

PRESTEIGNE AND NORTON TOWN COUNCIL

MEETING WITH WELSH GOVERNMENT 20TH JULY 2017

This meeting was an invitation only meeting organised by Welsh Government in order to look at the relationships (or lack of) between community councils and local authorities.

The programme for the day was -

Speech and questions, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Mark Drakeford

Emerging findings from the recent Local Government Survey.

Four workshops (two to be selected), I chose community delivery of services and relationships between Community and Unitary Authorities.

A final session between representatives of the same area to talk through the problems or successes.

We had allocated seats within the Pierhead Building at Cardiff Bay and tables included representatives from each sector, Councillors from both levels, Clerks and Unitary Officers, all for the same area. My table was entirely Powys apart from one Carmarthenshire Councillor. From PCC were Cllr. James Evans, Portfolio Holder for HR and Community Engagement and Shane Thomas, Member Support Manager. There were three Clerks representing Powys -those from Newtown, Llandrindod and myself for Presteigne and Norton. One Community Councillor, the present Mayor in Talgarth.

I was impressed by the new Minister - he seemed very positive about Town and Community Councils and very willing to listen. His predecessor (at least it seemed to me) was not a fan and put forward the minimum budget of £200,000 suggestion!

We each had the opportunity to speak on our experiences of community delivery and how our Unitary Authority had handled the process. I was expecting this to be an awkward moment given that all the Clerks present (not just from Powys) had few good things to say. Surprisingly the two from PCC, when asked to respond, readily admitted that things had not been working and had to change. The Portfolio Holder said that he was intending to get out and about to improve community engagement and the process of community delivery. Interestingly Cllr. Evans mentioned that PCC could not continue to give away assets to the community. The response made (by several on our table) was that surely the assets belonged to the community and that transfers to date had been of liabilities not assets!

The research team is continuing work looking into the sector and the review will start in September with more opportunities for consultation. In addition a working group is being put together, including an experienced clerk, One Voice Wales and officers from the Society of Council Clerks to carry out liaison work with Town and Community Councils.

It was a worthwhile day and it was good to hear that other Counties are also having their problems.