

NORTH & MID WALES ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

MINUTES

of a special meeting of the Executive held on
Friday 17th January 2025 at 10.30am by Zoom.

Present were

Cllr Ian Hodge Chair	Holywell Town Council
Cllr Norma Davies	Flint Town Council (part of time)
Cllr Michael Davies	Beaumaris Town Council
Cllr Lynette Edwards	Caerswys Community Council part of time)
Cllr Bernise McLoughlin	Towyn and Kinmell Bay Town Council
Robert Robinson Secretary	Llanfair Caereinion Town Council

Apologies received

Cllr Joan Butterfield President	Rhyl Town Council
Cllr Patrick Heeson	Mostyn Community Council
Cllr Ted Palmer	Flint Town Council

1. Welcome by the Chair

The meeting received a welcome from the Chair.

2. Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to pre-plan for the main meeting to be held on Friday 24th January 2025. To start the process the secretary gave a short presentation on the subject in (3) below.

3. Town and Community Council review

The programme for completion of the Association paper for Welsh Government is:

January 2025	Identify the views and issues from the members. (issues and ideas)
February/March 2025	To complete the document with consultation. (Preparation of a paper). (Discussion by email and meetings).
April 2025	To agree at the main meeting the document For presentation to Welsh Government. (Final document).

The issues with regard to the reduction of Town and Community Councils from around 737 down to around 150 were identified as follows:

Basis

It was recognised that one size does not fit all with towns (urban) being very different from villages (rural). Any plan for the future needs to reflect this.

Size of council

At present town and community councils vary from Barry (pop 50,000) to small rural councils (pop 700).

Wales has a population of 3.2m and has 737 local councils, average population 4,300. If there were 150 town and community councils the average rises to approx. 20,000 population.

Identity

Towns and communities being joined raises the concern of loss of identity. Smaller councils may feel overrun by larger councils and feeling they may lose control of their communities.

Representation

Representation within communities was considered important and should be protected.

Legislation

It was felt that the only way combining councils or clustering councils would work was via legislation – it was recognised that many would not take part if not.

Culture

Many communities have diverse cultures to others and this becomes an issue if councils were combined as opposed to clustered.

Service delivery

The service delivery of more (handed down from County Councils) will give rise to issues of what each community wants. All vastly different in their views.

Service delivery of the level envisaged will require larger unit to enable it to happen.

The list of services that are likely to be devolved to others has been issued at a previous meeting and will be included in the presentation.

Financial

Each council has various levels of reserves and some may not be happy to combine with a council with less funds.

Council will rise whatever the outcome.

VAT

The VAT status of councils would change with partial exemption not being an option once the council budget rise to the level expected.

Seats

If councils were to be combined the allocation of seats (of which there are likely to be less) will be an issue depending upon how they are calculated.

Councillors and payments

With larger councils and with the workload it is expected that councillors would need to be paid when a new system arrives. This has a cost implication.

Services and council tax

Councils may have two parts to their council tax. One part for their own area and part for joint services. Some may not wish to pay for a service on a collective basis if they do not receive it.

Town Clerk and staff

The cost of making staff redundant (less Town Clerk's required) – where is it met from?

4. Possible way forward for discussion

The executive general view is:

One size will not fit all.

Whatever is taken forward it will need to be backed by legislation.

Three levels of councils maybe right as follows:

Larger councils – leave along (i.e. over 20,000 population)

Combine councils where the areas are more urban.

Cluster councils where the councils are more rural.

5. Way forward

Following the meeting on 24th January 2025 the secretary is to prepare a paper in draft for consultation and further discussion.

6. Details and circulation

The secretary is to circulate these details in advance of the meeting on 24th January 2025. The presentation should include the above to aid discussion and gaining of the views of members.

Members are to be asked at the next meeting for their views on the issues and to put forward any thoughts on a possible solution.

7. Banking

The Secretary confirmed that internet banking was almost complete with Lloyds Bank with a single signatory. Once this is in place it is easy to add signatories to bring in line with the Association constitution.