

Dear Clerk

Please bring this letter to the attention of your Chair and Councillors.

Membership of One Voice Wales 2020/21

I am writing to invite your council to renew its membership to join One Voice Wales from April 2020. Once again, the past year has seen many positive developments to our services, many of which are outlined in this letter, which we believe add significantly to the value for money offered by One Voice Wales membership.

We continue to represent the sector on the **Local Government Partnership Council** – during 2019-20 we have made strong representation on the role the sector can play in supporting sustainable local services and supporting the Local Government Reform agenda – indeed One Voice Wales provided a comprehensive response to the Local Government and Elections Bill consultation. We have developed even stronger working relationships with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) strengthening the voice of the sector within the public services family in Wales. One Voice Wales continued to make significant contributions to public policy developments through our representation on several Welsh Government advisory panels including the **National Assets Working Group**, the **External Advisory Group on Community Asset Transfer**, **Welsh Government Community Resilience Forum** addressing issues of community resilience, **Welsh Government Litter Advisory Panel**, **Ministerial Advisory Forum on Ageing**, **Electoral Reform Board**, **NAfW Cross Party Group on Fuel Poverty** and **the National Training and Advisory Group**. One Voice Wales is playing an ever increasing role in the development resources for the sector and during the year has represented the sector on the **Understanding Welsh Places** Advisory Group which has developed a data and information resource for community and town councils with a population greater than 1,000 people – launched in October 2019. We continue to work collaboratively with a range of other bodies including the **Local Government Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales**, **Independent Remuneration Panel**, **Public Services Ombudsman** and **Wales Audit Office**. So, our ability to influence key stakeholder organisations continues to grow.

There are exciting and challenging times ahead for Community and Town Councils in Wales and we will continue to develop our lobbying and representational roles especially in relation to the outcomes of the **Local Government and Elections Bill**. Work has already begun with Welsh Government and WLGA colleagues in developing actions to address the key findings and this will continue into our 2020/21 work programme.

Our representational role means that **we have direct interface not only with the Minister for Local Government and Housing but other Ministers** where our sector's remit extends. During 2019-20 we made several representations to the **Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services** on a range of matters but importantly on the need for greater resources for the sector, the need for skills and capabilities to be developed, devolution of services and asset transfer agenda. During 2019-20 we have extended our

representational role - One Voice Wales' many Councillors across Wales are increasingly able to provide their views on a wide range of policy areas to support our lobbying activities and **influence government and stakeholder organisations** in their decision-making. This includes representation on health trust stakeholder forums and several **Public Services Boards**. These developments have improved and further developed our representational and lobbying roles and we will seek to further develop them in 2020-21.

Some of our other accomplishments over the past 12 months include:

- Hannah Blythyn Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government attended our National Conference, we held our second newly named **Innovative Practice Conference** in July 2019 and our **7th joint training conference** with the **SLCC** (Society of Local Council Clerks)
- Held our **3rd National Awards scheme and Innovative Practice Conference**.
- **Area Committees** continue to play an influential role locally, with many appointments to Public Service Boards, Local Development Plan Stakeholder Groups, Rural Development Partnerships, Standards Committees and the like now being proposed by Area Committees. One Voice Wales has become much more visible at the local level

As current members are aware, we provide the following services and we are aware from feedback by our members that all aspects of the service are highly valued.

- **Provision of free legal advice** from a team of experienced Solicitors which can save members significant time and cost compared with using local solicitors for advice (These savings can in many cases exceed the membership that is payable)
- **Quality and timely advice and support service** on topics relevant to member councils.
- **Training** for members and staff, including policy seminars and new working opportunities.
- **General information via our website including a members' area.**
- **Monthly** editions of our new '**E- Newsletter**'
- **Representation** of the sector on the Local Government Partnership Council.
- Creating **new opportunities for collaboration** with national organisations across Wales.

The training and development agenda is another area where much progress has been made during 2019-20. Under the auspices of the **National Training Advisory Group**, chaired by One Voice Wales, we have continued to refine and develop and extend our training provision to the community and town council sector including a successful bid to Welsh Government for support to update and improve the content of our training materials with the development of 7 e-learning modules. Once again, the breadth of our training programmes has been extended and will be available to members throughout the year. During 2019-20 we provided over XXXX units of training to the sector.

Furthermore, our **Consultancy Services** have been growing at a pace with many councils taking advantage of this service. We are increasingly able to provide 'One Stop Shop' solutions for our members and have supported our councils on **community planning exercises, accountancy services, technical VAT advice, HR and personnel matters including representation at Industrial Tribunals**, assisted in **policy development and health and safety** – and at **costs significantly below market rates**. We are also now able to offer consultancy support in relation to community planning and engagement. Please contact the Ammanford Office if you would like further details on how we can support you through these services.

Importantly our role as a representative body has been significantly improved with a significant growth in our membership during 2019-20 – for the first time **we broke the 620 councils in membership level and at year end we had 625 local councils in membership or nearly 85% of all community and town councils**.

I hope that this summary of current and future developments has demonstrated that One Voice Wales continues to do all it can to represent the sector and provide a high class information and support service for our members.

In order for your council to have a voice in the future of this vital sector of local government, and to benefit from the support provided by One Voice Wales, please complete the Membership Form which will come to you in the post in the next few working days and return to Tracy Gilmartin-Ward at our office in Ammanford.

If you have any further queries relating to membership, please contact the office on 01269 595400 or email: tgilmartinward@onevoicewales.wales

I trust that your Council will give this invitation full consideration and I hope to be able to welcome you into membership shortly. I look forward to working with your council in 2020-2021.

Yours sincerely,



Lyn Cadwallader
Chief Executive