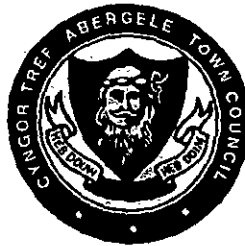


Cyngor Tref Abergele Town Council

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Mrs C.J. Earley
Clerc a Swyddog Cyllid



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24 July 2006

Local Government & Public Services Committee
(Electoral Arrangements)
National Assembly for Wales
Assembly Offices
Cardiff Bay
CARDIFF
CF99 1NA

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Electoral Arrangements in Wales – A Discussion Document

Thank you for sending a copy of the above document, which was discussed by the Council at a recent meeting.

Please find enclosed a summary of the response from this Council to the questions raised in the document.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CJE', is written over a horizontal line.

Town Clerk

enc

SCHEDULE 'A'

Electoral Arrangements in WalesDraft Responses to the Questions raised in the Discussion Document issued by the National Assembly for Wales**Question 1**

Although registration is compulsory in Wales, the penalties for non registration are hardly ever used. Should penalties be used and would this encourage more people to register?

Although penalties could be used, this Council considers it more important to address the problem of why people don't register – see Qu. 2 and 3 below.

Question 2

What methods could be used to ensure that more people living with their parents, who have moved recently or are living in rented accommodation register?

Young people should automatically be registered at their parents' address and their vote should remain there unless another permanent address is provided.

Question 3

Will individual registration with personal identification help to increase registration? Will it help to make voting more secure if the personal identification has to be produced before you can vote?

This Council agrees that individual registration should help to increase registration but there is some concern that this will lead to a requirement for a National Identity Card system. There is always a danger that personal identification can be forged.

Question 4

Should there be some form of automatic registration as in other countries? If yes, what sources of information could be used to ensure that everyone was automatically registered. **Every child should be registered at birth and this number should stay with them for life, replacing the need for separate national insurance numbers and medical numbers. The date of birth details would then automatically register them for voting at the appropriate age. The database would need to be maintained with up to date information, i.e. home address, for this system to work. Immigrants should also be registered in a similar way and should be unable to work or claim any benefits until they have done so.**

Question 5

What methods could be used to encourage more Black and Ethnic Minority people to register?
See qu. 5 above – registration should be automatic.

Question 6

Would an all postal vote be workable in Wales? Please give your reasons for your views.
No – due to concerns that this would be open to abuse and fraud.

Question 7

What forms of electronic voting (e.g. internet, text, at polling stations) could be used in Wales? What could be the benefits/problems of using the methods you have suggested?

None - would be open to abuse / fraud if unsupervised.

Question 8

Could alternative venues be used as polling stations? (e.g. supermarkets, post offices etc)
Yes, local supermarkets could be used providing there is sufficient space and they are adequately supervised. However, many post offices have closed and more are under threat of closure.

Question 9

Why do so few young people in Wales vote? Please give any examples you have come across (leaving out any personal details)
Young people seem to have little or no interest in politics, although they may be interested in specific issues, such as animal welfare or the environment.

Question 10

Are young people given enough information in schools to make an informed decision about how they are going to vote?
No. Young people should be taught about government, local governance and citizenship.

Question 11

Should party politics be taught in schools? If so, how? If not, why not?
No. The personal views of teachers may influence young people, who should be able to gather information and make up their own minds. Schools should not become involved in party politics.

Question 12

Should political parties be involved in informing young people about politics in schools and other youth groups?
No. See above.

Question 13

Are there examples of good practice in informing young people about politics in your area? Please tell us about them (leaving out any personal details).
No.

Question 14

Is there enough provision for people with disabilities to help with the registration process? If not, what practical things could be done?
No. Help should be offered to those registered as disabled (blind, illiterate etc.) and a personal visit should be arranged where forms have not been returned to offer help.

Question 15

Is there enough provision for people with disabilities to help with voting? If not, what practical things could be done?
No. Not all polling stations have access for the disabled - this should be a priority when choosing stations.

Question 16

Should there be statutory standards for the accessibility of registration and voting material and polling stations?

Yes. This should be covered by the Disability Discrimination Act.

Question 17

What are your views on the use of mobile ballot boxes for people who have difficulty getting to polling stations?

This is a good idea.

Question 18

Should polling station managers be required to produce a report similar to that in the Netherlands?

Yes.

Question 19

What are your views on the availability of help and advice available bilingually at elections in Wales?

The presiding officer or one of the poll clerks at each polling station should be bilingual.

Question 20

What could be done in terms of documents and advice to encourage more BME people to register and vote?

This should be linked to citizenship and should be a requirement for all immigrants. Second generation immigrants should be taught about governance and the need to register and vote at school.

Question 21

Do you consider the forms and information given about registration and voting to be straightforward and easily understandable?

No - they are not as clear and straightforward as they could be.