



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Support for Financial Management and Governance in the
Community and Town Council Sector in Wales in 2020-21**

DATE **12 February 2020**

BY **Julie James, Minister for Housing and Local Government**

Community and town councils are an integral part of local government; democratically accountable and working at the most local level to improve their communities.

The latest report from the Auditor General for Wales, “*Financial Management and Governance in Town and Community Councils 2018-19*” published on 5 February, noted that “...only 66% of councils published their accounts by the statutory deadline of 30 September 2019” and that “...significant problems led to public interest reports being issued on 12 councils.”

I want to ensure that all councils have the tools to meet their statutory requirements and to have strong governance to support their communities. Meanwhile, a number of community councils are thriving. They are ready to take on additional responsibilities and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill proposes new powers for eligible councils i.e. the General Power of Competence (GPoC).

In recognition of the support needed, I am making available up to £500,000 of funding in 2020-21 to strengthen the financial management and governance across the sector. This additional investment will be in addition to the annual general support provided to the sector by the Welsh Government and will reflect the relevant areas the Welsh Government has committed to take action following the *Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales*.

I have asked my officials to immediately begin work with partners in One Voice Wales, The Society for Local Council Clerks and the WLGA to develop creative proposals for a support package to boost the governance infrastructure across the sector. The priorities for this work will be a short term boost in training and support for clerks and councillors, and development of a sustainable, self-improvement approach for councils which we will co-develop with partners. Our goal is to significantly lift the confidence in council governance arrangements and lay a strong foundation for the future.

In the longer term, I want to work with the community and town councils, and our partners, to develop sustainable proposals for enhancing the infrastructure of governance and support for the sector, based on the findings from the independent review. I hope to consult more broadly on these proposals by the end of this year.

In the meantime, I urge all councils to consider strengthening their financial management and governance arrangements through the additional opportunities that will be made available in 2020-21.