# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Proposals to amend primary legislation which provides for changes to executive governance arrangements in principal councils** |
| **DATE**  | **05 December 2019** |
| **BY**  | **Julie James AM, Minister for Housing and Local Government**  |

Today, I am launching our consultation which proposes amendments to provisions in the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 which enable changes to the executive governance arrangements of principal councils.

Currently, all 22 principal councils in Wales operate a ‘leader and cabinet’ model of executive governance arrangements. Following an ordinary election, the principal council will appoint a leader, who will then normally appoint a cabinet of members of the principal council.

The executive governance arrangements of principal councils can be changed to a model with an elected mayor taking responsibility for the executive functions. An elected mayor would have the right to appoint a new cabinet, and might choose to replace the cabinet which was in place before they were elected.

As a result of current time limitations set out in legislation, if a principal council changes its executive arrangements, mayoral elections may not be able to take place at the same time as an ordinary election of councilors. Holding mayoral elections shortly after (or before) an ordinary election could be disruptive and potentially destabilising within the principal council.

We propose that petitions should be able to be presented, proposals for resolutions to be drawn up by principal councils and directions and orders be made by the Welsh Ministers from the day following an ordinary election and the deadline should be eighteen months before the date of the next ordinary election. The intention is that, following a successful petition or a resolution, a direction or order, there would be sufficient time for any referendum to take place and enable any mayoral elections to be held at the same time as the next set of ordinary elections.

Our intention is also to limit the disruptive impact of repeated changes of executive arrangements within a relatively short period.

Currently, principal councils can only hold a referendum once in any five year period. However, the current situation still has the potential to create considerable political instability with what could amount to a change of executive arrangements during each electoral cycle.

In order to minimise the risk of instability, we propose that where the executive arrangements of a principal council have been changed, no further changes can be made to them until two complete electoral cycles have passed. This is in line with provisions set out in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill for principal councils to change their voting systems.

We are also seeking opinions on updating some of the regulations around petitions such as allowing for e-petitions, online notifications for petitions and whether the threshold required for signatures to a mayoral petition triggering a referendum should be amended.

The consultation, which runs until 27 February 2020, describes in more detail what we are proposing to do and sets out our reasons.

This is the first step of a two phase consultation. We will shortly consult on proposed amendments to secondary legislation taking into consideration responses to this consultation.

<https://gov.wales/changes-executive-governance-arrangements-principal-councils-local-authorities>

I would welcome your comments.