

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
COMMITTEE :	County Council
DATE:	6 March 2012
TITLE OF THE REPORT :	PROPOSAL BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT TO ALTER THE DATE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS IN WALES FROM MAY 2016 TO MAY 2017.
REPORT BY:	Chief Executive
PURPOSE OF REPORT :	Consultation
ACTION :	To respond to the consultation.

Introduction:

The Fixed Term Parliament Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) received Royal Assent on the 15 September 2011. The 2011 Act provides for parliamentary general elections to be held on fixed days every five years. The next parliamentary general election will be on the first Thursday in May 2015.

The Fixed Term Parliamentary Act 2011 also provides for the date of elections to the National Assembly for Wales to be delayed by one year from May 2015 to May 2016.

Delaying the National Assembly elections by one year will result in the elections coinciding with the date of local government elections in Wales in May 2016.

Welsh Ministers have the power, under section 87 of the Local Government Act 2000 to alter the year in which local government elections are to be held and are considering using this power to delay elections to county, county borough and town and community councils by one year from May 2016 to May 2017. The cycle of elections after that will be subject to separate consultation.

In 1999 the National Assembly for Wales and Local government elections were combined in Wales. From the perspective of voters, candidates and electoral administrators these arrangements did not work well. As a consequence, the then Minister decided that for the following cycle, the Local Government elections should be decoupled and held a year later in 2004.

Similar experiences in Scotland in 2007 resulted in the Gould Inquiry with the Report specifically recommending decoupling. The local government elections in Scotland due to be held in 2011 have been moved to May 2012.

Consistent with these established principles based on experience in both Wales and Scotland, Members may be of the opinion that it is appropriate and beneficial for decoupling to continue for the future and the proposal to move the local government election to one year after the next National Assembly Elections is welcomed.

A further anticipated complication is that the second round for Police and Crime Commissioners is scheduled for May 2016 which could result in up to 5 elections with 3 different electoral systems being combined in 2016 if the local elections remain to be held at that time.

Members may therefore wish to consider supporting the Minister in changing the date of the next local government election from May 2016 to May 2017.

Views on this proposal are required by 12 March 2012.

Recommendation: Members are requested to consider the report and present an opinion on the matter.

Report prepared by : Alan Williams, Election Services.