

Please see the responses below.

### **General Power of Competence Case Studies**

The LGA evidence to the Committee provided a link to an [LGA report](#) including early case studies on the General Power of Competence; there is also an [annex](#) to that report with more in-depth case studies, but it doesn't appear to be linked to the main document. There is also a House of Commons [Briefing Paper](#) from 2016.

### **Section 63 and 64 – Assistants and job-sharing**

*The extent enabling the appointment of assistants to an executive and job-sharing for executive leaders and members will assist in improving diversity. Also, what level of interest is there for more of this within local government.*

The WLGA and local authorities support these proposed reforms and they will provide greater flexibility for members to undertake such roles. The appointment of assistants is welcome as it will provide additional support for executives but also provide scope to provide development and opportunity for senior members to 'succession plan'. Although job-sharing may allow some members with wider family or professional commitments to undertake an executive role, there are mixed views about whether it will have a significant improvement on diversity. There is not widespread demand for such roles currently and where it has been implemented, notably in Swansea, there have been challenges in applying the role both in terms of how the role is 'shared' (such as impact on remuneration, voting and day-to-day responsibilities) but also in terms of managing workload and expectations. It may therefore be necessary for wider revisions to the remuneration framework and guidance to encourage rather than just enable job-sharing of senior roles. The Committee may wish to review the evidence submitted by former 'job-share' Swansea Cabinet members Cllrs Mary Sherwood and June Burtonshaw, which was submitted to the Committee's previous Inquiry into Diversity in Local Government.

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/documents/s90308/Additional%20information%20from%20Councilor%20Mary%20Sherwood%20and%20Councilor%20June%20Burtonshaw%20on%20job-sharing.pdf>

### **Section 67 – Duties on leaders in relation to standards**

*The extent the duty on group leaders in relation to standards of conduct will assist in promoting and maintaining good standards of conduct, and how might this provision be extended to independent members?*

The WLGA supports this provision as it builds on good practice already (for example, many group leaders support councils' local resolution protocols around councillor behaviour and conduct) and sets out clear expectations on the role of group leaders. The Bill provides guidance-making powers for Ministers around this new duty; this guidance will be important in clarifying expectations and what actions group leaders may take in exercising this duty. The WLGA and authorities will support the Welsh Government in developing this guidance, but it may include recommendations around how group leaders manage personal development reviews, encourage group members' commitment to development and training opportunities, promoting an inclusive and supportive group culture, how to manage and support individual members whose conduct may be a concern, through to publicly championing high standards and challenging poor standards of conduct where it occurs.

It is not yet clear however whether the Welsh Government intends that this duty will be incorporated into the statutory Members' Code of Conduct and whether, for example, Group Leaders could be subject to complaints if they are perceived not to be undertaking this Duty appropriately. This will require careful consideration.

This proposed new duty would be applied to all Group Leaders, which would include groups of independents councillors. There are however several unaffiliated independent councillors in Wales who are not members of a group and therefore do not have a group leader. These councillors however remain subject to the statutory code of conduct and they (as all councillors) are reminded of their expectations and obligations around conduct and standards and are supported in undertaking their role through guidance and training. Standards Committees are also responsible for promoting good behaviour and high standards of conduct.

I hope the above helps.

Regards,

Daniel Hurford, Head of Policy (Improvement and Governance), Welsh Local Government Association