

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Minister for Public Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-666
Ein cyf/Our ref LA -/00794/15

William Powell AM
Assembly Member for Mid & West Wales
Chair - Petitions Committee
Ty Hywel
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7 December 2015

Joe William

Thank you for your letter of 26 November regarding the petition concerning the influence of senior council officers within their local authorities. I am pleased you have given me the opportunity to put my views to your committee.

It is certainly not the case that the Welsh Government has "turned a blind eye" to the influence of some senior officers in certain local authorities, nor to the level of remuneration some of them receive.

The prime responsibility for ensuring that officers do not acquire an unreasonable level of influence in an authority lies firmly with the political leadership of the authority. That is why I have included provisions within the Draft Local Government (Wales) Bill, published for consultation on 24th November, which make clear that the chief executive of an authority is appointable by and accountable to the authority concerned. The Draft Bill goes on to provide that the leader of the authority must set objectives for the chief executive and monitor their achievements, reporting on this to the full council.

Furthermore, there is now a legislative framework in place in relation to the pay of senior officers. From January, in keeping with the provisions of the newly-enacted Local Government (Wales) Act 2015, no local authority will be able to vary the pay of their chief executive or any other chief officer without first consulting the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. If they do not act in accord with the Panel's recommendation, the authority will have to give their reasons and may be subject to a direction from Welsh Ministers to reconsider. This is in addition to the need for full council to approve the salary structure of their senior staff, as included in the Welsh Government's guidance on Pay Policy Statements.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The Draft Bill also provides for the establishment of the Public Services Staff Commission, already operating on a non-statutory basis, which will be tasked with overseeing the public service workforce in general.

I am determined that reformed local government, which we will move towards over the next few years, will have political leaderships who understand that it is they who must set the direction of their authorities, not their senior employees, and that those senior employees are appointed fairly, and paid fairly, with full public accountability for the procedures involved.



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