



AGENDA

for a meeting of the Association to be held on
Friday 26th April 2019 at 10.30am
at The Colwyn Bay Cricket Club

1. Record of attendance

To record attendance and any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the last Quarterly Meeting

To consider and approve the minutes of the last meeting. **(see attached)**

3. Declarations of interest

To record any declarations of interest.

4. Actions from the last meeting

To consider a report on actions to be taken forward from the last meeting:

No	Item	Action
1	Investigate and publish the results regarding the tax situation with Councillors	Discussions with the Inland Revenue are taking place.
2	Post the 'Future of Councils' paper on the web site	Completed.
3	Publish the press release on school meal provision.	Completed.
4	Investigate if there is any common ground with One Voice Wales over working together without membership conditions.	A meeting with Lyn Cadwallader has been arranged.
5	Note change of date for next meeting and liaise with Tina Early Bay of Colwyn Council over the venue availability.	Completed.



5. Financial Report

5.1 Management Accounts

To consider an update on the finances of the Association. (See appendix A)

5.2 Public Liability Insurances

To consider the need for public liability insurance to cover the Associations meetings and when members are on Association approved activities.

A quote is to be presented to the meeting so that the matter can be considered fully.

6. Executive Meeting Minutes

To consider the minutes of the Executive Meeting held on Friday 8th March 2019. (see appendix B)

7. School Meals Provision

To consider an update on school meals provision and the payment for such meals as follows:

Denbighshire County Council - Rhyl
Welshpool High School new arrangements – Powys
Discussions with Welsh Government

8. Homeless

To consider an update on the Secretaries investigations into homeless provision and rules which may help Town and Community Councils to be able to help?

9, Welsh Language Policy

To consider a members request to adopt a Welsh Language Policy for the Association. A formal Policy is suggested – members will be asked to put forward ideas and guidance so that the Secretary can prepare a paper for approval at the Annual Meeting.

10. Future of Local Councils

To consider an update on the Ministers Statement regarding the future of Local Councils.



Continued.....

To note the following items will be taken forward over the next 12 months:

Ministers Statement – Matters to be taken forward immediately
Undergo a campaign to confirm the role of Local Councils.
Local Councils to consider what services they should deliver at local level.
Encourage Local Councils to form where there are none.
Using existing powers ensure reviews of boundaries area carried out regularly by the County Councils.
Establish a better understanding of the use of social media.
Undertake a campaign to get more people to stand for election.
Provide access to the General Power of Competence to qualifying councils.
Local Councils to prepare for the General Power of Competence.
Support the establishment of joint service delivery arrangements.
Provide and share good practise on service delivery models.
Raise awareness of existing sources of funding.
Identify core training and introduce a programme for Councillors.
Continue to provide a bursary scheme for smaller Councils.
Encourage an increase in the number of qualified clerks.
Facilitate work to strengthen key relationships between Local and Principal Councils.
Add a representative from Community and Town Councils in the list required by Public Service Boards.
Require all Town and Community Councils to issue an annual report.
Encourage Local Councils to follow the principles of engage, plan, undertake and report.
Explore how digital mechanisms to engage and share information are used and could be used more extensively by the sector.

(see also item 13 on the agenda).

11. Brexit and Town/Community Councils

The Welsh Government has been clear since the EU referendum result that a disorderly no deal Brexit would be disastrous for Wales.

Since the 2016 referendum, we have worked constructively in Wales, Westminster and Brussels to deliver a deal that works for Wales, which protects our people, our economy and our environment. But as it has become clearer a no deal outcome is a real possibility, so we have been actively increasing our preparations to safeguard the interests of Wales and its people.



The Welsh Government has set out a clear vision for a Brexit, which prioritises jobs, the economy and the interests of Wales. More information about this is available in our White Paper. This can be found on the Welsh Government Web Site.

Summary

In summary the effects on Town and Community Councils depends upon what activities they undertake, however the following should be noted:

- i) Councils with investments need to evaluate what they should do to protect them.
- ii) Allowance should be made for a small drop in commercial income, particularly where tourism is involved.
- iii) Allowance should be made for short term inflationary pressures.

12. Annual External Audit

To consider an update on the External Audit report by Welsh Government.
The relevant matters of note are:

The amount of money managed by local councils in Wales continues to increase. However, the current standard of financial management and governance remains disappointing that too many councils as evidenced by a doubling of the number of qualified audit opinions

A significant number of councils fail to comply with their statutory responsibilities for preparing accounts and ensuring that proper arrangements are made for the statutory audit, including making arrangements for inspection of the accounts by their electors.

For information

The number of qualified audit opinions has doubled in 2017-18 to 340 councils, with auditors highlighting on-going failings in financial management and governance

Auditor's issue 'qualified' audit opinions when councils fail to comply with their statutory responsibilities or where auditors conclude that the information reported in the annual return is mis-stated.

Over 340 individual councils received a qualified audit opinion for 2017-18 compared with 170 in 2016-17. This increase is mainly due to a failure to adhere to the statutory timetable for the accounts and audit.

Auditors identified issues that require attention by the council, but which did not result in an audit qualification, at 522 councils compared with 424 in 2016-17.



Continued.....

Auditors have again highlighted a need to develop the internal audit function and this is supported by the findings of my national study on internal audit in the sector.

Financial Management and Governance – Town and Community Councils 2017-18
In 2018, due to significant deficiencies identified during the audit, I exercised my statutory powers to issue reports in the public interest or to make written recommendations to eight councils in Wales

Town and community councils in Wales can learn lessons from the reports in the public interest issued at seven councils during 2018. I am also considering similar reports on several other councils.

Councils can also learn lessons from written recommendations issued under section 25 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. In 2018 I made such recommendations to one council. The 2018-19 and 2019-20 town and community council audits will continue to focus on areas where auditors identify scope for improvement in council's arrangements and during this period, I will review the adequacy and effectiveness of the current audit arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose

My audit programme for 2018-19 to 2020-21 will continue to focus on areas where there is scope for local councils to improve their financial management and governance.

In 2019, I will review the current audit arrangements to determine if they remain fit for purpose with any resulting changes to the arrangements expected to be introduced for the 2020-21 audit of accounts.

Note 1:

The 2017-18 audit is incomplete at 94 councils for various reasons.

	Number of councils
2017-18 annual return not submitted to the auditor	17
Councils not responding to requests for further information	24
Prior year audits incomplete	22
2017-18 audit issues to be resolved	31

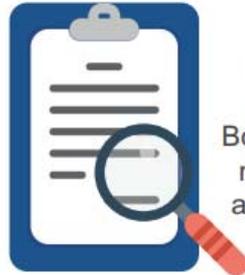


Note 2:



80

Bodies failed to meet 30 June deadline



242

Bodies failed to make proper arrangements for audit

Source: Wales Audit Office analysis

Note 3:

**Exhibit 9 – audit timetable for 2018-19**

I have appointed 29 July 2019 as the date from which local electors may exercise their rights under section 30 of the and 31 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.

Action	To be completed by
Council to place audit notice in a conspicuous place and to publish a copy on its website	16 June 2019
Responsible Financial Officer to certify the accounting statements	30 June 2019
Council to approve the accounts for submission to the auditor	30 June 2019
Council to make accounts and supporting records available for public inspection	1 July 2019
End of statutory inspection period	26 July 2019
Date from which local electors can ask questions about or make objections to the accounts to the auditor	29 July 2019

2.18 As notice of these dates has now been given, I anticipate that almost all councils will comply with the Regulations for 2018-19.

13. Consultations – ‘Future of councils programme of consultation’

The Executive considered how to take forward the consultations outlined by Welsh Government over the coming 12 months. Rather than wait for the whole Consultation it was agreed that the Association should do it in ‘bite size’ chunks and consider one subject per meeting. This can then be put into the final consultation (when it is issued) and leave just a few items to discuss at that time.

This meeting is to consider the ELECTIONS section which relates to:

- (i) **Age for voting**
The proposal which is to come forward for consideration is to reduce the age for voting in Wales to 16.
- (ii) **Co-options**



The proposal is to put Co-options as a 'last resort' and to rule that no person can be co-opted for two consecutive terms but must stand for election at the earliest opportunity.

(iii) Single nominated person for election

The proposal being considered is for a single candidate would still stand for elections with a 'yes or no' vote option.

(iv) Dual role Councillors

Consideration is being given to whether Councillors should be allowed to be a Community Councillor at the same time as being a County Councillor.

14. Independent Review Panel for Wales

To consider the actions required by Town and Community Councils as outlined in the Annual Report (now approved). See appendix C.

15. Climate Change Policy

To consider the following:

- a) Declaring recognition that there is a Climate Change Emergency.
- b) To consider adopting the following action plan to support the statements.

This Climate Change Emergency has been promoted on the basis of the World having just 12 years to turn around the carbon omissions issue before the damage cannot be reversed. See the extract from the Campaign against Climate Change article at appendix D.

See suggested Action Policy at appendix E.

14. Business Rates

To consider supporting another approach to the Welsh Government and Parliament regarding the issue of business rates. See appendix F.

To consider the following proposal:

'To seek the immediate review of Business Rates and to replace them with A Turnover Tax relating to ability to pay'.

The Association to accept that Business Rates is now a Tax and not a contribution towards local services (which is the Welsh Governments viewpoint).

16. Dates of future meetings

To note the dates for future meetings as follows:



Quarterly Meetings

Friday 26th April 2019 – Bay of Colwyn Town Council

Friday 10th July 2019 – Connah's Quay Town Council

All Quarterly Meetings start at 10.30am.

Executive Meetings

Friday 9th March 2019

Friday 8th June 2019 All Executive

Meetings are held at 10.30am in the Offices of Rhyl Town Council

APPENDIX A

FINANCIAL REPORT



NORTH & MID WALES ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS		APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
ANNUAL ACCOUNTS YEAR TO 31.3.2019												
INCOME	Membership & Meals	144.00	256.00	16.00	1098.00	206.00	120.00	161.50	296.00	16.00	288.00	
	Interest											
	Debtors											
	Other											
	TOTAL	144.00	256.00	16.00	1098.00	206.00	120.00	161.50	296.00	16.00	288.00	0.00
COSTS	Meals		704.10				560.00		670.40			
	Expenses											
	Administration											
	Bank charges											
	Gavel											
	Web hosting											
	Web site											
	Translation											
	Other											
	TOTAL	0.00	704.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	560.00	0.00	670.40	0.00	0.00	0.00
	BALANCE	144.00	-448.10	16.00	1098.00	206.00	-440.00	161.50	-374.40	16.00	288.00	0.00
BANK	Start	5900.30	6044.30	5596.20	5612.20	6710.20	6916.20	6476.20	6637.70	6263.30	6279.30	6364.45
	End	6044.30	5596.20	5612.20	6710.20	6916.20	6476.20	6637.70	6263.30	6279.30	6567.30	
	Balance	-144.00	448.10	-16.00	-1098.00	-206.00	440.00	-161.50	374.40	-16.00	-288.00	6364.45
	TREASURER		Robert Robinson									

APPENDIX B

MINUTES

of a meeting of the Executive held on



Friday 8th March 2019 at 10.30am
in the Rhyl Town Council Offices

1. Record of attendance

1.1 Present were:

Cllr B Roberts (Chair), Cllr J Butterfield, Cllr H Meredith and Robert Robinson (Secretary).

1.2 Apologies were received from

Cllr B Bertola, Cllr J Arnold (Ellis), Cllr B Barton and Cllr H Chave.

2. Minutes of the last Executive Meeting

The meeting considered and approve the minutes of the last meeting.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no recorded declarations of interest.

4. Financial Report

4.1 Management Accounts

The meeting consider an update on the finances. Current balance £6,567.30.

4.2 Insurances

The meeting considered if the Association should carry liability insurance for accidents that might take place during their meetings or when officers are on the Associations business. The secretary is to add this to the next quarterly meeting agenda and is to gain a quote for consideration.

5. Agenda for the quarterly meeting April 2019

The meeting considered the agenda for the next quarterly meeting to be hosted by Bay of Colwyn Town Council on Friday 26th /April 2019.

The agenda was approves subject to adding:

- a) Consultation process for 'Future of Councils' and Elections.
- b) The Independent Review Panel for Wales.
- c) Insurances for the Association.
- d) Climate Change.



6. Any other business

There were no other items of business.

7. Dates of future meetings

The meeting noted the dates of meetings leading to the Annual Meeting in July 2019 as follows:

Quarterly Meetings

Friday 26th April 2019 – Bay of Colwyn Town Council

Friday 10th July 2019 – Connah’s Quay Town Council

All Quarterly Meetings start at 10.30am.

Executive Meetings

Friday 9th March 2019

Friday 8th June 2019 All Executive

Meetings are held at 10.30am in the Offices of Rhyl Town Council.

APPENDIX C

IRP DETERMINATION FOR 2019-2020	APPROVAL BY COUNCIL REQUIRED
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D40-All community and town councils must make available a payment to each of their members of £150 per year as a contribution to costs and expenses.	No -the payment of £150 is mandated for every member unless they advise the appropriate officer that they do not want to take it in writing.
D41-Community and town councils in Group A must make available an annual payment of £500 each to a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses.	Yes –a council must decide how many payments of £500 it will make – to between 1 and 5 members unless they advise the appropriate officer in writing that they do not want to take it.
D42-Community and town councils in Groups B or C can make an annual payment of £500 each to up to 5 members in recognition of specific responsibilities. This is in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses.	Yes –the payment of £500 is optional for up to 5 members
D43-Community and town councils can make payments to each of their members in respect of travel costs for Authorise duties.	Yes –the payment of travel costs is optional attending approved duties.
D44-If a community or town council resolves that a particular duty requires an overnight stay, it can authorise reimbursement of subsistence expenses to its members.	Yes –the payment of overnight subsistence expenses are optional.
D45-Community and town councils can pay financial loss compensation to each of their members, where such loss has actually occurred, for attending approved duties.	Yes –the payment of financial loss allowance is optional.
D46-All community and town councils must provide for the reimbursement of necessary costs for the care of dependent children and adults (provided by informal or formal carers) and for personal assistance needs up to a maximum of £403 per month.	No -the payment is mandated for every member if they are eligible to claim, and wish to do so.
D47-Community and town councils can provide a Civic Head payment to the mayor/chair of the council up to a maximum of £1,500.	Yes –the payment to a Civic Head is optional.
D48-Community and town councils can provide a Deputy Civic Head payment to the deputy mayor/deputy chair of the	Yes –the payment to a Deputy Civic Head is optional.



council up to a maximum amount of £500.	
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APPROVED DUTIES

(as determined by the IRP)

It is the spirit of the Panel's determination is that if taxis are the most appropriate / only method of transport then the Panel considers they should be paid. This will be clarified in the next annual report for 2020.

The list of duties classed as approved duties attending council and council standing committee meetings so members are able to claim for this. Paragraph 39 on page 84 (Annex 2, the Panel regulations) of the annual report states :

“Approved Duty” under this Part means

- 1) Attendance at a meeting of the council or of any committee or sub-committee of the council or of any other body to which the council makes appointments or nominations or of any committee or sub-committee of such a body.
- ii) Attendance at any other meeting the holding of which is authorised by the council or a committee or sub-committee of the council, or a joint committee of the council and one or more councils, or a sub-committee of such a joint committee provided that at least two members of the council have been invited and where the council is divided into political groupings at least two such groups have been invited.
- iii) Attendance at a meeting of any association of councils of which the council is a member.
- Iv) Attendance at any training or development event approved by the council.
- V) Any other duty approved by the council or duty of a class approved by the council for the discharge of its functions or any of its committees or sub-committees.

APPENDIX D

Climate Emergency – taken from Campaign against Climate Change



The Need

Extreme weather events this last two years have presented severe challenges to transport, agriculture and other services, though what we have experienced in the Welshpool area is almost insignificant compared to many parts of the world.

Unless we act on climate, we collectively face the greatest threat to our local and global environment. According to October's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 1.5C report, humanity has 12 years to deliver the major actions needed to turn this around, so we can avoid reaching tipping points where we no longer have the ability to avoid extreme weather events. It is clear to many of us that we must act locally and globally.

Business as usual is clearly no longer an option. We need local wisdom and action to increase our resilience and to prepare for the changes already in the system. Welshpool can play its role in preventing dangerous and extreme weather events.

Our inspiration:

A motion calling on Bristol City Council to declare a climate emergency was passed on Tuesday 13 November 2018, with support from councilors of all parties. The motion was inspired by the recent IPCC report. Bristol Council unanimously CARRIED this motion showing a commitment to play its part in avoiding catastrophic climate breakdown. Machynlleth and Welshpool Town Councils also recently passed a motion declaring a climate emergency and committing themselves to taking action to counter this.

Motion.

1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency';
2. Take action to improve the Associations own practices to reduce our own contribution to Climate Change.



3. Take action to;

- * help move towards The Association being a net-zero carbon producer as soon as possible – see short action list at appendix E.
- * increase local resilience to climate impacts;
- * Support actions that provide local benefits in other sectors such as health, agriculture, transport and the economy;

4. Call on Wales and UK Government to provide the support and resources to make this possible;

5. Work with other organisations, such as Renew Wales, other Community Councils and Local businesses to help counter climate change;

Background Information

Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1 degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO2 levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). This far exceeds the 350 ppm deemed to be a safe level for humanity.

The IPCC’s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, published in October, describes the enormous harm that a 2°C rise is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise, and told us that limiting Global Warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities.

Councils around the world are responding by declaring a ‘Climate Emergency’ and committing resources to address this emergency.

APPENDIX E

No	Activity	Actions	Current rating
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1	Drive less Walk, bike, car-pool or take mass transit more often. You'll save one pound of carbon dioxide for every mile you don't drive! Use vehicles less.	Members to car share where ever it is practical.	BLUE
2	Recycle more You can save 2,400 pounds of carbon dioxide per year by recycling just half of your household waste.	Secretary to ensure that paperwork is printed on recyclable paper.	BLUE
3	Avoid products with a lot of packaging You can save 1,200 pounds of carbon dioxide if you reduce your garbage by 10 percent.	When purchases are made on behalf of the Association the secretary is to seek items with the least packaging.	YELLOW
4	Plant a tree A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.	The Association to fund the planting of 6 trees per annum in Mid and North Wales.	BLUE
5	Renewable Energy Support renewable energy schemes.	Support renewable energy polices put forward by Government.	BLUE
6	Publicity Make the public aware of the Council's actions and consider how to promote the global warming issues.	Put on public record the Associations policy.	BLUE
7	Review Review progress every 3 months with a chart showing progress towards completing actions.	Review progress every other quarterly meeting.	BLUE

KEY: **Red** Not achievable **Yellow**
Could do better – reviews and report
Blue Reasonable but with more actions to be completed **Green**
Completion of all that can be done



BUSINESS RATES (Retail High Streets in particular)

“The governments just haven’t got it. They need to take some responsibility for the high street’s decline.”

The Entertainer’s chief executive Gary Grant is far from the only prominent figure to blame business rates for the worryingly extensive roster of retailers facing insolvency or administration.

Recently, books retailer Foyles largely blamed their £88,791 loss on the rise in business rates, while fresh research from real estate advisory group Altus suggests that business rates rises were a key factor in House of Fraser’s recently announced CVA.

Last year, Argos chief executive John Rogers said it was “it is no surprise the profit warnings tended to be from those companies that predominantly have a high street presence, because they are paying a cost to their business that’s not borne by most of their online competition,” joining MPs from the influential Treasury Select Committee in his criticism.

The list of the tax’s critics is almost as long as the list of retailers large and small who are struggling to make ends meet in the current retail climate.

But just how much of the blame for the high street’s current woes can be pinned on this controversial tax?

“The fundamental issue is persisting with the link between rates liability and property value”

“Unsecured borrowing was the least since November 2012 chiming with the recent drop in consumer confidence and rise in saving intentions,” Altus Group’s head of UK business rates Robert Hayton told the *Retail Gazette*.

“Add to the mix the already lethal cocktail of increased operating costs for the national living wage and apprenticeship levy against a backdrop of rates bills having rose by more than a fifth before the revaluation creates the perfect storm for 2018 being the year of the CVA.

“Business rates are rarely the sole driver for insolvencies but certainly a contributory factor being one of the least negotiable taxes and the hardest to defer.”



Placing the sole blame for a very complex and multifaceted issue on a single piece of legislation is always going to be reductionist, and could cause more problems than it solves.

That said, unlike wider economic burdens that cannot be controlled, such as customers' exodus away from physical retail or the fall in the value of the pound, business rates stands out as a seemingly unnecessary weight on retailers' shoulders.

This is largely due to the fact it is based on an outdated framework for retail, failing to account for the lightning-fast, but never unexpected rise of online players.

As Richard Roberts, head of retail at independent legal practice Brabners, points out, traditional retailers are hindered by their reliance on high footfall properties.

“High-street vendors have far less choice about where they locate their stores than ecommerce businesses who enjoy the geographical freedom to base themselves in more remote locations, which benefit from far lower rateable values,” he said.

“The fundamental issue is persisting with the link between rates liability and property value, meaning high-street retailers are punished because they need to have a physical presence in high-footfall, high-value locations.

“Unless the link between property value and business rates is severed, we will see increasing numbers of outlets forced out of urban centres leading to more boarded-up units and high streets with little variety beyond charity shops, £1 retailers and pop-up traders.”

Since the initial rates rise came into effect last year, both the Chancellor Philip Hammond and newly-appointed Home Secretary Sajid Javid have promised change.

The most concrete effort to alleviate pressure was announced in the Autumn Budget last year. Hammond announced that the inflation measure used to calculate the rates would move from the Retail Prices Index (RPI), to the lower Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Though the move was largely welcomed, Roberts described it as “the government re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic”.

Hayton added that despite the headline £2.3 billion reprieve the industry would enjoy as a consequence of this change, it is but a drop in the ocean of the overall costs of the tax.

“Even with business rates rises limited for this financial year to last September's CPI rate of three per cent, that still drove business rates bills from April for 2018/19 up for the embattled retail sector by £226 million,” he said.



With a further 55,000 retail businesses having to deal with yet more rises this year, it's no stretch of the imagination to assume the current "retail protocol.