

P-04-666 – Democracy in Local Government

This petition was submitted by Royston Jones, having collected 144 signatures.

Text of the Petition

In recent years we have observed a trend in Welsh local government that has seen unelected officers effectively take control of local authorities.

This is invariably achieved with the connivance of a small group of councillors who commit their loyalty to senior officers rather than to the council to which they were elected and those living within the local authority area.

A phenomenon that raises a number of concerns.

1. When power is exercised by senior officers and elected representatives are, effectively, excluded from the decision-making process then, clearly, the democratic process has been undermined, and democratic accountability lost.

2. Excluding the majority of the elected representatives from any role other than the cosmetic must call into question why cash-strapped councils need to pay so much money in various forms to political eunuchs.

We therefore call on the Welsh Government to be aware of this threat to local democracy and where it becomes clear that senior officers are exerting an unhealthy and undemocratic influence over the running of any local authority to warn that authority publicly that decision-making powers rest solely with the elected

representatives and, where such a warning is not heeded, to take that authority into special measures.

Additional information

Senior local government officers, no matter what their qualifications or how inflated their salaries, remain employees of the council and servants to the electorate and the wider population. That they should subvert democracy by taking over the running of the local authorities that employ them is both unacceptable and dangerous.

Yet this is the situation we find in a number of our local authorities, but for reasons best known to itself the Welsh Government has turned a blind eye to the situation, even though the problem of officer domination has been obvious for a number of years.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Dwyfor Meirionydd
- Mid and West Wales