the people in their community.

They must serve their community. But councillors don't always understand the job or their responsibilities.

Some Councillors also are voted on to more than one Community or Town Council. Others also work as a Councillor for the Local Authority.

We want:

- all Councillors to have to do training.
- Councillors to have only one council position.

They have to make decisions.

It's important Community and Town Councils are able to make decisions and act quickly.

We want:

- Community and Town Councils to look at ways to making decisions faster and easier.

They use technology.

Community and Town Councils must have a website. But there are still some who don't.

Some Community and Town Councils are good at using technology and social media to connect to their communities. But others aren't. This needs to change.

We want:

- to make Community and Town Councils use technology more.

They work together.

Community and Town Councils need to work well with:

- their Local Authority
- businesses
- organisations
- charities and
- others in the community.

We want:

- all Local Authorities to have a named person whose job it is to work with Community and Town Councils.



4 Answering to the Community

Community and Town Councillors make a lot of decisions and use public money. Lots of people think they need to show what they do with it.

All Councillors are elected.

This means if the public don't like what they're doing they could vote them out. But there are challenges.

There aren't enough people who want to be Councillors.

Also, if there aren't enough people to be elected then the council can ask someone to join them without an election.

We want:

- the Welsh Government to run a national campaign to get more people to become councillors.
- Councillors who haven't been voted in to stay for no more than one term.
- to have elections, even if there isn't competition.

They need to represent everyone.

Communities have people of different backgrounds, cultures, abilities and ages. Its important councils represent everyone.

In 2017:

- **55%** of councillors were over 60.
- Only **1.2%** of community councillors were non-white
- **65%** were male.

This doesn't reflect us.

We want:

- more people to become Councillors.
- to lower the age someone can become a Councillor, if the voting age is lowered.

They must let people know what they do.

All Community and Town Councils need to let people know what they're doing. Communities need to be able to connect more and get involved in decisions.

We want:

- all Community and Town Councils to report each year on what they've done.
- to set out their plans for the year ahead.
- to hold at least one public meeting.
- to use social media more.



They should be open about what they spend.

Community and Town Councils have to set out accounts that are checked and people can see every year. It is important they manage money well.

We want:

- more support for smaller Community and Town Councils to do this.

Sometimes things go wrong.

It's important someone can step in and help if they do.

We want:

- Community and Town Council's to have the support they need to help if things go seriously wrong.
- the Welsh Government to step in if things go wrong.

Councillors should have good behaviour.

Most councils don't have issues with their councillors. But a small number do. When a complaint is made most are dealt with in the right way, but sometimes this take a long time.

We want:

- people's behaviour to be checked before they can become a councillor.

Thanks for reading this

You can read the full report here:

gov.wales/topics/localgovernment/communitytowncouncils

