

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY, 15 JULY 2014**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **"IN DEFENCE OF LOCALISM" - ELECTED
GOVERNMENT IN WALES AND THE IMPACT OF
AUSTERITY"**

1.00 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To consider the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) consultation document "In Defence of Localism" – Elected Government in Wales and agree the Council's response.

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.01 Appended to this report is the WLGA consultation document "In Defence of Localism" – Elected Government in Wales and the Impact of Austerity" which was published at its Annual Conference on 19th June.

2.02 The document covers key issues including financial futures, the Public Services Commission's recommendations, central local relations in Wales and devolution. The predominate theme of the document is to restate the case for localism in Wales.

2.03 In England and Scotland, the Local Government Association (LGA) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) respectively, are advocating localism as a campaigning stance. The LGA campaign "Rewiring Public Services" and the COSLA "Commission on Local Democracy" both argue for devolution of power to the most appropriate local level.

2.04 The WLGA is now utilising the "In Defence of Localism" badge on all further publications between now and the Assembly elections in 2016. It is also their intention to undertake a national customer survey on local government services and the value which the public place on these services.

3.00 **CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 As part of the shared commitment outlined above, Welsh Local Government will:

- Engage in constructive debate around structural reform of local government and will continue to lead and deliver the wider public service reform agenda
- Promote and support the local contributions to the long term national strategic vision for Wales which will be articulated through the forthcoming Future Generations Bill
- Deliver specific local contributions to the Wales Programme for Government, through successful delivery of Outcome Agreements
- Continue to lead on self improvement and a collective sector-led approach to identifying and responding to improvement challenges faced by individual authorities
- Build on progress around improving engagement, challenge and scrutiny within the local democratic process, with particular focus on improving the diversity of democracy ahead of the next local elections
- Honour all existing specific service based commitments

3.02 It is vital that the relationship between Welsh Government and local government is improved and more clearly defined. The WLGA Consultation document argues that there is room for improvement with formal partnership agreements, concordats and memoranda of understanding etc. A completely new approach is needed towards redefining the relationship between Councils and their communities; providing services with local people, rather than for them.

The dividing line is a clear choice between two approaches:

- 3.03
- Centralist – that local government is primarily in existence to administer, provide and oversee the provision of public services and therefore must be regulated and controlled – as far as any constitution allows – by the centre; or
 - Localist – that it is a democratic body charged with the role of governing its locality and representing (and defending) it and its need to the centre, in which case it must have autonomy and financial security and control over its own locality.

3.04 It is the unanimous view of the leaders of all 22 local authorities that the localist approach offers the best way forward in terms of protecting our communities and enhancing democracy across Wales.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is asked to consider the consultation document and agree to support the approach as outlined in paragraph 3.01 to 3.04 above.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As outlined within the consultation document.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

None directly associated with this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

None directly associated with this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

None directly associated with this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

None directly associated with this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

None directly associated with this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

None directly associated with this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

WLGA Consultation Document:

“In Defence of Localism – Elected Government in Wales and the Impact of Austerity”.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Documentation is contained within the relevant files within the Executive Office.

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