

Summary
document

RENEWING LOCAL DEMOCRACY |

The Next Steps



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Making it work together

RENEWING LOCAL DEMOCRACY : THE NEXT STEPS

Summary

1. This document lists the conclusions reached in *Renewing Local Democracy: The Next Steps*, published by the Scottish Executive on Wednesday 27 March 2002, and the various questions on which Ministers have asked for views. While this summary gives a broad indication of the conclusions reached in the document, anyone with a particular interest in the subject and anyone who wishes to respond to the Executive's request for views on the issues raised, should obtain a copy of the full document. Inevitably, while this summary provides some indication of the issues covered in the full document, it cannot provide the same contextual analysis of the issues discussed and the options proposed.

2. The full text of the document is available on the Scottish Executive website at www.scotland.gov.uk or by contacting Angela Stewart. Her address is Local Government Constitution and Governance Division, Area 3H, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ. Her telephone number and e-mail address are 0131 244 1477 and angela.stewart@scotland.gsi.gov.uk respectively.

3. This summary is also available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gaelic, Hindu, Punjabi and Urdu, and in large print, from the same address. Comments on the document should be sent to Angela Stewart as soon as possible, and, at the latest, by 31 July 2002.

Chapter 1: Introduction

4. Ministers are not planning a review of council boundaries or a reduction in the number of councils in the foreseeable future, and that they have concluded that they do not wish to make a wholesale reduction in the number of councillors at this time.

Chapter 2: Removing Barriers

5. Ministers :

5.1 intend to discuss with CoSLA, local authorities and other bodies ways in which progress with making councils more representative of the communities they serve can be stimulated;

5.2 are committed to bringing the age for standing as a councillor (21) into line with the voting age (18) when a suitable legislative opportunity arises;

5.3 are committed to repealing the legislation establishing a salary threshold for politically restricted posts within local authorities and amending the legislation dealing with the requirement for council employees to resign on nomination as a candidate when a suitable legislative opportunity arises;

5.4 intend to draw up non-statutory guidance providing advice on and establishing criteria for defining 'posts providing policy advice' to ensure a consistent approach in future.

5.5 will bring forward legislation to remove the existing restrictions on the use which councils can make of electronic communications for arranging and conducting meetings in the Local Government in Scotland Bill to be introduced to Parliament in April 2002.

6. Ministers would be grateful for views on:

6.1 the restrictions which apply to former councillors who wish to seek employment with the council after their period of service comes to an end; and

6.2 whether the political restrictions relating to other groups of public sector employees are also artificially restricting the field of candidates for election and, if so, whether public bodies should be encouraged to adopt a similar approach to that proposed for council employees.

Chapter 3: Electoral Reform

7. Ministers would be grateful to know:

7.1 respondents' views on the issues relating to electoral reform raised in the chapter;

7.2 whether respondents agree with the principles for determining the most appropriate electoral system for local government recommended by the McIntosh Commission and adopted by the Kerley Group;

7.3 whether respondents agree with the priority which the Kerley Group attached to the first 2 principles; and

7.4 whether respondents agree with the Kerley recommendation of STV as the most appropriate electoral system for local government in Scotland?

Chapter 4: Remuneration

8. Ministers are committed to changing the current system of councillors' allowances, and to establishing some form of pension provision for councillors. They would also like to know:

8.1 whether respondents are in favour of the possibility of introducing local or national remuneration committees in future, independent of councils;

8.2 whether respondents agree that the current system of allowances needs to be overhauled;

8.3 whether any of the allowance based options set out in the paper should be adopted in the short or long term;

8.4 whether councillors should be paid a salary in future, and the level at which any such salary should be paid;

- 8.5 whether the salary paid should vary according to the size of the council area, or whether the amounts should be standardised across Scotland;
- 8.6 whether a salary should be paid to all councillors, or whether there is a case for distinguishing between those with less onerous responsibilities who are therefore paid allowances, and those with particularly heavy responsibilities who are therefore paid a salary;
- 8.7 whether an MSP's salary provides an appropriate comparator for those councillors who carry the greatest responsibilities as the Kerley Group suggested, or whether there are other more appropriate comparisons to be made;
- 8.8 whether decisions about which councillors should receive additional elements of salary should be the responsibility of a remuneration committee, at local or national level;
- 8.9 whether there should be a 'quota' set for the number of councillors who should receive additional salary elements;
- 8.10 whether pension provision for councillors should be made through salary or through the Local Government Pension Scheme; and
- 8.11 whether respondents have views on the issue of severance pay.

Chapter 5: Powers, Resources and Structures

9. Ministers propose to abolish the existing system of local authority capital consents in the forthcoming Local Government in Scotland Bill. They would welcome views on:
- 9.1 whether there is an obvious lead body (or bodies) to provide an improvement service;
- 9.2 whether a new body should be created to provide such a service;
- 9.3 whether a partnership or consortium of existing agencies would be the best way forward;
- 9.4 if so, which agencies should be involved in such a partnership;
- 9.5 whether individual providers should be asked to bid for work to be carried out as a result of the provision of such a service;
- 9.6 possible options for continuing the Leadership Advisory Panel process;
- 9.7 the timing of such further work;
- 9.8 best practice in joint officer/member training;
- 9.9 ways in which groups of people, such as young people, can be involved in the work of the council; and

9.10 any possible implications for the co-option of non-elected members to the new decision making structures which councils are adopting as a result of the LAP process.

For further information please contact

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