

WLGA BUSINESS PLAN 2021-22

Purpose

1. To present the WLGA's Business Plan 2021-22.

Background

1. COVID-19 recovery and responding to future outbreaks will dominate the work of local government for much of 2021-22. Councils will look to respond to the Welsh Government's programme for government and the UK Government's regeneration funding and delivery programmes, whilst embedding recent legislative reforms, including the establishment of Corporate Joint Committees, and preparing for the local elections in May 2022.
2. The WLGA will therefore need to continue to be responsive and agile in supporting local authorities in their response to and recovery from the pandemic.
3. The WLGA will seek to build on constructive relationships with the Senedd, Welsh Government and UK Government which have been developed during the pandemic, in particular seeking to shape the Welsh Government's priorities and legislative programme for government and making the case for a fair and sustainable funding for local government.
4. The WLGA's core aims, set out in the Corporate Strategy, remain relevant and will shape our collective approach to our engagement with the Welsh and UK Governments' and Senedd ahead of the local elections in 2022:
 - **Reform, continuous improvement and a commitment to partnership** – local government is committed to sector-led improvement and reform to deliver better outcomes and services and ensuring resources are used as effectively and as efficiently as possible. A continued and constructive commitment to partnership working based on mutual respect and understanding is essential to delivering better outcomes for the people of Wales. Local government leads and supports collaborative local public service reform seeks to ensure the governance of regional services are democratically accountable and, wherever possible, streamlined;
 - **Fair and flexible funding** – councils need greater fiscal autonomy and flexibility to respond to local needs and priorities, with specific grants transferred into the settlement, new national initiatives or legislation costed and fully funded by the Welsh Government and a commitment to multiyear financial settlements;
 - **Commitment to the principle of Subsidiarity** –the WLGA promotes the principle of subsidiarity, where power is transferred to the level of government closest to the people. The WLGA seeks a commitment from the Welsh

Government and the Senedd to the European Charter of Local Self Government. The Welsh Government has a clear national strategic role and sets national outcomes, but councils are best placed to determine what services are prioritised locally and how they are best delivered with maximum and powers should be devolved allowing maximum discretion for councils to respond to community needs and priorities.

5. The WLGA refocused and realigned itself in terms of its governance arrangements, organisational structure and work programme, to support the local government response to the coronavirus pandemic. Leaders met with Ministers on a weekly and, at times, daily basis during the pandemic but these arrangements will be reviewed during the transition to recovery.
6. During 2021-22, the WLGA will return to implementing organisational changes that were initiated before the pandemic, which sought to reform and refresh the organisation in preparedness for the establishment of the new Association for the new municipal term from May 2022.
7. The WLGA will relocate to a new, smaller office location in Cardiff which will provide opportunities for efficiencies, a reduced carbon footprint and a more agile and collaborative approach to work. As part of this process, WLGA organisational and HR policies will be reviewed and new WLGA branding will be introduced alongside a new website to support our communications and public affairs activities.
8. The WLGA will also work with members in reviewing constitutional, governance and political management arrangements and members' allowances and support to ensure that the organisation is prepared for the new Association and new leadership following the election.
9. The WLGA's core priority themes for 2021-22 are:
 - Supporting councils' COVID-19 response and recovery
 - Local Leadership, Freedom and Flexibility
 - Finance
 - Lifelong Learning, Language and Culture
 - Health and Social Care
 - Housing and Community Safety
 - Regeneration and a Resilient Environment
 - Public Protection and Emergency Planning

10. The WLGA's Business Plan for 2021-22 is included in **Annex A**.

Recommendations

11. Members are recommended to agree the WLGA's Business Plan 2021-22.

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ANNEX A

WLGA Business Plan 2021-22



Introduction

1. The WLGA is a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level.
2. It is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales, the 3 fire and rescue authorities and the 3 national park authorities as associate members.
3. The WLGA's primary aims are to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of local authorities in Wales.
4. The WLGA's Corporate Strategy 2019-22 sets out the WLGA's values, its governance arrangements and how the organisation operates on behalf of its member authorities.

WLGA Priorities 2021-22

5. COVID-19 recovery and responding to future outbreaks will dominate the work of local government for much of 2021-22. Councils will look to respond to the Welsh Government's programme for government and the UK Government's regeneration funding and delivery programmes, whilst embedding recent legislative reforms, including the establishment of Corporate Joint Committees, and preparing for the local elections in May 2022.
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collaborative local public service reform seeks to ensure the governance of regional services are democratically accountable and, wherever possible, streamlined;

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13. The WLGA's core priority themes for 2021-22 are:
 - **Supporting councils' COVID-19 response and recovery**
 - **Local Leadership, Freedom and Flexibility**
 - **Finance**
 - **Lifelong Learning, Language and Culture**
 - **Health and Social Care**
 - **Housing and Community Safety**
 - **Regeneration and a Resilient Environment**
 - **Public Protection and Emergency Planning**

Supporting councils' COVID-19 response and recovery

The WLGA will:

1. Ensure the political leadership of the WLGA is engaged in and influences the Welsh Government's approach to reviewing restrictions and plans for post-pandemic recovery.
2. Seek to ensure local government funding is prioritised by Welsh Government and UK Government, making the case for additional funding to cover additional pressures and responsibilities and any lost income.
3. Work with professional groups to inform Welsh Government considerations and the development of guidance or regulations in response to reviewing COVID-19 restrictions.
4. Promote sharing of learning and good practice from the pandemic to shape councils' future plans and recovery, including commissioning research and offering COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal Panel sessions, via the LGA, through the WLGA's new improvement programme.
5. Promote social partnership working at local, regional and national levels so that local authority employers, trade unions and other bodies engage in an early and meaningful way about all key policy issues and any proposed changes which might impact upon the local government workforce in Wales.

Local Leadership, Freedom and Flexibility

Councils are respected, empowered and have the freedom and flexibility to respond to local needs

The WLGA will:

6. Champion the role of councillors and council leaders, promoting the reputation of councils, their crucial role and contribution.
7. Proactively engage with the Welsh Government and new Members of the Senedd, promoting local government, local democracy and the [WLGA's manifesto priorities](#) and building awareness and understanding of and respect for local government.
8. Work with the Welsh Government in the development and delivery of its programme for government, and with Members of the Senedd, to ensure any policies, guidance or legislation respects and strengthens local democratic accountability and provides maximum flexibilities and powers for local government.
9. Support local authorities embed the new powers and duties introduced through the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 ahead of commencement from May 2022, including the establishment of Corporate Joint Committees and new performance and governance duties.

10. Promote and support improvement and transformation through sector-led improvement, through the work of the Chief Digital Officer and the WLGA's new [improvement programme](#). The WLGA aims to develop and embed peer challenge and support and recruit 80 Welsh peers during 2021-22.
11. Promote equalities, including the 'Diversity in Democracy' campaign to encourage more diverse candidates to stand for election and to promote interest in the democratic process ahead of May 2022 and support authorities in preparing induction programmes, member development and support for newly elected councillors and new leaders, cabinets and senior members.
12. Support authorities to effectively manage their workforce through our role as the Employers' Organisation, with a particular focus on enhancing social partnership working at national and local levels which builds upon authorities' responsibility to determine local workforce issues at a local level following early and meaningful consultation with trade unions and staff alike.
13. Continue to provide an EU Transition Support Programme to local authorities and to engage with the other local government associations and Welsh and UK Governments to ensure local government interests and concerns are heard and addressed. Produce materials and information to assist local authorities in responding to changes and new requirements arising since the ending of the transition period. Run a transition and recovery support programme which links to decarbonisation and green recovery efforts (further details under 'Regeneration and a Resilient Environment' below)

Finance

Financial reform and fair funding for local services

The WLGA will:

14. Lobby for fair and sustainable funding for local public services including evidenced pressures and new responsibilities.
15. Promote greater financial freedoms and flexibilities for councils within a longer-term financial framework including a move towards multiyear settlements.
16. Continue to work towards the incorporation of all specific grants into the core grant and timely financial announcements.
17. Support the Welsh Government's review of local taxation and ensure that is consistent with the WLGA's views on fairness and sustainability.
18. Seek greater powers for councils to explore other sources of income, including new sources of taxation.
19. Lobby the UK and Welsh Governments and support authorities to ensure that welfare reforms and changes to devolved benefits are fair on our communities.

Lifelong Learning, Language and Culture

National education standards delivered at a local level

The WLGA will:

20. Ensure that local government plays a full role working with partners on the national mission to raise standards in schools and improve outcomes for learners, including the new national curriculum for Wales.
21. Continue working with the WJEC, Qualifications Wales and the Welsh Government to make sure the qualifications framework during COVID 19 is fit for purpose and places learners at the heart of the system.
22. Continue to support investment in the 21st Century Schools programme and contribute towards refining the model.
23. Continue to make the case for education to be funded through local authorities and the Revenue Support Grant to endure full flexibility and local determination for their own and schools' budgets.
24. Prioritise social partnership in working with the Welsh Government, trade unions and other bodies to influence the determination of teachers' pay and conditions in Wales, along with the modernisation of working practices in our schools
25. Continue to work with and guide Welsh Government in its desire to support schools causing concern, by encouraging each part of the system - schools, local authorities and consortia – to play an appropriate role in schools making and sustaining progress.
26. Promote and support equalities and diversity and pupil wellbeing as a priority for schools and local authorities through initiatives such as hate crimes in schools programme, period poverty work, healthy eating and school holiday enrichment programmes, as well as aspects of youth support service work.
27. Continue to monitor and scrutinise legislation and funding in relation to children with additional learning needs (ALN).
28. Work with Welsh Government and support schools and local authorities with the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales by 2022.
29. Promote, support and value the contribution of the arts, culture and leisure services to well-being and to local economies.
30. Champion the Welsh language and culture, encouraging and supporting the use of the language in everyday lives and promoting Wales' rich cultural heritage and identity, within Wales and to the world.

Health and Social Care

Ensuring good quality and sustainable social care services for the future

The WLGA will:

31. Support local authorities in responding to the stabilisation and reconstruction of social care in light of COVID-19, working closely with our social care partners and professional groups to strengthen the voice of and promote the work of local government and highlight common issues of concern and / or improved ways of working. Work with Welsh Government and partner organisations in the development of solutions in relation to the future funding of social care, with an ambition of securing long-term sustainable funding for social care services in Wales.
32. Continue to champion and promote the social care workforce and make the case to Welsh Government for parity of esteem with NHS workers and that the workforce is appropriately rewarded for the invaluable work that they undertake.
33. Continue to support implementation of *A Healthier Wales*, ensuring that social care is seen as an equal partner to the NHS, promoting the move - away from health systems centred around hospitals – to ones where health and social care systems focus on place-based communities; primary and community services and wellbeing, addressing people's physical health, mental health and social needs together.
34. Work with Public Health Wales and partner organisations in highlighting local government's contribution to addressing the wider determinants of health through *Building a Healthier Wales* and the provision of preventative services provided by local authorities, Continue to support councils as they seek to intervene with families earlier and prevent problems from escalating. Working with Welsh Government to help ensure councils are able to invest in preventative, universal and early help services so children, young people and families receive the practical, emotional, educational and mental health support they need, as soon as they need it.
35. Work with social partners to ensure a sustainable social care workforce through various social partnership arrangements including the Social Care Fair Work Forum. This includes working with Welsh Government to realise the shared ambition of paying the Real Living Wage to the social care workforce.

Housing and Community Safety

Creating good quality homes and safer communities for people to live and work

The WLGA will:

36. Continue to support the work of local authorities in tackling and preventing homelessness and rough sleeping and ensuring that those brought into temporary accommodation during the pandemic are supported into permanent housing while transforming current and future temporary accommodation provision and homelessness services.
34. Support and enable increased plans for building council houses across Wales to meet housing need, tackle and prevent homelessness and as part of the pandemic recovery activities.
35. Collaborate with Welsh Government and Community Housing Cymru, on behalf of local authorities, in negotiating and developing an appropriate *Housing Pact* setting out shared ambitions, outcomes and requirements covering the Senedd term.
36. Support the implementation of the WLGA's Rural Wales Manifesto, in particular the key ask for housing to reflect local community needs.
37. Continue to contribute to the development and implementation of plans for the decarbonisation of existing homes in Wales, focusing initially on the social housing stock and identifying likely overall resource implications.
38. Continue to contribute to on-going work to improve building safety following the findings of the Hackitt Review and work with local authorities and other partners in implementing the findings and recommendations of the Building Safety Expert Group as set out in the Welsh Governments' Building Safety-White Paper which sets out changes to the law in relation to Housing, Building Regulation and Fire Safety.
39. to contribute to on-going work to improve building safety following the findings of the Hackitt Review and work with local authorities and other partners in implementing the findings and recommendations of the Building Safety Expert Group as set out in the Welsh Governments' Building Safety White Paper which sets out changes to the law in relation to Housing, Building Regulation and Fire Safety.
40. Work closely with local authorities and policing in Wales to support and enhance the coherence and planning of community safety work at local and regional levels and in addressing national strategies and priorities through their local arrangements. Continuing to support the newly established Safer Communities Network, the Safer Communities Board in addition to the WLGA Cabinet Members for Community Safety Network will be a key aspect of this work.
41. Continue to work with the Fire and Rescue Authorities and Welsh Government and to participate in discussions on any potential to widen the role of firefighter's roles, including identified implications.

42. Continue to support Police and Crime Panels through regular engagement with Chairs, Vice Chairs and Lead Officers and to engage with Welsh Government to raise awareness of the role they play in holding Police and Crime Commissioners to account and to help develop closer links between WG and the PCPs in Wales.

Regeneration and a Resilient Environment

Local councils supporting inclusive growth locally, regionally and nationally and promoting a resilient environment for future generations

The WLGA will:

43. Seek to build on the central role afforded to local government under the new funding and delivery arrangements introduced by the UK Government (Community Renewal Fund, Levelling Up Fund). Contribute to efforts to work within the regional framework for investment previously agreed with Welsh Government and other regional development partners. Seek to align local and regional proposals with national objectives, and to avoid gaps in national support for development that could emerge under the new funding arrangements. Develop relations with UK Government and exert influence on the size, shape and operation of the planned Shared Prosperity Fund. Ensure that all funding streams align behind agreed regional and local development priorities, building on the work of the City Deal and Growth Deal partnerships and regional economic frameworks, as well as the National Development Framework and the emerging Strategic Development Plans.

44. Work to progress and publicise the priorities in the WLGA Rural Forum's Manifesto ([WLGA Rural Wales Manifesto - WLGA](#)), making the case to Welsh Government and partners about the need to address the retention of young people, rural infrastructure issues, sustainable tourism, rural housing pressures and town centre revival and community wealth building. We will seek to influence the Welsh Government's planned replacement for Common Agricultural Policy support and the introduction of a new Rural Development Plan.

45. Work with Welsh Government in taking forward its Circular Economy Strategy including the next iteration of statutory recycling targets and plans for new facilities to deal with waste/resources within Wales. Provide continued support for the regional political structures linked to the Ministerial Waste Programme Board in feeding into these matters.

46. Seek to influence UK and Welsh Government plans for the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and Deposit Return Schemes (DRS). Work with local authorities to collate and model costs of handling packaging waste and managing litter, so they are well-placed to push for full cost recovery under EPR proposals expected by 2023. Participate in the Defra working group reviewing DRS and facilitate pilot work on DRS at home to promote the use of kerbside services within DRS

47. Continue to lobby for new ways of maintaining the highway network (including county, unadopted roads and active travel routes) through a long-term investment programme. Provide support to local authorities in working with Welsh Government on plans to introduce a new default 20mph speed limit, civil enforcement of pavement parking obstructions, and a new Road Safety Framework.

48. Ensure Members' views feed into proposals for reform of bus and taxi services in Wales. Input to new legislation expected to be included in Welsh Government's legislative plans.

49. Support local authorities in the build-up to the introduction of Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs). Share learning and good practice across the four regions as aspects of strategic planning, transport and economic well-being are considered for inclusion within the remit of CJCs. Support work to better integrate these functions at regional level to get the best outcomes for communities.

50. Work with Welsh Government and other partners to assist employees to have more opportunities to work from home, or in a local office, more of the time, where it works for them and for their employer; this will complement the "Transforming Towns" vision and help to create new opportunities for regeneration and economic activity in our towns and communities. Work with Local Planning Authorities and Welsh Government to ensure that the planning function remains flexible and responsive to these changing needs.

51. Engage with Welsh Government in understanding the changing impacts on town centres as we emerge from the COVID crisis and ensure they remain relevant and sustainable environments, including support for reuse and repair services on high streets.

52. Develop a decarbonisation support programme to support authorities with their plans to reduce their own carbon emissions, in pursuit of the target of a carbon neutral public sector by 2030. Continue to support local authorities in addressing biodiversity loss and work to ensure nature-based approaches and upholding of environmental standards are central to 'green recovery' efforts.

53. Continue to support local authorities in their work to respond and adapt to flood, coastal erosion and coal tip risks and events, including efforts to ensure effective Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes and responding to emerging environmental constraints such as phosphates. Continue lobbying WG through our membership of the WG Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management Capital Programme Board to ensure suitable funding is allocated to protect communities and infrastructure. Support the updating of strategic plans (Shoreline Management Plans, Local Flood Risk Management Strategies). Collaborate with Natural Resources Wales to develop courses to develop workforce skills and for the next generation of flood risk professionals. Continue cross-border work with LGA sharing expertise and good practice around coastal adaptation.

54. Progress work on planning fees to ensure that services are fully funded. Support the development of the structures and regulations to allow Strategic Development Plans to progress. Update the planning guidance for new Members and supporting materials to ensure that all Members have the necessary information to discharge their duties in planning.

Public Protection and Emergency Planning

Local councils preventing ill health, suppressing disease, planning for and responding to emergencies, and allowing legal celebration of life and death

The WLGA will

55. Begin a series of regular meetings for Public Protection portfolio holders, which will give lead Members an opportunity to be updated on and discuss related matters.
56. Work with Local Authorities Public Protection and Emergency Planning teams to produce business cases, examining the current workforce pressures, and setting out the case for reinvestment in skills and knowledge within these service areas
57. Continue to develop relationships and work with external partners including for the Food Standards Agency Wales, to coproduce policy, resilience, priorities, delivery mechanisms and service design
58. Work with Welsh Government to deliver a modern legislative framework for private hire and taxi vehicles to operate more safely in Wales