



Localism 2016-21

A plan for public services in Wales

November 2015

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

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1. The most important Welsh election since devolution

- 1.1 The National Assembly for Wales elections in May 2016 come at a crucial juncture for public services across Wales. The election of a Conservative Government at Westminster in May 2015 sees a renewed focus on deficit reduction and a plan to take the nation's finances into surplus by 2020. The Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt. Hon George Osborne MP has asked that government departments model further cuts on a range between 25% and 40% for the forthcoming November 2015 Spending Review. The consequence of this is further austerity and deep reductions to balance the public finances, with local government services at the forefront of these changes.
- 1.2 As a consequence, Welsh Government finances have effectively flat-lined over the last 5 years which has resulted in real terms cuts to its budget. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimates that the total block grant allocated by the UK Government to Wales in 2015-16 is set to be 12.2% lower in real terms than that in 2010-11 (after adjusting for the transfer of funding for council tax benefit to the Welsh Government).
- 1.3 Following a short period of relative protection for local government in Wales, the past two years have seen 'English style cuts'. The WLGA estimates that £720m has been cut from local services since 2010. The Welsh Government's decision to protect NHS funding in 2013 and the on-going protection of schools by 1% above the Welsh Block since 2010 sees the majority of unprotected preventative services in councils locked into a process of serious decline. Core funding for non-schools will have fallen by a quarter in real terms by the end of 2015-16. With further huge cuts to follow the future of these services is in question. Some could fail and some could disappear altogether.
- 1.4 This will mean that the five-year term of the next Welsh Government could see the most profound changes to our councils. The sustainability of key services is at stake.

2. "The first cut is the deepest?" - continuing austerity

- 2.1 Demand management is increasingly replacing the traditional operating model of providing "blanket" services to our communities. There is a greater variety of service providers and alternative delivery models including the emergence of community trusts, local authority trading companies and mutuals. There is greater innovation and wider use of digital technology together with new approaches involving our employees in flexible working, hot-desking and divesting underused assets. Councils are delivering services at the regional level, setting up new merged services, sharing posts and jointly procuring services.
- 2.2 For public services, such a focus requires new ways of doing business. In addition to alternative and community delivery models, there is a need to share both inputs and outcomes with partners like Health, "blue light" services and the third sector. Delivery would involve a re-imagining of Local Service Boards to purposeful Public Service Boards, with partners agreeing outcomes, pooling resources, sharing systems, data, evidence and needs assessments and jointly commissioning services, and a shift to preventative services characterised by a focus on outcomes not delivery mechanisms.
- 2.3 In particular, we should be clear that if we are to reform public services and grow our economy in the face of cuts, we need to develop responses which are sensitive to the complexities of place. The reality is that this simply isn't possible at an all-Wales level. Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Conwy are very different places and need the freedom to develop different responses within an overarching outcomes and funding framework set by the Welsh Government. This is what the WLGA sees as the core principle of localism.
- 2.4 This will only go part of the way to meet the challenges ahead. The uncomfortable reality is that services are being cut and

many jobs are being lost. Unprotected non-statutory local services are struggling and authorities are being forced to close libraries, day centres, leisure centres and other facilities. At the same time, charges are increasing across a range of services from social care to environmental services. There are unavoidable financial pressures building up in the wage bill, national insurance and the growing costs of redundancies.

2.5 In 2012 the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) report on local government expenditure in Wales showed that, until 2009-10, spend had been increasing in real terms by around 5% each year. This kept pace with inflation and service pressures. From 2009-10, spend has been reducing in real terms; had expenditure kept pace with general inflation it would now be over £7bn. The resulting gap of £720m represents a conservative estimate of the cuts and efficiency savings achieved so far.

2.6 Services vital to economic growth and the general well-being of communities, such as transport, housing, libraries, cultural services, planning and regulatory services have already faced budget reductions of between 20% and 50%. Some authorities are now looking for further reductions of between 40% and 50% in these areas of spend. It is anticipated that there will be a cumulative budget shortfall of £941m by 2019-20. In this context it is vital that the increasingly outdated finance formula which underpins funding distribution is reformed to properly reflect deprivation and sparsity and the challenges of the future. Equally, more planning certainty would be provided to local councils by the reintroduction of multiyear finance settlements.

3. Prevention is better than cure

3.1 In Wales, significant progress has been made through partnership working in terms of enacting the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014, and in the introduction of factors such as an intermediate care fund (ICF). This progress has been significant. However, the policy developments and investments that have taken place in England point to an ambitious agenda. For example, Greater Manchester's proposals

for a combined health and social care budget will see a £6bn pooled budget between the NHS and local government. As the Kings Fund have stated, "the Greater Manchester proposals offer one route for strategic joint commissioning across a number of local systems, with the single commissioner role taking place at local authority/CCG [Clinical Commissioning Group] level."

3.2 In a wider context, the UK Government announced the 'Better Care Fund' (BCF) in the June 2013 spending round (now totalling £5.3bn), to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care. The BCF is a single pooled budget to support health and social care services to work more closely together in local areas. The original intention was for the fund to support adult social care services that have health benefits, helping people to remain healthy and independent within the community. In summer 2014, the emphasis changed to reducing emergency hospital admissions and achieving financial savings, with a proportion of the fund now linked directly to performance against these goals.

3.3 Despite significant structural reform in recent years, coupled with record investment, the NHS appears unable to meet existing and predicted demands. The recent problems of the Betsi Cadwaladr Local Health Board, the largest public sector organization in Wales, clearly demonstrate that economies of scale do not always provide the answer. The key issue for the new Welsh Government will be to shift the priorities from hospitals to prevention and public health. It has been the WLGA's consistent policy that the latter function should be located in local government as is the case in England.

3.4 Wales needs to rapidly accelerate and embrace a new and radical approach to health and social care integration with local government at the heart of this. In the recent period, the Welsh Government has increased investment in the Welsh NHS by more than £400m. This means the total budget for Health and Social Services in Wales in 2015-16 will be £6.7bn, a record high. This includes a recent £70m consequential in addition to the extra £295m being invested by the Welsh Government in health and social care in 2015-16. This means the budget for

Health and Social Services in Wales in 2015-16 will account for just under 50% of the total Welsh Government budget. In addition, the UK Government has pledged to protect the NHS with a guaranteed £8bn increase in spending per year above inflation by 2020. If this works on a basis of a Barnett Consequential this would see additional monies come into Wales over the next 4 years. If meaningful integration across health and social care is to occur, it needs a step change and these resources could be the driver of this.

- 3.5 Now is the time to invest new monies in local government preventative services. In Children's Services, we know that investment in early years and safeguarding helps ensure that children are afforded equal opportunity to reach their full potential. Local government has a key role to play in promoting physical activity and offering community support. This approach would fully chime with the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act in Wales.
- 3.6 This is not just a view from within local government, it is shared by the Chief Executive of NHS England Simon Stevens who, in the seminal report, "Five Year Forward View" published in October 2014, argued "we need to get serious about prevention." As he stated, "the future health of millions of children, the sustainability of the NHS, and the economic prosperity of Britain all now depend on a radical upgrade in prevention and public health. Twelve years ago, Derek Wanless' health review warned that unless the country took prevention seriously we would be faced with a sharply rising burden of avoidable illness. That warning has not been heeded - and the NHS is on the hook for the consequences."

4. Welfare, skills and employment

- 4.1 Local government continues to have a crucial role in welfare reform. It will retain housing benefit working age claimants until the transfer of housing benefit to Universal Credit is completed in 2018. It appears that pension age housing benefit will remain with councils for the foreseeable future. It is important that

the housing benefit administration subsidy continues, to ensure councils are properly resourced until the transfer is completed. Local government needs assurance from the Welsh Government that it will fulfil its promise to review the funding of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS).

- 4.2 The UK's £13bn employment and skills budget is spent through 28 national funds and is supplemented by the Welsh Government's own programmes. This cannot be efficient, and outcomes vary considerably. Local areas need powers, funding and responsibilities to plan employment and skills investment in their local area. In return, councils can reduce long-term unemployment and better serve local employers' current and future skills demands.
- 4.3 The UK Government can achieve this through the introduction of more localist solutions to labour market problems. Across the UK, the Government should devolve or co-commission almost £3bn in employment and skills funding, including the Flexible Support Fund and the Work Programme. It is the view of the WLGA and LGA that Jobcentre Plus and the maze of national reengagement schemes should be scrapped - to be replaced with a locally-led Youth Transitions Service giving every 14 to 24-year-old the advice, experience and support to participate in education, training or work.
- 4.4 Many of the recurrent themes within this Manifesto document also apply to the issues affecting the local government workforce and the management of the workforce in these extremely challenging times. Themes such as honesty, transparency and respect are paramount. These principles should govern all workforce issues from an internal perspective, and will also ensure value for money for the tax payer from the pay bill.
- 4.5 We accept that there have been a very few high profile occasions across the UK where it has appeared that these principles may not have been fully implemented. However, these cases are far from the norm, and clearly sufficient checks and balances already exist to

ensure they were identified and dealt with. No doubt, there were lessons learned. However, we do not believe that there should be further regulation based more on media attention than real evidence of systematic problems of mismanagement of workforce issues within local government.

- 4.6 Other themes go straight to the heart of the democratic principle and the need for councils to be able to exercise autonomy and control over the workforce in their own locality, as individual sovereign employers should be entitled and expected to do. Democratically elected councillors are best placed to determine how to shape the workforce to deliver services most cost-effectively in the face of unprecedented cuts. Different councils face different challenges and have varied starting points and goals. One size does not fit all and councils need the flexibility to make and implement decisions on recruiting and restructuring (including decisions relating to pay) that are designed locally to best meet the needs of the communities they serve. Working closely with Trade Unions in this setting is paramount.
- 4.7 Sustainability for the future is a key principle which must underpin the work of councils in Wales. The degree of sustainability of the workforce will, to a large degree, determine the success or failure of councils in weathering the current and coming storms. Nowhere is this more important than at senior levels where Welsh councils must attract, recruit and retain high quality leaders from as wide a spectrum as possible. The responsibilities of senior posts in local government are considerable and the rewards often far less than in other sectors, particularly the private sector. It is essential that we seek to make a senior career in local government in Wales an attractive opportunity. This will not be achieved by removing employment safeguards or depressing rewards under the guise of 'value for money'.

5. Localism and local government reorganisation

- 5.1 The WLGA is fully committed to radical public services reform and fully accepts the need for change.
- 5.2 As we approach the Assembly elections however, the position on local government reorganisation in Wales remains uncertain. There is no consensus on the way forward across, and often within, the Assembly's political parties. The process is equally contested in local government. The impact of this ongoing uncertainty on the morale of the people who work in local government cannot be overstated.
- 5.3 In June 2015, the Welsh Government added to the four options already set out in the Williams report by producing two further maps of 8 or 9 councils in Wales. It stated that any future reorganisation would be based on further consultation and a manifesto commitment aimed at achieving a renewed mandate following the 2016 elections. Nonetheless, the reality is that reorganisation will not happen until 2020 at the earliest. There is no clarity over costs, or how it would be funded.
- 5.4 While Welsh Government has outlined timescales and a range of options, the detail and fully costed financial case have yet to be worked up. The outcome of the Assembly elections inevitably creates further uncertainty for the process of reorganisation. Given the collective challenges faced, it is critical that the new Welsh Government and local government commence an urgent and constructive debate on the future of local government post May 2016.
- 5.5 Fundamentally, local government is the key partner for the Welsh Government in delivering its broad social and economic outcomes. This is recognised fully in the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act 2015. Local services provide the bedrock of safer, more cohesive and fairer communities. In this setting, councils are the key democratic bodies charged with the role of governing their locality and representing it. To do that they must have autonomy, financial

security and control of their own localities. This is the essence of localism.

5.6 In supporting the concept of a Constitutional Convention across the UK, the UK Forum (the four local government associations including the WLGA, LGA (England), COSLA (Scotland) and NILGA (Northern Ireland) and, in turn, the WLGA Council, has endorsed the following core principles which should underpin devolution and localism:

- **We must establish a principle of subsidiarity; the presumption that power is transferred to the level of government closest to the people.** We recognise that there is a case for some powers to rest nationally. However, this should only happen when there is an explicit demonstration that the activity being delivered nationally will result in better outcomes. We want to see real momentum behind the devolution of powers beyond Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont to local government and to local communities.
- **We want the legal position of local government to be secured and enhanced.** At the moment, local government is entirely a creature of devolved authority from “higher” bodies. Our communities want to be able to make local decisions for themselves. We need to consider a defined set of powers and responsibilities which sets out what local government can support at the local level so that we can design public services which are most appropriate to local need.
- **We want greater fiscal autonomy for local government.** Our centralised system of public finance is inefficient and stymies economic growth. We are ready for greater responsibility for funding at a local level to improve public services and ensure that local residents and business see how their money is used.

- **We want the full adoption of the principles set out in the European Charter of Local Self Government.** This document was signed up to by the UK Government in 1996 who agreed to apply all of the Charter’s provisions for England, Wales and Scotland. The Charter sets out core principles on the role and purpose of local government and embodies a range of fundamental baselines. It is the view of the UK Forum that the European Charter of Local Self Government should form part of the new constitutional settlement for the UK voluntarily signed up to by Westminster and the devolved administrations.

5.7 The WLGA Manifesto seeks to enshrine this ethos and urges all political parties in Wales to embrace a localist approach, to invest in local preventative services, to support Welsh communities in a bi-lingual nation, and in doing so revitalise local democracy and help create “the Wales We Want”.

6 ‘It’s good to talk’ - a new understanding between elected government in Wales

6.1 The WLGA has established an Independent Commission on Local Government Finance chaired by Professor Tony Travers of the London School of Economics to consider future perspectives on funding and examine new ways of funding local councils. The Commission will be taking evidence across government and we look forward to the publication of its findings in due course.

6.2 Underpinning our decision to establish the Travers Commission was the view from elected members that the seriousness of the current economic situation needs a new understanding between Welsh Government and local government. We need shared appreciation of the impact of austerity, and joint ownership of solutions that will sustain services. WLGA members contend that these solutions should focus on significantly increasing flexibility, managing risk differently, and ensuring that Welsh Ministers have accurate, impartial and transparent information regarding the likely

- consequences of cutting local government funding arising from policy choices. The recent announcement of the localisation of business rates in England show that other areas of the UK are seriously addressing the issue of the balance of funding between central and local government.
- 6.3 We also now need a Welsh equivalent to the Office of Budget Responsibility to provide a rolling, independent and authoritative analysis of Wales's public finances. Such a body would sit outside of Welsh Government to assess the long-term sustainability of public finances and subject spending measures to detailed scrutiny and challenge.
- 6.4 The WLGA believes that there should be more equal treatment across services. Schools have been protected for over 5 years since 2010 at 1% over the 'Welsh Block'. Now is the time to remove this national target and let councils and schools set budgets locally in the context of seeking cashable efficiencies. Taking forward public services reform needs more open and honest dialogue between the Welsh Government and local government.
- 6.5 There is ample evidence in key services to demonstrate that when the Welsh Government and local government work together closely remarkable results follow. Take for example the excellent performance of Welsh councils in waste management. Wales' councils have the highest average recycling rate in the UK, according to the latest figures; recycling 56% of household waste in 2014/15, with seven councils hitting the 58% target a year early.
- 6.6 Improving recycling rates will become more challenging in the future, thus it is vital to build a consensual way forward. This includes the need for increased efforts to reduce wasteful packaging. It will also require a review of the 70% statutory recycling targets to identify what needs to happen to move from the current year's 58% target to 70% by 2024/25, including a cost-benefit analysis of the steps required. Increased recycling includes food waste treatment, which helps to reduce biodegradable materials being sent to landfill. This also impacts on emissions of greenhouse gases and represents an important part of local authorities' contribution to tackling climate change. WLGA welcomes the Welsh Government's Green Growth Wales initiative that embraces all forms of resource efficiency including the encouragement of renewable energy generation.
- 6.7 Positive central-local relations produce improvement and results. The development of the National Model for Regional Working, the school improvement consortia and the national categorisation model are all examples of a joined-up approach between local and central government. This partnership has resulted in increased levels of funding delegated to schools and a process of rationalisation of education grants.
- 6.8 These developments are not ends in themselves but part of a collaborative approach aimed at raising standards, improving outcomes and breaking the link between poverty and attainment. There is significant evidence that this strategy is having an impact. Performance at GCSE and A level are at a record high. Other indicators such as attendance figures and secondary school absences all confirm that improvement is starting to gain momentum.
- 6.9 Local authority performance indicators have broadly improved year on year during the past Assembly term and, despite some significant challenges in some service areas, the WLGA expects that by 2016, none of Wales' local authorities will be in special measures for education services.
- 6.10 This partnership approach to services extends beyond education to meet the needs of the wider economy and society as a whole. A good education enables individuals to fulfil their potential but also contributes to the wider benefit of communities. Education must be part of an integrated approach to skills, employment and growing the economy. This can translate into better childcare provision for parents and a more integrated approach to capital investment in school buildings so that communities' needs for libraries, leisure centres and arts facilities are considered when planning and building new schools.

- 6.11 The 21st Century Schools programme is an excellent example of an initiative developed jointly by central and local government but together we must ensure that the initial vision of community-focused schools becomes a reality that benefits the people and communities of Wales.
- 6.12 The same principles would apply for the growth-agenda, though in this case the spatial scale is necessarily different. In local government we are developing responses at the sub-national level which reflect economic geographies, not a one-size-fits all approach for Wales. In South East Wales and the Swansea Bay area this means a city-region approach. The Cardiff City Deal has been driven by local government and is backed by the 10 authorities. It has the potential to provide a direct investment of up to £1bn over the next 10 to 15 years - and of course its multiplier effect would have a much bigger impact. Leaders in the Cardiff Capital Region are taking this agenda forward, by committing to regionalise economic development and business support functions, and consolidating currently fragmented regional resources as part of a City Deal proposal.
- 6.13 In North Wales the Economic Ambition Board has worked with Welsh Government and been at the heart of developing the new prison in Wrexham and lobbying for new infrastructure, particularly in terms of road, rail and digital. The board sees the six councils enhancing collaborative working by Local Authorities to embrace economic growth and to work with higher and further education to generate a regional skills plan and web portal.
- 6.14 The 'Growing Mid Wales' initiative brings together the councils of Ceredigion and Powys. The private sector is represented on the partnership through the Mid Wales Economic Forum, the Local Growth Zones (LGZ) and representatives from higher and further education, tourism and other business sectors. The themes identified by 'Growing Mid Wales' as being of importance to the local economy include regeneration, housing, town centre vibrancy and viability, skills and workforce training, and the heritage and culture of rural Wales.
- 6.15 Swansea Bay City region encompasses the four local authority areas of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire. An Economic Regeneration Strategy has been developed and a City Region Board has been established to oversee development in the region. The strategy is designed to accelerate the region's economic growth so that the gap with the performance of the rest of the UK in terms of wealth creation can be reduced. A plan of action has been agreed as part of an ambitious economic growth plan for the region. Members of the Board have also held early stage discussions over the possibility of seeking a city deal for the area to boost the economy, with a particular focus on renewable energy, building on the development of the tidal lagoon in Swansea.
- 6.16 As the examples above demonstrate, a partnership approach across the range of service delivery has been vigorously pursued. This takes place within an overarching framework of central-local relations. Ultimately, this is the key factor that sets the tone for the interface across the tiers of elected government in Wales. It also provides the necessary checks and balances characteristic of every successful modern political system. The arrangements that govern and manage this relationship must therefore be robust, must stand the test of time and must be above the ebb and flow of day-to-day politics. We need to review and refresh the frameworks of central-local relations with an aim to codify the relationship and ensure that devolved and local government work together even more effectively post May 2016.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The issues highlighted in this paper consider a number of the challenges that will face the Welsh Government and councils over the next Assembly term. The period 2016 to 2020 will essentially define the shape and role of local government into the future. Weathering the storm of cuts and austerity is the political imperative of all councils in this period.

7.2 Whatever happens in the 2016 National Assembly elections, local government reorganisation is at least 4 years away and any subsequent efficiency savings that may accrue are unlikely to be achieved for a further 3 years at the earliest estimates.

7.3 The new Welsh Government must urgently prioritise what it can do now to secure and sustain services and most importantly support the communities who rely upon them. The following priorities, based on the above principles of localism, will help local authorities respond to local challenges and needs and contribute to the delivery of national ambitions and outcomes

Local Government Top Priorities:

What can the Welsh Government do to help councils deliver on national outcomes and prioritise the services that matter most to communities in Wales?

FINANCE

- 1) Commit to fully cost and fund any new Welsh Government initiatives or legislation.
- 2) Properly commit to multiyear financial settlements so councils can plan more effectively and support the Welsh Government's longer-term 'Future Generations' ambitions.
- 3) Establish an independent Welsh based "Office of Budget Responsibility" model to provide a rolling independent and authoritative analysis of Wales's public finances.

- 4) Give local authorities the necessary freedom to make spending and cost recovery choices locally. One measure to achieve this is to dramatically reduce the number of specific grants and transferring the £916m attached to them into the RSG; this has happened in Scotland and to a large extent in England, it is vital it occurs in Wales.
- 5) Urgently reform the increasingly outdated finance formula which underpins funding to properly reflect deprivation and sparsity and the challenges of the future.
- 6) Create a new £20m capacity fund for local government to merge services and to digitalise delivery where applicable and explore alternative delivery models such as mutuals, cooperatives and social enterprises.
- 7) Change Big Lottery Fund criteria to allow grant funding to support council-run community services, particularly those most at threat such as libraries and leisure centres.
- 8) Explore new income sources, such as a localised Tourist Tax on foreign visitors.
- 9) Invest monies raised from the plastic bags levy in local authority front line services. This would see an additional £17m to £22m invested in vital front-line services.

LOCAL FREEDOM AND FLEXIBILITY

- 10) The new Welsh Government to work closely with the WLGA and hold an urgent summit of the 22 council leaders and senior ministers, to discuss the future of local government in Wales and fully embrace localism.
- 11) The new Welsh Government to provide immediate clarity on the future shape and costs of structural change to Welsh local government.
- 12) Recommit to a partnership approach to governance and central-local relations aimed at creating a stronger "Team Wales" approach.

- 13) Free up local government from central bureaucracy releasing further efficiency savings in central administration costs and encourage in turn the development of place-based, integrated public services.
- 14) Reduce the burden of audit and inspection. This has occurred already in England and Scotland.
- 15) Support an approach to locally directed self-improvement and peer review.

SCHOOLS

- 16) Keep pre-16 education within local government and continue to fund schools through the Revenue Support Grant. Retain the current statutory position and ensure that schools function within a framework of local democratic control.
- 17) Reject the introduction of academies and free schools in Wales.
- 18) Continue the national focus on raising standards, improving outcomes for learners and breaking the link between poverty and attainment.
- 19) Provide full flexibility for councils and schools to set their budgets locally within the context of cashable savings, removing the national budget protection of schools, allowing councils to set budgets according to local circumstances.
- 20) Continue investment in 21st Century Schools and greater integration with other capital investment programmes.
- 21) Review the current system of school governance with the aim of actively promoting and increasing the number of school federations, and change current regulations to allow federations to pool school budgets. This would replace the current number of governing bodies, improve the quality of school leadership, drive up standards and improve learner outcomes.

- 22) Introduce school exclusion zones for mobile hot food vans and enforce operating restrictions on all new vendors of food within 400m of schools as part of the on-going drive to promote healthy lifestyle choices for children and young people.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

- 23) Keep social care within local government as set out in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 24) Establish a new Preventative Integrated Care Fund for Wales funded through the potential Barnett consequential from the £8bn annual health investment in England.
- 25) Lift the £60 charging cap that limits the amount councils can charge for all non-residential social services. Link it more clearly to ability to pay.
- 26) Transfer Public Health Wales function and its funding into local government.
- 27) Ensure greater democratic oversight of the NHS through locating the powers of Community Health Councils (CHCs) within local government.
- 28) Switch investment into preventative services such as social care, economic development, transport, housing, libraries, leisure and environmental health. These services increase people's wellbeing and reduce demand for expensive care in hospitals.

HOUSING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- 29) Remove the Treasury-imposed cap on housing borrowing allowing Welsh councils to borrow more for house building since the public sector clearly gains a bankable asset and there is no need for this to appear on the books as public borrowing.

- 30) Undertake an urgent review of the 70% statutory recycling targets to identify what needs to happen to move from the current year's 58% target to 70% by 2024/25, including a cost-benefit analysis of the steps required.
- 31) Lobby the UK Government to seek stronger enforcement powers for councils to tackle excess packaging in supermarkets and the retail sector.

JOBS AND REGENERATION

- 32) Allow councils to reinvest in local economies through the retention of 100% business rates growth.
- 33) Scrap Jobcentre Plus and the maze of national reengagement schemes - replacing it with a locally-led Youth Transitions Service giving every 14 to 24-year-old the advice, experience and support to participate in education, training or work.
- 34) Empower local authorities with a statutory economic development duty. This duty must be properly resourced and capable of being exercised at a regional level in an integrated and strategic way alongside transport and land use planning, supporting the regional development work of city region boards and other regional partnerships.
- 35) Support the work of the two city regions in South East and South West Wales, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the Growing Mid Wales partnership covering the rural communities of Powys and Ceredigion - a separate WLGA Rural Manifesto will expand on this.
- 36) Support the Cardiff City Deal concept across South East Wales and development of the Metro.

- 37) Maintain the Bus Services Support Grant at its current level to protect services, especially for rural areas where the bus service provides a local lifeline for some communities.
- 38) Support the local government workforce, and in turn local economies, by fully funding councils to introduce the Living Wage and cover other workforce pressures as the Welsh Government has done in the NHS.
- 39) Reject the Trade Union Bill, which will set back the social partnership approach in Wales and impact on industrial relations within local government.
- 40) Fully campaign to support the UK's membership of the EU during the referendum process especially in terms of Wales benefiting through economic wellbeing, investment and cultural links.