

Cardiff Council's Response to Consultation on the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Bill

Re: section on changes to Chair of Council/Lord Mayor

Cardiff Council is supportive of the new proposed section 51 of the Bill.

The Council already has a desire to split these roles and is actively taking steps to do so. A report debated at the full Council meeting on the 17 May 2012 resolved that:

1. the proposals to pursue the separation of the functions of the Chairman into two distinct functions: a "Chair of Council" (with a political governance and administrative remit) and a "Lord Mayor" (with ceremonial and civic functions) as set out in the report be approved;

2. delegated authority be granted to the Chief Officer Legal & Democratic Services to pursue such separation of functions."

Both the administrative and civic functions are key roles for the Council. The Chair of Council is the focus for effective governance and impartial chairing to ensure the smooth running of the Council meeting and that all members have a voice in the Council proceedings. This includes:

- (a) upholding and promoting the purposes of and interpreting the Constitution;
- (b) ensuring the business of meetings is dealt with efficiently, with respect for the rights of Councillors and in the interests of the community; and
- (c) ensuring that Council meetings provide the opportunity for proper debate and for Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet are able to hold the Cabinet to account.

Separation of the administrative functions would enable the Chair to carry out their duties and be chosen on the basis of their suitability for ensuring good governance free from the civic functions that may be distracting, competing or requiring a different skill set.

Similarly, separation of functions would enable the civic functions of the Lord Mayor to stand in their own right – recognising the importance of the civic functions to the city. The position of Lord Mayor is seen as providing a sense of tradition and continuity to civic functions that is believed to be beneficial to the city's commercial and social interests and tourism. It is proposed that separation of functions would enable the Lord Mayor to concentrate on and be selected solely on their suitability for these civic functions.

We note that the creation of the Presiding Officer position would enable such separation and are therefore fully supportive of the proposal.