

24th May 2024

REVISED DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN WLGA AND ONE VOICE WALES

Purpose

- 1 To seek approval from Executive Board for a revised Memorandum of Understanding between the WLGA and One Voice Wales (OVW) with a view to the MoU being launched at a joint plenary session at the WLGA Annual Conference in June 2024.

Context

- 2 The WLGA and OVW agreed on an MoU in 2013 in order to promote partnership and cooperation between the two statutory sectors of local government in Wales.
- 3 In January 2024, the Leader and Chief Executive of the WLGA met with the Chair and Chief Executive of OVW along with the Association's Deputy Chief Executive and Interim Head of Policy and Corporate Services.
- 4 It was acknowledged that the current MoU had been in place for 10 years and therefore it was considered timely to refresh the document and ensure it adequately reflects the current joint working commitments between both organisations.
- 5 The changes to the MoU (Appendix 1) are relatively minor. There is a proposal to have 2 leadership meetings and 3 officer meetings each year to support the joint working arrangements. In addition, the Interim Head of Policy and Corporate Services has worked with the Chief Executive of OVW to capture work that is being undertaken in partnership and areas of future collaboration. These are reflected on page 6 of the draft revised MoU.
- 6 If members of the Executive Board are content to approve the revised MoU, it is proposed to launch it at a joint plenary session with OVW at our annual conference which is focusing on the role Community and Town Councils can play in supporting local authorities to provide place-based services. Community and Town Councils can and do play a vital role in taking on local services and working with communities to ensure they can remain in place and are sustainable for the future; particularly in the current challenging economic climate. The plenary session will highlight examples of practice from across Wales and promote the need for this activity to be carried out in a planned way.

Recommendations

7 Members are invited to:

- 7.1 Consider the draft revised Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix 1) with One Voice Wales and provide comments and/or suggest additional changes; and**
- 7.2 Approve the Memorandum of Understanding, subject to changes being made, prior to launch at the WLGA Annual Conference in June.**

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Appendix 1

Draft revised MOU between WLGA and OVW
Cover page – title, logos and date

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Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding is a statement of the working relationship and partnership between One Voice Wales and the Welsh Local Government Association. It sets out how both organisations will work together and with their membership to promote and support local democracy and public services.

Logos to be inserted

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Introduction

The Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013 in order to promote partnership and co-operation between the two statutory sectors of local government in Wales.

The Welsh Local Government Association represents the interests of the unitary authorities in Wales, having the role to promote better local government and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public services and democracy.

The Welsh Local Government Association represents all 22 unitary councils in Wales and the three fire and rescue authorities and the three national park authorities are associate members. One Voice Wales represents the interests of the community and town councils in Wales, being the body recognised by the Welsh Government to promote local democracy and deliver services by these bodies at a community level.

One Voice Wales comprises a network of over 670 member councils and in turn, over 7350 individual councillors. These member councils make up over 92% of the community and town councils in Wales, and the sector itself covers the vast majority of the country, with very few areas not covered by these local councils.

The Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales will work together to promote local democracy and sustainable public services in Wales and encourage partnership and mutual support amongst their member authorities.

They will:

- respect the mutual commitment to delivering the best outcomes for local communities.
- understand the different frameworks, structures and constraints in which the respective tiers of local government have to operate.
- recognise the changing political, legislative and financial context in which the agenda for local democracy and public services is driving forward.
- identify areas for improvement across the sectors in order to maximise the use of resources and to avoid unnecessary duplication of functions in the delivery of quality services.
- identify areas of joint work, where capacity and resources can be effectively coordinated to deliver complementary activity (such as member development) or specific policy or project work.

Principles

The Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales will work in partnership based on the following key principles:

- to demonstrate mutual respect and understanding of each organisation and their membership's circumstances, perspectives and priorities.
- to engage in meaningful communication and liaison between each other on behalf of the two respective sectors.
- to manage expectations and to set realistic and proportionate responses to any emerging challenges, priorities or proposals for joint activity.
- to agree manageable timescales for any necessary changes in the work or in the culture of relationships planned as a result of this partnership.
- to share relevant information and good practice as a means of enhancing the effectiveness of each other's operations which will be to the overall benefit of communities and towns throughout Wales.

Partnership

The membership of the Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales meets through the statutory Partnership Council.

The leadership of the Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales will also meet on a bilateral basis biannually to discuss areas of mutual interest, to consider strategic issues regarding local government and to agree to an ongoing programme of joint activity.

The Chief Executives and/or other officials will meet regularly and will be in ongoing dialogue regarding sharing intelligence and policy initiatives as well as managing any programme of joint activity.

Joint Work

A programme of joint work will be considered and agreed annually at the beginning of each financial year, to identify common policy interests and agree complementary or joint activities or project work. The programme of activity will be agreed at a bilateral meeting of the two organisations' leadership.

To support the joint working arrangements, there will be 2 leadership meetings and 3 officer meetings each year.

The specifics of any programme of joint work will be agreed annually, but may include the following exemplars:

- development of charters and communication and consultation between member councils,
- protocols and relationships between elected members,
- promoting collaboration and joint work within and between the tiers of local government
- seeking to avoid duplication of service delivery and explore delegation and devolution of services and associated funding or financial considerations for councils.

In addition to working in harmony and respecting and supporting each other's agendas, the Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales will also seek ways of working closer together and of developing potential joint projects or other partnership activities.

An example might be working together to develop new training programmes for member councils. Set out below are some examples of joint work already being undertaken and/or planned for 2024/25.

WLGA and One Voice Wales

Agreed Areas of Mutual Interest and Joint Working 2024/25:

- Work together on actions arising from the Democratic Health Task and Finish Group (due later 2024).
- Work together on actions arising from the Cabinet Secretary's programme on tackling abuse in politics.
- Continued joint work on:
 - the Community and Town Council Digital Health Programme.
 - the Local Places for Nature programme.
 - National Training and Advisory Group (NTAG) which includes WLGA representation.
 - OVW National Awards Scheme.
 - Climate Strategy panel.
 - Resourceful Community Partnership.
- Collaboration and Partnering - a joint seminar to share practice; joint letter from the Leader of WLGA and Chair of OVW encouraging collaboration; OVW having a conference spot at the WLGA annual conference in 2024 to highlight the role of Community and Town Councils in delivering sustainable place-based services and to launch a refreshed MoU.
- Further discussions on:
 - the role of Community and Town Councils and place-based services.
 - the development of Charters between the two tiers.
 - addressing election costs for Community and Town Councils.
 - the Community Asset Transfer agenda in light of the Ministerial Commission in 2024-25 and re-worked Ystadau Cymru sub-groups.
 - relationships between County Councillors and Community Councillors on the ground.
 - encouraging more commonality in the approach to community boundary reviews and WLGA and OVW working together on the provision of support for councils affected by boundary reviews.
 - WLGA working with OVW to encourage the creation of councils in those areas not having the benefit of a local council.
 - opportunities for further joint working on existing areas of interest for both organisations and members, for example, the cost-of-living crisis. WISERD (support for strong liaison between local government and Welsh academia); Code of Conduct Training for UA's by OVW; Annual Conference; promoting vacancies for Community and Town Council Clerks, procurement of services from local authorities e.g. legal advice and IT.

Monitoring/Review

The Welsh Local Government Association and One Voice Wales shall review the Memorandum and joint work programme annually and will publish any updates or amendments to this memorandum, by agreement, in their annual reports or other suitable documentation.

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