

RB/JB

Jane Brewer  
01495 765913

13<sup>th</sup> July 2006

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: Electoral Arrangements in Wales - A Discussion Document**

At Pontypool Community Council's Full Council meeting in June it was agreed that a working party would meet on Wednesday the 13<sup>th</sup> July in order to discuss the above document.

As Chairman of that working party please find attached answers that Pontypool Community Council wish to put forward in respect of the questions raised within the consultation document.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Rob Benjamin,  
Pontypool Community Council  
Word/Council/Reports/ElectoralArrangementsinWales

Please find below replies to questions in order that they are asked in the document:

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?

**Yes, without a doubt penalties should be used as the Council feels this would encourage more people to register.**

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?

**The Council felt that a Citizens Register should be introduced as a lot of these people are on benefits, and therefore a Citizens Register would come close to an ID card.**

3. Will individual registration with personal identification help to increase registration?

**The Citizens Register above, entitling people to a host of benefits would serve as such.**

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

**Yes**

4. Should there be some form of automatic registration as in other countries?

**See proposal on Citizens Register**

If yes, what sources of information could be used to ensure that everyone was automatically registered.

**Through a person's Birth Certificate, if a database was set up, then at the age of 18 the Government would automatically know that the person stated on the Birth Certificate would be entitled to vote. Also through national insurance numbers as everyone is given a national insurance number from birth as well.**

5. What methods could be used to encourage more Black and Ethnic Minority people to register?

**The Council felt that this was a leading question and felt that if they are registered as British Citizens then the voting method used at present should apply to all.**

6. Would an all postal vote be workable in Wales?

**Definitely no**

Please give your reasons for your views

**Obviously there are some contentious issues around postal voting and the Council felt that if people were on holiday or too ill to vote then a postal vote would be acceptable, however as already proved in various places postal voting is open to fraud and corruption and therefore is not a very secure voting system. An example was also given of 4 days after an election had taken place previously a boxful of postal votes was found and concern was expressed about identity fraud with all this personal information in one box, this was totally unacceptable.**

7. What forms of electronic voting (e.g. Internet, text, at polling stations) could be used in Wales?

**Although you could vote on the Internet it was stated again that this was not totally secure as although a card would be sent with a series of numbers for the person to tap into the Internet this was open to fraud as if another person gained access to this card then this would prove fraudulent.**

8. Could alternative venues be used as polling stations? (e.g. supermarkets, post offices etc).

**Where existing traditional polling stations are too remote or inaccessible to some people local retail outlets could be considered. In addition one other problem is that often schooling is interrupted.**

9. What do so few young people in Wales vote?

**Members felt that a lot of parents do not vote today and therefore if young people look to their parents as examples, if they do not vote the tendency is going to be that their children will not vote.**

Please give any examples you have come across (leaving out any personal details).

**A member gave an example of young people he works with who were speaking to him and they informed him they did not even have an idea of how the political process works and therefore they did not vote through lack of information and understanding.**

10. Are young people given enough information in schools to make an informed decision about how they are going to vote?

**Definitely not**

11. Should party politics be taught in schools?

**Members felt that politics should be taught in school not party politics**

If so, how?

**Members felt strongly that the understanding of local government/politics should be part of the National Curriculum. They felt that history is not taught today as well as it was years ago and only by having this as part of the national Curriculum for children to have a better understanding of local government and the voting process, would children be encouraged to vote.**

12. Should political parties be involved in informing young people about politics, schools and other youth groups?

**One view is that political parties could be invited to make a contribution so long as a balance between the parties is ensured. Only relatively mature students say over 15 should take part.**

13. Are there examples of good practice in informing young people about politics in your area?

**There may have been in the past but Members felt there are no examples at this present time.**

14. Is there enough provision for people with disabilities to help with the registration process?

**No**

If not, what practical things could be done?

**Members felt that the Disability Discrimination Act should be enforced as far as registration is concerned.**

15. Is there enough provision for people with disabilities to help with voting?

**No**

If not, what practical things could be done?

**Again make sure the Disability Discrimination Act is enforced.**

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

**Members felt that the Electoral Registration Officer should have the responsibility of ensuring that all polling stations are accessible to disabled people and in respect of Questions 14 and 15 only by ensuring that the Disability Discrimination Act is strictly adhered to will disabled voters ensure they have accessibility to be able to register and vote.**

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

**Members felt that this was a good idea, however they felt that a pilot scheme in a chosen area needed to be carefully selected to see how it worked, ideally in a remote/rural area. Also letters could be sent giving people a choice of times and then**

**whatever the majority have stated that could be the time that the mobile ballot box could run for.**

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

**The Council felt that this should certainly be the case. One of the members outlined an example of a number of errors that occurred at a polling station in her ward at one of the elections about which nothing was ever done. If the Polling station manager was asked to produce a report this would mean that issues would have to be followed up and any recommendations made in that report addressed.**

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

**Where appropriate such help and advice should be made available.**

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

**Members felt that all voters should be provided with the same information.**

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

**No, especially at the European Elections. Members have known people turn away from polling stations when they have arrived there because of the complexity of the forms, therefore the information has to be as simple as possible to encourage more people to vote. It has to be recognised that the current voting systems for the European and Assembly Elections do lead to greater complexity than the first past the post system.**