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Councillor remuneration and citizen engagement: Survey of councillors

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Nerys Owens

Knowledge and Analytical Services, Welsh Government

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For further information please contact:

Nerys Owens

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Email: Research.PublicServices@gov.wales

Table of contents

1.	Background	4
2.	Methodology.....	6
3.	The role of the rouncillor.....	7
4.	Remuneration.....	32
5.	Equipment	42
6.	Behaviour and attitudes towards councillors	43
7.	Training and development.....	54
	References.....	58
	Annex A	59
	Annex B	81

List of Tables

Table 1: Responses by councillor type	7
Table 2: How long have you served as a councillor?	8
Table 3: Do you hold any senior positions within the council?	9
Table 4: In addition to your work as a councillor do you undertake any additional roles?	10
Table 5: What do you see as the most important role of a councillor?	12
Table 6: How aware, if at all, would you say members of the public are of the difference between the role of a county councillor and a community and town councillor?	17
Table 7: How much influence do you feel you have as a councillor?	21
Table 8: Thinking back to when you were considering becoming a councillor, what was your expectation in terms of the hours you would be required to commit to the role each week?	22
Table 9: How many hours do you spend each week on council business?	23
Table 10: How many hours a week did you spend working from home before the Covid-19 pandemic?	26
Table 11: Would you like the working arrangements put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic to continue in future?	26
Table 12: Awareness that community and town councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:	35
Table 13: Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?	35
Table 14: Awareness that principal councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:	37
Table 15: Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?	38
Table 16: Awareness that dual-hatted councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:	39
Table 17: Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?	40
Table 18: Since becoming a councillor, have you experienced or witnessed any type of inappropriate behaviour while undertaking your role?	45

Table 19: In the last few years, do you think the standard of behaviour towards councillors in your area has:53

Table 20: Are there suitable arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors by...55

1. Background

- 1.1 The Welsh Government has undertaken a programme of research to find out more about the role of councillors in Wales, their remuneration and experiences of citizen engagement. This programme of work builds on an evaluation of the first phase of the Welsh Government's Diversity in Democracy programme ([McConnell and Stevenson, 2019](#)) which identified the need for a more targeted and tailored approach to supporting under-represented groups to help them actively participate in local democracy. The evaluation also highlighted a lack of awareness among the general public of the role of the councillor and the important contribution they make on behalf of communities.
- 1.2 To meet these evidence needs, the Welsh Government carried out an evidence review of councillor remuneration in Wales and how it compares with other countries ([Williams, 2021](#)), and a survey of public attitudes ([Owens, 2021](#)). The final element of this research has involved carrying out an online survey of councillors in Wales at principal and community and town council levels, to find out more about their role, including the type of work they undertake, the time spent working as councillors in supporting communities, the remuneration they receive and the training provided to support the role. Taken together, the research findings from all three stages will broaden understanding of the role and remuneration of councillors in Wales from multiple perspectives.
- 1.3 Findings from the evidence review and the survey of public attitudes will be used alongside the evidence gathered as part of this research to inform the design and delivery of activities under the next phase of the Diversity in Democracy Programme aimed at increasing confidence of councillors that they are valued, and ensuring that expectations placed upon them are fair and that their remuneration appropriately reflects the work they undertake.
- 1.4 The remainder of this report outlines the methodology for the survey and presents key findings under the following themes:
 - the experiences of councillors and the work they do;
 - councillors' allowances and remuneration;

- the equipment they use to undertake their role;
- behaviour and attitudes towards councillors at a community level; and
- training and development.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The purpose of the online survey was to find out more about the role of councillors at principal and community and town council levels, including the type of work they undertake, the time spent working as a councillor in supporting communities, the remuneration they receive and the training provided to support the role.
- 2.2 The evidence gathered as part of the survey will help the Welsh Government to identify ways to provide broader support to both existing and potential councillors and with the aim of improving the opportunities available for a diverse range of individuals and groups to participate in local democracy.
- 2.3 The survey questions were developed by social researchers and policy officials in the Welsh Government in collaboration with representatives from One Voice Wales (OVW), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW). The survey was administered using SmartSurvey, an online survey platform that allows completion on computers, tablets and smartphones and was made available in Welsh and English.
- 2.4 Key points of contact from OVW and WLGA helped disseminate information about the survey and a link to the online survey to relevant networks, with the aim of reaching councillors across Wales in both principal and community and town councils. The survey was open for completion for a period of 8 weeks between 1 October 2021 and 26 November 2021. Reminder emails were sent before the closing date to encourage participation. Analysis was conducted in-house by Welsh Government social researchers.
- 2.5 A total of 1,844 responses were received, comprised of 1,142 completed responses and 702 partial responses. Of these partial responses, 220 responses were excluded from the analysis as they were duplicate responses (identified by reference to the IP address of the respondent) or because the participant had clicked through the survey but had not provided any responses to the questions. In total, 1,624 responses were included in the analysis. The survey questions are included at Annex A and the demographic data collected as part of the survey is shown at Annex B.

3. The role of the councillor

Profile of respondents

- 3.1 Around two-thirds of respondents (66 per cent) were community and town councillors only. Around a fifth (19 per cent) were principal councillors only. The remaining 15 per cent noted they were working as 'dual-hatted'^a councillors.

Table 1: Responses by councillor type

	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Principal councillor	19	314
Community and town councillor	66	1055
'Dual-hatted' councillor	15	240
Total	100	1609

Base: 1,609 respondents (15 respondents chose not to answer this question)

- 3.2 Across all three categories of councillors, responses were received from all 22 local authorities in Wales. Of the community and town councillors that responded, the highest proportion of responses were received from councillors in Powys (16 per cent), followed by Pembrokeshire (10 per cent) and Carmarthenshire (9 per cent). Responses from principal councillors were more evenly spread across all local authorities, ranging from 2 per cent in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Monmouthshire County Council, to 8 per cent in Carmarthenshire County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council.

Length of service

- 3.3 Across all categories of councillors, 14 per cent had served as a councillor for 1 to 2 years, and just under a third (32 per cent) between 3 and 5 years. Just over a fifth (21 per cent) of respondents had served as a councillor for between 10 and 20 years and fifteen per cent for more than 20 years.

^a Dual-hatted councillors are those who serve on both a principal and at least one or more community or town councils.

Table 2: How long have you served as a councillor?

Length of service	Percentage of respondents
1-2 years	14
3-5 years	32
6-9 years	17
10-15 years	14
21-25 years	8
More than 25 years	10

Base: 1,530 respondents (94 respondents chose not to answer this question)

3.4 Of the community and town councillors who responded to this question (1,016 respondents), just over half (52 per cent) had served as a councillor for between 1 to 5 years, compared to 37 per cent of principal councillors and 32 per cent of those working as 'dual-hatters'. Councillors who were working as 'dual-hatters' were more likely to have been in the role for a longer period of time compared to principal and community and town councillors. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of dual-hatters who responded to this question had been in the role for more than 20 years, compared with 13 per cent of principal councillors and 13 per cent of community and town councillors.

Senior positions

3.5 All respondents were asked whether they held any senior positions within the council as part of their role. Of the 964 councillors who responded to this question, nearly three-fifths (58 per cent) were community and town councillors, around a quarter (24 per cent) were principal councillors and around a fifth (18 per cent) were dual-hatters.

3.6 Around two-fifths (43 per cent) of community and town councillors noted that they were members of a committee, a quarter (25 per cent) said they held a position as chair of a committee, and around a fifth (18 per cent) served as chair of their community or town council. Some of the other senior roles held by community and town councillors included clerk to the council; committee vice-chair; deputy chair of the council; former chair of the council, and mayor or deputy mayor.

3.7 Around half of the principal councillors (49 per cent) that responded noted that they were members of a committee and around a quarter (22 per cent) held a role as

committee chair. Around a fifth (19 per cent) of principal councillors noted that they were cabinet members and around a tenth (7 per cent) held a position as leader or leader of the opposition. Other senior roles held by principal councillors included membership of various panels and partnerships, former mayor or deputy mayor and deputy whip.

3.8 The senior positions held by dual-hatters appeared to be very similar to those of principal councillors, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Do you hold any senior positions within the council?

Senior council positions	Percentage of respondents ^a			
	All councillors	Community and town councillors	Principal councillors	'Dual-hatters'
Committee Member	46	43	49	51
Committee Chair	24	25	22	22
Chair of the Council	18	27	5	4
Cabinet Member	8	<2	19	17
Leader	2	<2	4	<2
Leader of the Opposition	2	<2	3	2
Other senior role	20	23	14	20

Base: 964 respondents (660 respondents chose not to answer this question)

^a Respondents could select more than one answer from the list of options, therefore columns do not sum to 100 per cent

Other additional roles

3.9 The survey also asked respondents if they carried out any additional roles alongside their work as a councillor. Of the 1,446 councillors who answered this question, around two out of five (45 per cent) were retired and just over a fifth (21 per cent) were working full-time in paid employment. Nearly two-fifths of respondents were self-employed or carried out freelance work and 13 per cent said they worked part-time in paid employment. Around a tenth of respondents also noted that they looked after family alongside their role as a councillor. Other additional roles mentioned by councillors included agricultural work, primary carer to a relative, trustee of a charitable organisation and volunteer. A breakdown of responses by councillor type is provided at Table 4.

Table 4: In addition to your work as a councillor do you undertake any additional roles?

Additional roles	Percentage of respondents			
	All councillors	Community and town councillors	Principal councillors	'Dual-hatters'
Full-time paid employment	21	24	15	13
Part-time paid employment	13	13	15	12
Self-employed or freelance	19	19	18	19
Unemployed	2	1	4	3
Retired	45	47	39	47
Looking after home / family	13	12	17	12
Full-time education	1	<2	<2	-
Other roles reported by less than 100 of the 964 respondents (7 per cent) ^a				
Agriculture				
Primary carer				
Trustee of a Charitable organisation				
Volunteer				

Base: 1446 respondents (178 respondents chose not to answer this question)

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

Voluntary activities

- 3.10 The survey asked respondents if they carried out any voluntary or unpaid roles alongside their role as a councillor. Of the 1,436 councillors who responded to this question, around three-quarters (73 per cent) said they were involved in volunteering roles.
- 3.11 The type of voluntary activities undertaken by councillors varied greatly. Of the 981 respondents who provided further details, around a quarter of councillors (24 per cent) indicated that they offered informal volunteering support within their communities, as well as through community and third sector groups operating locally. The type of activities mentioned included:
- organising community events;
 - providing practical support with shopping, medication collection and food parcel delivery;
 - helping to run community friendship and befriending schemes aimed at tackling loneliness and social isolation among vulnerable residents;
 - co-ordinating local foodbanks; and

- maintaining public open spaces within the community, including litter picking, footpath clearance and flower planting.

3.12 In addition to these activities, around a fifth (22 per cent) of councillors carried out unpaid roles with local associations and committees either as chairs, secretaries or treasurers, a similar proportion (21 per cent) were school governors and just over a tenth (13 per cent) worked as trustees for various local and national charities or associations.

Reasons for becoming a councillor

3.13 All respondents were asked what was their main reason for standing as a councillor. This question allowed an open-ended response to encourage respondents to share their personal motivations and to capture a wide range perspectives.

3.14 Of the 1,271 respondents who responded, a large proportion had become councillors in order to improve their community and make it a better place to live and many noted that the best way they could do this was 'to influence change' and 'get things done'. Others had put themselves forward as candidates in order 'to help people' and 'give local people a voice'. A number of councillors said they had either been encouraged to stand or felt motivated to do so as a result of a lack of engagement or inaction on the part of previous councillors in their area, while others felt that they had the suitable knowledge and experience or the right political beliefs and values to carry out the role successfully.

Perceptions and understanding of a councillor's role and responsibilities

3.15 Respondents were asked what they saw as the most important role of a councillor and could select one or more responses from a list of different options. Of the 1,377 councillors who responded to this question, the vast majority (91 per cent) said that their role was to 'represent the views and needs of local residents', followed by 'support the local community' (88 per cent), 'work with residents to address local issues' (87 per cent), and 'listen to the views of the local community' (85 per cent). Keeping local residents informed (78 per cent), attending council meetings (76 per cent) and making or influencing decisions about the work of the council (72 per cent) were also frequently cited as important roles of a councillor.

Table 5: What do you see as the most important role of a councillor?

Most important role	Percentage of respondents
Represent the views and needs of local residents	91
Support the local community	88
Work with residents to address local issues	87
Listen to views of local community	85
Attend council meetings	76
Make or influence decisions about the work of the council	72
Keep local residents informed	78
Deal with complaints	64
Hold surgeries	23
Other roles reported by less than 68 of the 1377 respondents (5 per cent) ^a	
Act as an additional layer of scrutiny for council responses and decisions	
Encourage others to get involved in grassroots politics	
Improve link between communities and other tiers of government	
Protect and enhance local services and facilities	
Improve social, economic and environmental well-being	

Base: 1377 respondents (247 respondents chose not to answer this question)

^a 'Other' responses are presented alphabetically.

- 3.16 Some of the other roles identified by councillors are shown in Table 5. The additional comments highlighted some tension between the traditional role of an elected member with its emphasis on scrutinising council responses and decision-making and their duties in responding to the needs and expectations of their communities. Several councillors referred to the challenges this created, where they were often required to deal with long-term strategic matters alongside more localised issues being experienced within their constituencies.
- 3.17 All respondents were asked whether their understanding of the role and responsibilities of councillors had changed at all during their time in the role. Of the councillors who responded to this question (1,372 respondents) around three out of five (61 per cent) agreed that their understanding had changed, while around a third (33 per cent) disagreed. Respondents were then asked to explain their answer in a follow-on, open-ended question.
- 3.18 Councillors provided a range of negative comments. Many emphasised that when they were first elected they were unprepared for the scale of work they were expected to undertake as part of the role. Both principal and community and town

councillors noted that their workload had increased considerably since they were first elected and they now faced greater demands on their time and high expectations from constituents:

It is much more demanding on time than I expected. The community don't often understand how difficult some issues are to address. (Town and Community Councillor)

More goes on 'behind the scenes' than I would have perceived. I did not appreciate (and it isn't publicised) how much time and effort can go into simple things that people take for granted. (Town and Community Councillor)

The anticipation of what you think the role of a councillor is bears no resemblance to the reality of being a councillor. (Principal Councillor)

I didn't realise how much of my time it would take to be an effective Councillor, and I didn't realise I would be contacted at all times of the day and on weekends. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

I started as a Town Councillor and had a very limited understanding of what was expected of me [...] also becoming a County Councillor opened my eyes [...] Being a Cabinet Member is on another level again. The work that is required to just read all the paperwork involved is extensive. It is a full-time position and the responsibility is massive. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

The role is extremely demanding at times and takes a tremendous amount of time, it's like we are on call 24/7 but it's extremely rewarding (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 3.19 Another issue highlighted in the survey was the complexity of the work councillors were now undertaking, which appeared to be much wider than many had originally anticipated. This view was shared by both principal and community and town councillors:

Over the more than 20 years as a Community Council I have experienced an increasing range of responsibilities which we need to attend to, some as a result of transfer of tasks from the Local Authority or from their inability to address all local issues, some from the increase in the details of Conditions of Service and legal requirements, and to some extent from the growth in residents' expectations of what their Community Council should attend to. (Town and Community Councillor)

It's become more demanding with the ever changing local and government rules and regulations and we're more accountable to the public because they're far too quick to criticise now than in the past. (Town and Community Councillor)

It is only through being part of the council that one begins to appreciate how complex and multi-layered the responsibilities of a county councillor are. (Principal Councillor)

The additional responsibilities that have been handed to Local Authorities over the years have significantly increased the role required of a Councillor i.e. Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, child sexual exploitation, violence against women, human trafficking etc. (Principal Councillor)

3.20 The survey also indicated that an increasing aspect of a councillor's role and workload now involved working strategically across the local authority area, for example by interacting with a wide range of public, private, and third sector partners. Both principal and community and town councillors emphasised that this crucial element of their role took up an increasing amount of their time and demanded particular skills, as well as other resources and support.

3.21 Linked to this, a number of community and town councillors reported that they were responsible for a range of community services, including public conveniences, community facilities such as a library and shop, and green spaces, which took up a considerable amount of time and resources. The scale of the responsibilities held by community and town councils was emphasised by this quote from a community and town councillor:

At first we did little more than decide the colour we wanted to paint the local bus shelter. Now we operate an Institute, 2 Memorial halls [...] a Bowls Club a Senior Citizens' Hall, 4 local Parks, a large children's playground, toilets [...], operate a 'food-bank' type of operation, operate a Lunch Club delivering hot meals twice a week to those in need, and developed several Forums designed to cover sustainability and Future Well-being which include residents and businesses who are members of those forums. It is a totally different council to what it was 17 years ago. (Town and Community Councillor)

3.22 Other community councillors echoed this view and observed that it was a big commitment on top of their existing workload, especially for councillors who were carrying out the role alongside full-time work. It was emphasised that these additional responsibilities demanded new skills and knowledge that many

councillors did not have. Several reported difficulties in identifying and accessing support and expertise which meant that responsibility for aspects of the management process had fallen on the community council and local volunteers.

3.23 Another challenge highlighted by community and town councillors was ensuring that any community services that were transferred from the principal council did not become liabilities and drain council budgets. One of the main priorities identified by respondents in this context was the immediate need for better support from the principal council to help councillors adapt to these new demands.

3.24 Respondents also felt that a lack of understanding about a councillor's role caused a great deal of confusion among constituents, but also among councillors and potential candidates. Both principal councillors and community and town councillors noted that when standing for election, they had particular views and expectations of what the role involved, but in reality there was often a tension between those expectations and what they were then able to achieve as part of their role:

It has been a real eye opener to learn what can actually be achieved in this tier of local government, and also how difficult it can be to do this. I realised very quickly the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes, [...] something that as a resident, I had no idea of. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

I feel that the opportunities to make real changes to the town are very restricted and [...] we are left with the 'petty and mundane'. I have become increasingly frustrated and realise I was probably unrealistic in my ambitions. (Community and Town Councillor)

You have a perception of the role of a councillor before you commence term which changes when you experience the reality. (Community and Town Councillor)

The anticipation of what you think the role of a councillor is bears no resemblance to the reality of being a councillor. (Principal Councillor)

3.25 Community and town councillors in particular frequently emphasised the limitations they faced within their role and in their council and several expressed frustration at the limited influence and power they held within local governance structures:

It is not as easy as one thinks for town councils to make a difference. Business is thwarted by late or no information and short time limits to agree on action. Town Councils don't seem to have very much influence on County Council decisions and are

often not consulted on projects and schemes that effect their town. (Town and Community Councillor)

At Community Council level there is only so much we can actually achieve. That hasn't changed much in the years I have served. (Town and Community Councillor)

I have found the role of Community Councillor quite limiting and frustrating, it seems my main role is to act as a liaison between the Local Authority and residents, I am not really empowered to 'do' anything. (Town and Community Councillor)

Think you're making a difference and have an influence, when most times you are not listened to. One can become unpopular easily being a councillor as you're blamed for challenging progress in your area, or creating delays. (Town and Community Councillor)

- 3.26 A small number of community and town councillors felt that their role was often undervalued and undermined by council officers, as notes by one councillor:

[...] the County Council especially it's Officers, do not take the role of Community Councillors seriously. Although we are in theory supposed to be at the forefront of the democratic process. (Community and Town Councillor)

- 3.27 Community and town councillors also complained that council officers did not involve them in certain decisions and often failed to provide appropriate information and support, which hindered their ability to carry out their role as effectively as they wanted. One community and town councillor commented:

The Community Council is treated as an irrelevance by our Principal Council member and by many of the Officers of the Principal Council who do not respond to emails and phone calls from our Clerk. (Community and Town Councillor)

- 3.28 The need for better sharing of information within governance structures and wider understanding of a councillor's role in challenging, questioning and seeking information and explanations from officers, as well as senior councillors, echoed the feelings of distance from decision-making experienced by many principal councillors:

After 31 years as a councillor I still find problematic areas in the council, especially the relative lack of power for councillors compared to senior officers. (Principal Councillor)

I was very surprised on how much influence the officers had over the decision-making process. (Principal Councillor)

The power to influence Officers and Cabinet Members is far less. (Principal Councillor)

The lack of information from Officers means you are unable to carry out your job in a professional manner. (Principal Councillor)

Public perceptions of councillors

3.29 Respondents were asked how aware they thought members of the public were (if at all) of the difference between the role of a county councillor and a community and town councillor. Of the councillors who responded to this question (1,287 respondents) around half (48 per cent) thought that the public were slightly aware of the difference between the two types of councillor, while just under a third (30 per cent) thought that the public were not at all aware of the difference. Just over a fifth of respondents (22 per cent) thought that the public had some awareness (either aware or very aware) of the difference (Table 6).

Table 6: How aware, if at all, would you say members of the public are of the difference between the role of a county councillor and a community and town councillor?

Public awareness of different types of councillor	Percentage of respondents
Very aware	4
Aware	18
Slightly aware	48
Not at all aware	30

Base: 1287 respondents (337 respondents chose not to answer this question)

3.30 Respondents were then asked what they felt were the most common misconceptions held by the public about a councillor's role. This question allowed an open-ended response to encourage respondents to share their views and experiences.

3.31 There was a general feeling among councillors that their work was often impeded by a lack of public understanding of what councillors do and particularly what they are able to achieve for their communities. A common concern voiced by councillors was that the public had little or no idea of the day-to-day role of a councillor. As a principal councillor commented:

The general public have very little knowledge on the role of a councillor and to how much commitment it takes to fulfil the role (Principal Councillor).

3.32 That concern was echoed by many councillors who emphasised the view that there was little public awareness or appreciation of the scale and complexity of the work they undertake:

They think it's all about meetings. The public has no idea of the time we put in to doing the job. (Principal Councillor)

3.33 Linked to this were concerns over unrealistic public expectations, as these councillors emphasise:

There's an assumption that Community Councillors have unlimited time and personal funding to devote all their time and effort to local matters. (Town and Community Councillor)

A member of the public will come to me with an issue which they expect the councillor to deal with yesterday, only to find that there is a system which involves protocol, time and availability of staff and money for resolution. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

That councillors are expected to know everything and act on everything. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

3.34 This point was highlighted by community and town councillors in particular, with many noting that constituents often thought that councillors had the power to address all issues and problems in their local area. Councillors emphasised that there was also a great deal of confusion among constituents and the public about the responsibilities and functions of different parts of government:

Most commonly the public do not understand the remit of councillors at different levels, and the distinction between what a community council can control or influence, what a principal authority controls, and what Welsh or UK Government control. (Town and Community Councillor)

There is little understanding in the community about the different levels of politician. I have been referred to on a number of occasions as their MP or MS. (Principal Councillor)

People do not understand the governance of the County Council, they think every councillor has the power to instruct any and all officers [...]. Often this is one of the first things I discuss with a resident when they contact me so they more clearly understand how I am able to help them. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

Most have no idea of the difference in authority and responsibility between county and community councils and most believe that councillors themselves have powers to solve their particular problem instantly. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

Most have no idea of the different roles of Community council, County council, Senedd and Westminster. Many think you are a direct line to whatever they need done and that you run departments and services and are able to change things by yourself. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 3.35 In addition, councillors emphasised that the uncertainty of the changing environment in which they now worked, which had been shaped by the impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, had in many ways altered the way councillors were regarded and treated by others. There was a widely held view that councillors and politicians were generally not respected by the public and therefore seen as 'fair game' for criticism and abuse. For many, this undermined their ability to carry out their role effectively:

The county councillors' role has been devalued for years and is seen as the bottom of the pile (Principal Councillor)

Some think they can abuse and speak to councillors with no thought for our feelings. (Town and Community Councillor)

- 3.36 There was equal concern among councillors about the public perception of the remuneration and allowances regime for councillors. What is clear from the evidence councillors presented is that the public viewed all councillors as a group of

full-time, salaried politicians receiving a generous income from council work.

Community and town councillors in particular noted that as a result of the negative attitudes towards remuneration they did not claim allowances and expenses to which they were entitled. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 4.

3.37 Community councillors also emphasised that they regularly came across negative attitudes and perceptions among their constituents and noted how they were often described as 'lazy' or 'useless'. Another common criticism directed towards councillors was that they lacked the skills or powers to deal with local issues or problems.

3.38 Many councillors also expressed concern at the way in which they were often perceived as being 'self-serving', with several noting that they were accused of being 'in it for themselves'.

Councillor influence

3.39 The survey asked respondents how much influence they felt they had as a councillor. Of the 1,281 councillors who responded to this question, around half (49 per cent) felt they had less influence to change things than they expected and just over a third (35 per cent) felt they had as much influence as they expected. Just over a tenth of respondents (14 per cent) thought they had more influence to change things than expected (Table 7).

Table 7: How much influence do you feel you have as a councillor?

Response	Percentage of respondents			
	All councillors	Community and town councillor	Principal councillor	Dual-hatters
More influence to change things than expected	14	10	19	23
Less influence to change things than expected	48	51	44	45
As much influence as expected	35	36	35	31
Don't know	3	3	2	1
Total	100	100	100	100

Base: 1,281 respondents (343 respondents chose not to answer this question)

3.40 There were some differences in responses by councillor type. A slightly higher proportion of community and town councillors (51 per cent) thought they had less influence to change things than expected, compared with 44 per cent of principal councillors and 45 per cent of dual hatters. Conversely, principal councillors (19 per cent) and dual-hatters (23 per cent) were more likely to respond positively than community and town councillors and say that they had more influence to change things than expected.

Time spent on council business

3.41 The survey included questions aimed at developing an understanding of the amount of time different councillors spend undertaking their role during a typical working week. Respondents were first asked what was their expectation in terms of the hours they would be required to commit to the role each week, when they were considering becoming a councillor. They were then asked to specify the actual hours they spend each week undertaking council business.

3.42 Around half of all respondents (49 per cent) stated that when they were considering becoming a councillor, their expectation in terms of the time required to undertake the role was 10 hours or less each week. Just under a fifth (17 per cent) expected councillors to work between 11 and 20 hours per week and a further 7 per cent thought the figure was between 21 and 30 hours per week. A quarter of respondents said that they had no expectation in terms of the time required to undertake the role.

3.43 Analysis of the responses by councillor type showed that around two-thirds (63 per cent) of community and town councillors expected to work 10 hours or less each week, while around half of principal councillors (55 per cent) and dual-hatters (51 per cent) who responded expected the time commitment to be between 11 and 30 hours each week. Around a third (29 per cent) of community and town councillors had no expectation of the hours required each week, while the equivalent figure was slightly lower for dual-hatters (22 per cent) and principal councillors (17 per cent) (Table 8).

Table 8: Thinking back to when you were considering becoming a councillor, what was your expectation in terms of the hours you would be required to commit to the role each week?

Number of hours	Percentage of respondents			
	All councillors	Community and town councillor	Principal councillor	Dual-hatters
10 hours or less	49	63	21	25
11-20 hours	17	7	35	35
21-30 hours	7	<2	20	16
31-40 hours	<2	<2	3	<2
More than 40 hours	<2	-	4	<2
No expectation	25	29	17	22
Total	100	100	100	100

Base: 1,280 respondents (344 respondents chose not to answer this question)

3.44 When respondents were then asked how many hours they actually spend each week carrying out the role, almost half (47 per cent) said they spend 10 hours or less each week, around a fifth (22 per cent) said between 11 and 20 hours and a further 15 per cent worked between 21 and 30 hours each week. Around a fifth (16 per cent) of respondents said they spend 31 hours or more per week undertaking council business and half of these (8 per cent) worked more than 40 hours each week.

3.45 Analysis of the responses by councillor type showed that around two-thirds (69 per cent) of community and town councillors spend 10 hours or less carrying out their role, while around half of principal councillors (52 per cent) and dual-hatters (55 per cent) noted that they worked between 11 and 30 hours each week (Table 11).

These figures were broadly in line with their expectations of the time commitments required when they were considering becoming a councillor, as shown in Table 8. Around two-fifths of principal councillors (44 per cent) and dual-hatters (38 per cent) said they spent 31 hours or more per week undertaking council business and of these figures, a quarter of principal councillors (25 per cent) and 17 per cent of dual hatters indicated that they worked more than 40 hours each week.

3.46 Taken together, the findings on the anticipated and actual time commitments of the councillors that responded to the survey support earlier findings that principal councillors, as well as community and town councillors, were unprepared for the weight of work they were expected to undertake and had seen the demands made upon them and the time committed to council work increase.

Table 9: How many hours do you spend each week on council business?

Number of hours	Percentage of respondents			
	All councillors	Community and town councillor	Principal councillor	Dual-hatters
10 hours or less	47	69	4	7
11-20 hours	22	23	20	19
21-30 hours	15	6	32	36
31-40 hours	8	<2	19	21
More than 40 hours	8	<2	25	17
Total	100	100	100	100

Base: 1,282 respondents (342 respondents chose not to answer this question)

3.47 Respondents were asked how they manage the time they make available for council work, for example responding to queries from members of the public or holding councillor surgeries. Of the 1,257 respondents who answered this question, the majority (66 per cent) said they were available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and only 4 per cent of respondents said they had set times during which they could be contacted by constituents. The remaining 31 per cent of councillors provided a range of different responses, including that they saw it as a flexible role where queries could be dealt with on an ad-hoc basis, mainly by email or through social media 'as and when required'; that they set-aside time to fit around work and home commitments; and that their visibility within the community allowed residents to raise any issues as required.

3.48 Principal councillors emphasised that their day-to-day role and workload varied considerably each week, depending on the nature of the work they were involved in, for example, attending formal council and committee meetings, dealing with casework and engaging with constituents. It also varied greatly depending on the type of roles they held within the council.

3.49 Evidence from the survey highlighted that a particular concern for councillors generally was the increasing workload and time commitments the role demanded. A number of councillors described their work as a 24-hour role, with few if any boundaries and many found it increasingly difficult to maintain a distinction between their council and private life, as these councillors noted:

I have been contacted in the early hours of morning and late at night on several occasions (Dual-hatted Councillor)

I probably shouldn't make myself available as often as I do, family time does suffer sometimes and I have difficulties shutting off [...]. (Principal Councillor)

I'm having to take annual leave from my job to attend to council tasks; I often give up family time to attend meetings. (Town and Community Councillor)

I'm a very good juggler, but I can't imagine doing the role with a young family, family time does suffer. (Town and Community Councillor)

3.50 Several community and town councillors saw this in more positive terms and noted that their visibility and availability within the community helped them to manage their day-to-day work and time commitments:

I'm visible within my community and make sure public feel they can contact me. In practice it's very manageable. (Town and Community Councillor)

In a small community where most people are acquainted community councillors are always visible and available. (Town and Community Councillor)

As we live in a small hamlet as and when items pop up I am contactable and regularly seen around and about our neighbourhood and in touch with our village. (Town and Community Councillor)

3.51 Anecdotal evidence suggested that many councillors felt overstretched and struggled to fulfil all the requirements of their current role, as one principal councillor who has decided to stand down as an elected member emphasised:

I feel all burned out, hence in my mid-fifties leaving the council!!! (Principal Councillor)

- 3.52 Respondents also noted that it was becoming more and more difficult for councillors to maintain their work commitments alongside full-time employment and family responsibilities, as these community and town councillors emphasised:

I'm not managing it well. I didn't realise the amount of work and doing it alongside a full-time job is incredibly challenging. I don't know if there is any standard guidance for how much time I should spend on it? But I've seen some councillors do nothing and for others it's ruined their marriages with how much time they spend on it. So yes. Need help on this. (Community and Town Councillor)

I'm having to take annual leave from my job to attend to council tasks; I often give up family time to attend meetings. (Community and Town Councillor)

- 3.53 The increasing demands of the role was highlighted by many councillors as one of the main barriers to encouraging new and younger people to stand for election as elected members.

Councillors' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic

- 3.54 The survey included a series of questions focusing on councillors' experiences of working during the Covid-19 pandemic aimed at developing an understanding of whether the role had changed at all during this time.
- 3.55 Respondents were first asked whether they regularly carried out council work from home before the Covid-19 pandemic. Of the 1,233 councillor who responded to this question, three-fifths (60 per cent) said they did, while the remainder said they did not.
- 3.56 Those respondents who regularly worked from home before the pandemic were then asked to note approximately how many hours per week they spent working from home. Around three-fifths (59 per cent) said they previously worked 10 hours or less from home each week, while just over a quarter (28 per cent) said they worked between 11 and 20 hours. Around a tenth of respondents (9 per cent) said they spent between 21 and 30 hours each week working from home before the pandemic and only 4 per cent said they worked more than 40 hours each week during that time (Table 10).

Table 10: How many hours a week did you spend working from home before the Covid-19 pandemic?

Number of hours	Percentage of respondents
10 hours or less	59
11-20 hours	28
21-30 hours	9
31-40 hours	2
More than 40 hours	2

Base: 721 respondents

3.57 Respondents were asked about the working arrangements that were put in place for councillors during the pandemic. The vast majority of respondents (96 per cent) had made use of arrangements put in place by local authorities to hold council meetings and carry out council work remotely, and only 4 per cent of the 1,200 councillors who responded to this question noted that they did not make use of these arrangements.

3.58 Those respondents who had made use of the arrangements were then asked if they would like these arrangements to continue in future. Nearly two-thirds (58 per cent) of the 1,142 councillors who provided a response to this question agreed, while around a third (30 per cent) disagreed. Around a tenth (12 per cent) of respondents said they did not know.

Table 11: Would you like the working arrangements put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic to continue in future?

	Percentage of respondents			
	All councillors	Community and town councillors	Principal councillors	Dual-hatters
Yes	58	51	71	68
No	30	37	16	18
Don't know	12	12	13	14
Total	100	100	100	100

Base: 1142 respondents (482 respondents chose not to answer this question)

3.59 There were notable differences in the proportion of respondents who said they would like to see the working arrangements put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic to continue in future by councillor type. A higher proportion of principal councillors (71 per cent) and dual-hatters (68 per cent) agreed, compared with 51

per cent of community and town councillors. A higher proportion of community and town councillors (37 per cent) said they did not want these arrangements to continue, compared with 16 per cent of principal councillors and 18 per cent of dual-hatters.

- 3.60 All respondents were then asked to explain their answer. The use of an open-ended question allowed respondents to include more information about why they would or would not like to see Covid-19 working arrangements continue. Councillors reflected on their experiences of carrying out the role during the pandemic and highlighted a range of advantages and disadvantages of remote working.
- 3.61 The advantages of remote working mentioned were increased efficiency and productivity and increased control of work patterns which helped provide a better work-life balance. Councillors also emphasised that saving time that would otherwise be spent on long commutes or travelling to and from meetings also allowed them to have a better work-life balance, and many noted that they had effectively gained hours in their day that could be better spent with families or dealing with constituent or community matters.
- 3.62 Linked to this, another positive aspect highlighted was a reduction in the time taken to complete council work, with many councillors noting that working from home provided fewer distractions compared with attending council offices or other locations.
- 3.63 Some positive views were shared by councillors about how remote working offered more flexible options for elected members, particularly those in full-time employment, with young families and caring responsibilities, suffering from mobility issues or ill-health and disabled councillors. A number of councillors suggested that the continuation of remote working arrangements had the potential to improve the diversity of elected members by making the role more attractive and feasible for a wider range of groups.
- 3.64 Several interviewees also identified ways in which the move to remote meetings had a positive impact on local governance processes and practices by providing more opportunities for constituents and councillors to engage in open discussions and debate.

- 3.65 On a more practical level, councillors noted that their councils had quickly established protocols to work online and make use of different technologies during the pandemic and many commented that holding online meetings using digital platforms such as Skype and Teams were as effective as face-to-face meetings. These councillors observed that online meetings were in many cases more efficient, because the agenda was much more clearly established. It was emphasised that this allowed members to work in a more efficient and focused way. A number of councillors also noted that the move to online working had also had a positive impact on behaviours of councillors during meetings.
- 3.66 Conversely, councillors also reported numerous disadvantages associated with remote working. On an individual level, these included reduced personal contact and the loss of informal interactions with constituents and fellow councillors, as well as feelings of isolation and dislocation brought on by the increased use of screen-based technologies.
- 3.67 Many councillors noted that they found that their work–life balance was also challenged as work and home boundaries became increasingly blurred, they worked more hours during the day and struggled as a result of the lack of face-to-face support and guidance. While many councillors also welcomed the option of not having to travel long distances to attend council offices and meetings, a small number noted that this helped them to define work and home boundaries whilst undertaking their role. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance was highlighted as a key priority for these councillors going forward.
- 3.68 On an organisational level, others noted that the changes brought about by the pandemic had significant impacts on their ability to deliver certain aspects of their role, namely to build connections with constituents, fellow councillors, council officers and partners and address issues and conflicts.
- 3.69 While councillors emphasised the benefits of remote working, the survey highlighted some mixed experiences, which could be attributed in part to the different levels of access councillors had to suitable technology prior to the pandemic and also their varying experience in the use of technology for remote working, as well as more basic technical skills.

- 3.70 Several councillors noted that they did not have the skills and knowledge to use technology from home at the start of the pandemic and had therefore struggled to carry out their roles effectively whilst working remotely. Despite this, many of these councillors recognised the advantages of remote working and acknowledged the fact that it had allowed them to stay connected to fellow councillors and constituents. Linked to this point, a number of respondents emphasised the importance of recognising differences in skills and knowledge among councillors when adapting to remote working arrangements. Lack of access to appropriate technologies was also highlighted as a particular issue, particularly for councillors based in rural areas with poor broadband coverage.
- 3.71 Overall, the views of councillors about remote working were wide ranging, with many seeing the advantages of more flexible working arrangements and easier access, whilst also recognising the disadvantages of the lack of face-to-face, in-person interactions.
- 3.72 Whilst there was a certain amount of hesitancy among a small number of councillors about the prospect of remote working arrangements continuing in future, councillors were on the whole supportive of maintaining some level of remote or hybrid working arrangements post-COVID-19 in order to meet the increased demand for flexibility.

Encouraging others to get involved in local politics

- 3.73 The survey asked respondents whether they would encourage others to become a councillor. Of the 1,189 councillors who provided a response to this question, the majority (80 per cent) said they would encourage others to stand for election as a councillor, while only 6 per cent of respondents said they would not. Around a tenth of respondents (14 per cent) said they did not know.
- 3.74 All respondents (with the exception of those who responded 'don't know') were then asked to explain their answer. The use of an open-ended question allowed respondents to include more information about why they would or would not encourage others to become a councillor.
- 3.75 Several respondents across the three councillor types described being elected as a 'privilege' and encouraged others to put themselves forward as candidates. Others

observed that while being a councillor was demanding work, which required an ability to balance council and party commitments with personal life and professional work, being able to deliver for the community made it a 'worthwhile' and 'rewarding' experience.

- 3.76 Perceptions of 'making a difference' to the quality of life of local communities were also commonly reported and there was a strong sense among councillors of 'giving something back to the community' in which they lived.
- 3.77 The lack of diversity in the current councillor population was widely acknowledged as a key issue by respondents, with all types of councillors emphasising the need to attract and encourage young and working-age candidates, especially women and minority ethnic groups to stand for election. Principal and community and town councillors, and dual-hatters all emphasised the need to improve the age, gender and social balance within the councillor population, as these quotes illustrate:

A council should be diverse in all aspects for a healthy and robust organisation.

(Community and Town Councillor)

There is a need to encourage younger members of communities to become involved, as well as encouraging people with diverse backgrounds and experience to offer their skills and insight to the benefit of the community (Community and Town Councillor)

The diversity of councillors is woefully lacking. As a disabled councillor I would like to see more councillors with disabilities come forward and I work with Disability Wales to try and achieve this. We need more women, we need younger people. [...] it is important to encourage more people to consider standing for council who would not have necessarily thought of doing so. (Principal Councillor)

Wide diversity of experience and views is necessary for the Council to properly perform its functions for the community. (Dual-hatted councillor)

(t)here is at present a woeful lack of diversity in our councils [...] a complete lack of anyone of working age, never mind anyone young. As a result, there is a strong sense of a "pensioner mafia" in both the administration and opposition, (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 3.78 In making such a call however, some of the barriers that prevented potential candidates from putting themselves forward to stand were identified, including the demands of the role, the type of work involved and the financial aspects of the role:

The role of a councillor is essential to democracy; however, there are financial barriers for young people and those who are not retired from becoming councillors. In order to attract more councillors from diverse backgrounds issues such as remuneration, accessible meetings and support must be addressed. (Principal Councillor)

(There are) not enough younger or diverse people involved in elected politics at a local level and this would improve solutions thinking [...] (There) needs to be an age cut off or a three-term limit to allow new individuals and fresh thinking to come into local government. [...] the quid pro quo would be to pay councillors a proper salary. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

We need young intelligent candidates instead of old people who are not the sharpest tools in the box. [...] young candidates [...] are reluctant to become Cllrs and give up jobs as finding a job after 4 years is difficult. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 3.79 However, for a small number of respondents it was clear that their personal experiences of abuse and intimidation as councillors, as well as the unacceptable behaviour they had witnessed towards fellow councillors, had impacted on their view of the role. Many cited this as the main reason why they would discourage others from considering standing for elected office.

It's an unpaid, thankless task that is often difficult and rarely rewarding. People take us for granted, feel that they can hurl abuse at us and have unreal expectations of what we can achieve. (Community and Town Councillor)

The Abuse and toxic environment contribute to mental health issues. (Principal Councillor)

Because the bullying that Councillors get is to a level I have never experienced before in any walk of life. (Principal Councillor)

It takes over your life. Stress from complaints and unreasonable expectations from taxpayers. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

Our community council has become such a nasty place, I won't be standing for re-election. There is no support for us at all. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 3.80 Several councillors specifically emphasised that the negative impact of online abuse and intimidation had influenced their position on whether to encourage others to stand.

Future plans

- 3.81 When questioned about their future plans as an elected representative, around three out of every five respondents (61 per cent) said that they intended to stand for re-election in the local government elections in 2022 (which were taking place after the survey fieldwork was carried out), while just under a fifth (16 per cent) said they did not intend to stand for re-election. Just under a quarter of the 1,171 councillors who responded to this question were undecided.
- 3.82 Those respondents who said that they did not intend to stand for re-election were then asked to explain their answer in a follow-on, open-ended question.
- 3.83 Councillors provided a number of reasons which appeared to be common across all types of councillors and included:
- Too old or retiring
 - Stepping aside to make way for new councillors
 - Too time consuming
 - Disillusioned and frustrated
 - Witnessed / experienced abuse and other unprofessional behaviour
 - Health issues
 - Moving from area
 - Family commitments
 - Negative impact on mental health
 - Frustrated at the lack of influence / power

4. Remuneration

- 4.1 The survey included a set of questions about the remuneration that councillors receive as part of their role and the additional allowances and expenses they are entitled to claim. The questions were tailored to each type of councillor to reflect the different salaries and allowances that principal, community and town councillors and 'dual-hatted' councillors are entitled to.

- 4.2 The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) is responsible for setting the levels and arrangements for the remuneration of members of principal councils, community and town councils, national park authorities and fire and rescue authorities in Wales.
- 4.3 For principal councils, this includes a basic salary that is paid to all elected members (based on a full time equivalent of 3 days a week), as well as payments to members holding senior responsibilities, such as leader, deputy leader, executive member and committee chair. The IRPW has also made provision for elected members to claim for any travel or subsistence costs they incur when on official business, and for the reimbursement of costs of childcare or care of a dependant adult.
- 4.4 In 2021, the IRPW carried out a review of the remuneration framework for community and town councils in Wales. Under the framework, community and town councillors are entitled to a basic payment of £150 per year for costs incurred supporting their role (including telephone usage, information technology and consumables etc.). Community and town councils can also make an annual payment of up to £500 to members in recognition of specific responsibilities (in addition to the £150 payment for costs and expenses) and also provide contributions towards care and personal assistance costs to enable people who have personal support needs and/or caring responsibilities to carry out their duties effectively as a member of an authority.
- 4.5 Further information on the allowances payable to elected members of principal and community and town councils can be found in the evidence review carried out as part of this programme of research ([Williams, 2021](#)) and in the IRPW's draft annual report for 2023-24 ([Welsh Government, 2022](#)).
- 4.6 Before presenting the findings on the remuneration of principal and community and town councillors, and dual-hatters, it is important to note that around three out of every five councillors (1,170 respondents) who responded to the survey chose to answer the section on remuneration. This may reflect that some respondents may not have felt comfortable discussing or providing information on issues relating to allowances and expenses.

- 4.7 Of the 1,170 councillors who did provide responses, just over a third (67 per cent) were community and town councillors, a fifth (20 per cent) were principal councillors and the remaining 14 per cent were working as 'dual-hatted' councillors.

Payments to Members of Community and Town Councils

- 4.8 Community and town councillors were asked if they were aware that they were entitled to a basic payment to act and carry out their duties as a member of a community or town council. Just over half of the 781 councillors who responded were aware of the basic payment, while 44 per cent said they were not aware. Respondents were then asked if they were aware that they were also entitled to an additional payment for any senior roles they hold within their Council. Awareness of this payment was slightly lower, with around two out of every five respondents (39 per cent) stating that they were aware of this payment, while just over three out of every five respondents (61 per cent) said they were not aware.
- 4.9 When respondents were asked whether they had (received / claimed) their basic and senior payment in full, around three-quarters of respondents (73 per cent) said that they had not, while a quarter said they had. Only 2 per cent of respondents did not know.
- 4.10 The survey also included questions aimed at gauging community and town councillors' awareness and use of the various allowances and expenses they are entitled to (including contribution towards costs of Care and Personal Assistance, reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs and compensation for financial loss when attending approved duties).
- 4.11 Overall, awareness of arrangements for claiming travel and subsistence costs for attending approved duties both within and outside the area of the council among community and town councillors was high, with around four out of five respondents (78 per cent) saying that they were aware of the arrangements in place, while around a fifth (22 per cent) said that they were not aware. Awareness of other allowances, including compensation for loss of earnings, reimbursement of care costs for dependents and contributions towards costs of personal assistance was lower, with over half of all community and town councillors noting that they were not aware that they could claim these three allowances as part of their role (Table 13).

Table 12: Awareness that community and town councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:

Allowance / contribution	Percentage of respondents	
	Yes	No
Travel and subsistence costs	78	22
Compensation for loss of earnings	42	58
Reimbursement of care costs for dependents	45	55
Reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance	41	59

Base: 782 respondents (Community and Town Councillors)

4.12 The survey went on to ask if community and town councillors had received or claimed any of the allowances or contributions listed in Table 13 and could select one of the following statements:

- I claimed in full
- I claimed part of my cost
- I had these costs but did not claim
- I did not have these costs

4.13 Only 7 per cent of community and town councillors had claimed reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs incurred as part of their role and a further 6 per cent noted they had claimed only part of the cost. Around two out of five respondents (37 per cent) said that although they had incurred travel and subsistence costs as part of their role, they had chosen not to claim for the allowance. The remaining 51 per cent said that they did not have these costs.

4.14 Provisions for claiming compensation for loss of earnings and reimbursements of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance also did not appear to be widely used by community and town councillors, with only 3 councillors stating that they had claimed for these costs, either in full or for part of the cost. Of the community and town councillors that responded, 15 per cent said that they chose not to claim for these costs even though they were entitled to, and over four out of five respondents (84 per cent) said they did not have these costs.

Table 13: Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?

Allowance / contribution	Percentage of respondents			
	I claimed in full	I claimed part of my cost	I had these costs but did not claim	I did not have these costs
Travel and subsistence costs	7	6	37	51
Compensation for loss of earnings	-	-	15	84
Reimbursement of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance	-	-	9	91

Base: 768 respondents (Community and Town Councillors)

Payments to Elected Members of Principal Councils

- 4.15 Principal councillors were asked if they were aware of their entitlement to a basic payment to act and carry out their duties as an elected councillor of a principal council. The majority of the 226 principal councillors who responded to this question (84 per cent) were aware that they could claim for a basic salary, while the remaining 16 per cent were not aware. Principal councillors were then asked if they were aware that they were entitled to additional salary payments for any senior roles they held within the council, for example councillors who are executive, chairs of committees and / or the leader of the opposition. Over two-thirds of the principal councillors (70 per cent) were aware of this and just under a third (31 per cent) said they were not.
- 4.16 When principal councillors were asked whether they had (received / claimed) their basic and senior salary in full, the majority of respondents (86 per cent) said that they had, while just under a tenth (9 per cent) said they had not claimed these payments in full. The remaining 5 per cent of respondents did not know.
- 4.17 The survey also included questions aimed at developing an understanding of principal councillors' awareness and use of the various allowances and expenses they are entitled to (including travel and subsistence costs for attending approved duties both within and outside the area of the council, and reimbursement of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance).
- 4.18 The majority of the principal councillors that responded to this question (88 per cent) were aware that they could claim for reimbursements of travel and subsistence costs, while just over a tenth (12 per cent) said they were not aware of this provision. Awareness of other allowances and contributions were slightly lower, with

around two out of every three respondents (67 per cent) saying that they were aware they could claim reimbursement of care costs for dependents and three out of five respondents (60 per cent) saying that they were aware they could claim reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance. The proportion of respondents who said they were *not* aware of these latter payments were 33 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

Table 14: Awareness that principal councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:

Allowance / contribution	Percentage of respondents	
	Yes	No
Travel and subsistence costs	88	12
Reimbursement of care costs for dependents	67	33
Reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance	60	40

Base: 223 respondents (Principal Councillors)

4.19 The survey went on to ask if principal councillors had (received / claimed) any of the allowances or contributions listed in Table 15 and could select one of the following statements:

- I claimed in full
- I claimed part of my cost
- I had these costs but did not claim
- I did not have these costs

4.20 Around one out of five principal councillors who responded (17 per cent) said that they had claimed full reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs incurred as part of their role and a further quarter of respondents noted that they had claimed part of the cost. Just under half of all principal councillors (46 per cent) said that although they had incurred travel and subsistence costs as part of their role, they had chosen not to claim for the allowance and around a tenth (13 per cent) said that they did not have these costs.

4.21 Similar to the results for community and town councillors, provisions for claiming reimbursement of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance appeared to be much less used by principal councillors, with only 7 councillors out of the 213

that responded stating that they had claimed for these costs, either in full or for part of the cost. Around one in every five respondents (18 per cent) said that they chose not to claim for these costs even though they were entitled to, and the majority of respondents (79 per cent) noted that they did not have these costs.

Table 15: Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?

Allowance / contribution	Percentage of respondents			
	I claimed in full	I claimed part of my cost	I had these costs but did not claim	I did not have these costs
Travel and subsistence costs	17	25	46	13
Reimbursement of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance	2	1	18	79

Base: 223 respondents (Principal Councillors)

Payments to 'dual-hatted' members

- 4.22 Respondents who noted that they were 'dual-hatted' councillors were asked if they were aware of their entitlement to a basic payment. Of the 159 councillors that responded to this question, four out of every five respondents said they were aware, while a fifth said they were not aware of this. Dual-hatted councillors were then asked if they aware that they were entitled to additional payments for any senior roles they held within the council. Just under three out of four councillors (71 per cent) were aware of this, while the remaining 29 per cent said they were not aware.
- 4.23 When dual-hatted councillors were asked whether they had (received / claimed) their basic and senior payment in full, the majority of respondents (86 per cent) said that they had, while a tenth (10 per cent) said they had not claimed these payments in full. The remaining 4 per cent of respondents said they did not know.
- 4.24 The survey also included questions aimed at assessing dual-hatted councillors' awareness and use of the various allowances and expenses they are entitled to (including travel and subsistence costs for attending approved duties both within and outside the area of the council, and reimbursement of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance).

4.25 The majority of the dual-hatted councillors that responded to this question (89 per cent) were aware that they could claim for reimbursements of travel and subsistence costs, while just over a tenth (11 per cent) said they there were not aware of this provision. Awareness of other allowances and contributions were slightly lower, with around two out of every three respondents (69 per cent) saying that they were aware they could claim reimbursement of care costs for dependents and nearly three out of five respondents (58 per cent) saying that they were aware they could claim reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance. The proportion of respondents who said they were *not* aware of these latter payments was 31 per cent and 42 per cent respectively.

Table 16: Awareness that dual-hatted councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:

Allowance / contribution	Percentage of respondents	
	Yes	No
Travel and subsistence costs	89	11
Compensation for loss of earnings	41	59
Reimbursement of care costs for dependents	69	31
Reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance	58	42

Base: 159 respondents (Dual-hatted Councillors)

4.26 Half of all the dual-hatted councillors who responded said they had claimed reimbursement for travel and subsistence costs incurred as part of their role in full, and a further quarter noted that they had claimed part of the cost. Around two out of five respondents (43 per cent) said that although they had incurred travel and subsistence costs as part of their role, they had chosen not to claim for the allowance. The remaining 7 per cent said that they did not have these costs.

4.27 Provisions for claiming compensation for loss of earnings and reimbursements of care costs for dependents and/or personal assistance appeared to be less widely used by dual-hatted councillors, with only 3 councillors stating that they had claimed for these costs, either in full or for part of the cost. Of the dual-hatted councillors that responded, just over a quarter (27 per cent) said that they chose not to claim compensation for loss of earnings, and 15 per cent of respondents chose not to

claim reimbursement for care and/or personal assistance costs, even though they were entitled to request both allowances.

Table 17: Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?

Allowance / contribution	Percentage of respondents			
	I claimed in full	I claimed part of my cost	I had these costs but did not claim	I did not have these costs
Travel and subsistence costs	25	25	43	7
Compensation for loss of earnings	1	-	27	72
Reimbursement of care costs for dependents / personal assistance	1	1	15	83

Base: 157 respondents (Dual-hatted Councillors)

4.28 All councillors were then asked to share their experiences of claiming allowances and remuneration as part of their role. This question allowed an open-ended response to capture the range of experiences and views.

4.29 From the responses provided, it was clear that the question of councillors' allowances and expenses continued to be a source of considerable contention at the local level. A large number of councillors, particularly those from community and town councils, emphasised that they regularly faced criticism from constituents and the public of payments of allowances and expenses to elected members. As a result, there appeared to be an inevitable reluctance among councillors to claim what they were entitled to for fear of appearing 'self-serving' and to avoid the familiar accusations that they were 'on the gravy train', as these quotations show:

Councillors will not claim any type of expenses because it reflects badly on the electorate. This too can leave you out of pocket and needs to be looked at. (Principal Councillor)

Because Councillors who have more money than me refuse to take this and then brag about the fact to the electorate, taking every penny creates fear that people will say I'm greedy and have my snout in the trough. (Dual-hatted councillor)

4.30 The stigma around the remuneration of councillors was also highlighted with several community and town councillors sharing experiences of being shamed by fellow

councillors and constituents for taking public money, particularly during times of financial austerity:

I did not claim it as I don't want people saying I am only in it for the money. (Town and Community Councillor)

In 5 years have received two annual payments which I had to ask for (after I attended a T&CC forum meeting at which the Independent Remuneration Panel gave information and guidance). The first time I asked, the cheque was read out for approval and I was made to feel ashamed for taking the £150 allowance by other councillors. (Town and Community Councillor)

I'm too embarrassed to claim care allowance (Dual-hatted Councillor)

4.31 There also appeared to be a culture of avoiding allowances and expenses, with many community councillors noting that they were 'following the norm' by not claiming for their entitlements and in many cases had been advised to do so by other senior councillors.

4.32 A large number of respondents were against the idea of councillors receiving payment for their work on more normative grounds, with community councillors in particular emphasising that this was incongruous with the nature their role. A common argument for these councillors was that it was a voluntary role and councillors should not be paid for the 'privilege' of serving their community, as this councillor emphasises:

I never asked the question. I see the role of Community Council as voluntary and a privilege. Once there is a 'reward' the role becomes open to accusations of 'snouts in trough' etc, which undermines the whole point. (Town and Community Councillor)

4.33 Across all categories of councillors, there was also a strong sense that any funds being made available for allowances and expenses would be better spent or reinvested in local communities.

4.34 Despite these views, a small number of community councillors defended the current councillor remuneration system and argued that the role of a community councillor in particular had now shifted from a traditional part-time, unpaid position to what they viewed as a full-time 'professionalised' role involving a range of activities and responsibilities. Many of these councillors saw value in being able to claim for

support such as the carers allowances to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

I started claiming the small payment a year ago as I wanted to support the idea that people should take it. I don't need it, but I didn't want a newer (and perhaps poorer) councillor to feel inhibited from claiming it. There was a culture of not claiming among the council. But there is a cost to being a councillor, and it's not right to expect people to have to waive it. (Town and Community Councillor)

4.35 Linked to this, it was also felt more generally that providing a more effective remuneration system would also encourage more people to stand for election:

I think not enough is understood about what it takes to do a council role well especially at senior level. There was no way I could have continued my career as it involved the need to be available and taking time out for meetings just wasn't practical. For several years our family finances was severely impacted as I went from £50k to £14k. I now have meetings with officers who are on £120k yet I'm the one interviewing them or signing off reports. (Principal Councillor)

The public also need educating as to the breadth of knowledge and skills base needed to be a good councillor and to ask themselves honestly is the remuneration fair if they want councillors to be available or even stand. Good candidates and younger ones with families and careers might not which means only older retired people will stand or the wealthier or self-employed public. To do the role properly takes hours and hours, impacts negatively on family life, can often take up most of your evenings and is really challenging for very little acknowledgement from the community [...]. I did make the decision to suffer financially because it was something I really had a passion for and wanted to do. Increasing Cllr remuneration will be very hard because the public don't understand the task and bad Cllrs give us all a bad name. (Principal Councillor)

5. Equipment

5.1 The survey included a series of questions about the equipment and resources councillors use or had access to as part of their role.

5.2 Of the 1,156 councillors that responded to this question, just under two out of every three respondents (63 per cent) said they had not been given any equipment to undertake their work, while 36 per cent of respondents noted that they had. Those

respondents who had received equipment were then asked to specify what type of equipment.

5.3 The equipment and resources which community and town councillors had received included:

- Laptop or tablet;
- litter picking equipment;
- councillor handbook;
- council policies / paperwork;
- printing equipment.

5.4 The equipment and resources which principal councillors received most were:

- Laptop; tablet;
- headset for virtual meetings;
- mobile phone / smartphone;
- Broadband
- Office equipment - desk / chair;

5.5 The majority of the 415 respondents who had received equipment noted that the equipment had been provided by the council, while only 6 respondents said they had paid for the equipment themselves. The results indicated that principal councillors and dual-hatters were more likely to have received equipment from the council to undertake their role compared with community and town councillors. The vast majority of the 202 principal councillors (95 per cent) and 150 dual-hatters (95 per cent) that responded noted that they used equipment provided by the council compared with a slightly smaller proportion (86 per cent) of the 62 community and town councillors that responded.

5.6 The survey also asked respondents if there was any additional equipment they needed that would allow them to carry out their role more effectively. The most common responses across all councillor types were laptop or tablet; printing equipment or access to printing facilities; mobile phone or smartphone; and access

to technical support to support the shift to online working. Community councillors noted that they would benefit from access to broadband for meetings at community premises; access to general technical support from the council; an official email; and access to computer hardware and software packages.

6. Behaviour and attitudes towards councillors

- 6.1 The survey included questions about general behaviour and attitudes towards councillors.
- 6.2 Respondents were asked whether they had experienced or witnessed any type of inappropriate behaviour while undertaking their role, either by members of the public, by council officers or by other councillors. Inappropriate behaviour was defined as any behaviour that causes people nuisance, annoyance, alarm or distress, and also included behaviours that are aggressive or intimidating or that impact upon a person's quality of life.
- 6.3 Overall, a large proportion of the 1,140 councillors that responded to this question had *not* experienced or witnessed any type of inappropriate behaviour while undertaking their role. Four out of every five respondents (81 per cent) noted that during their time working as a councillor they had not witnessed or experienced inappropriate behaviour by *council officers* (81 per cent), while around half of respondents said they had not come across this type of behaviour by *councillors* (54 per cent) or by *members of the public* (48 per cent).
- 6.4 Nevertheless, around half of all respondents (48 per cent) said they had experienced or witnessed inappropriate behaviour by *members of the public* while undertaking their role and two out of every five respondents (41 per cent) had witnessed or experienced inappropriate behaviours by *other councillors* (Table 18).

Table 18: Since becoming a councillor, have you experienced or witnessed any type of inappropriate behaviour while undertaking your role?

Inappropriate behaviour by...	Percentage of respondents		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Members of the public	48	49	1
Officers	10	81	2
Councillors	41	54	2
Other	3	33	3

Base: 1140 respondents (484 respondents chose not to answer this question)

- 6.5 These respondents were then asked to describe the type of behaviour they had witnessed or experienced in a follow-on, open-ended question. Over 500 responses

were received and the comments highlighted instances of bullying, offensive and inappropriate behaviour towards councillors, from fellow elected members, the public and from officers. Further analysis of the responses highlighted a number of common themes.

Relations between elected members

- 6.6 From the information provided by councillors, it was clear that bullying was a common feature of relations between elected members in many councils. Several respondents reported experiencing bullying and harassment by colleagues or witnessing such behaviour towards other councillors. Councillors reported many examples of verbal bullying and harassment including the posting of offensive and inappropriate comments on social media:

I am aware of one councillor submitting frivolous and malicious complaints to the Ombudsman in a sustained campaign to undermine fellow councillors. (Town and Community Councillor)

At this time a community councillor [...] no longer attends meetings because a group of community councillors are maintaining a series of social media posts against her. She has left the party she belonged to [...] Every councillor who opposes any in this group have posts written against them. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 6.7 A number of community and town councillors reported instances of being deliberately excluded from meetings and decision-making processes, and of other councillors withholding information relevant to their work:

A previous clerk bullied me and others - undermining our efforts, withholding information, providing misinformation to make us look bad. Councillors talk over me, shout at me, refuse to let me speak, withhold information, arrange meetings they know I can't make due to other commitments, are disrespectful. (Community and Town Councillor)

Councillors bully - shout, talk over, withhold information, hold meetings at times unsuitable for certain councillors (during usual working hours), bar councillors from meetings (lock remote meetings so you can't join). (Community and Town Councillor)

- 6.8 Several examples were also provided of inappropriate conduct in meetings such as shouting and aggressive behaviour from members deliberately aimed at intimidating or undermining fellow councillors:

One or two of our councillors become so loud and domineering in meetings that the rest of the council eventually caves in. (Town and Community Councillor)

One Councillor in particular was very aggressive, bombastic and frequently rude to other councillors and refused to accept majority decisions unless they agreed with his opinion. (Town and Community Councillor)

Some councillors dominate meetings with strident voices, interrupt others, don't adhere to standing orders themselves but are quick to challenge others on the same and generally behave in a bullying and egocentric manner which most Chairs are too inexperienced or willing to control. For this reason nearly half the councillors originally elected, including myself, have disengaged. (Community and town councillors)

- 6.9 A number of respondents noted that such behaviour had a detrimental effect on councillors and, in some cases, led to them to consider resigning or not standing for re-election:

I have experienced bullying and harassment from some senior members during my time as a Councillor, to the point where I have considered resigning. As Chair I have tried to change behaviours and reach out but the behaviour of a few is impossible to change. (Town and Community Councillor)

Very unpleasant and aggressive behaviour by one Councillor and a small cohort that have been 'encouraged/ bullied' into supporting. This has disrupted meetings, had staff in tears and caused many sleepless nights. I also have to spend time after meetings calming Councillors and convincing them not to stand down. Other Councillors' inappropriate behaviour has caused huge problems. (Town and Community Councillor)

- 6.10 As the quotes highlight, when respondents discussed these issues it was clear that many elected members were reluctant to complain about inappropriate behaviour out of fear of negative impacts.
- 6.11 Evidence from the survey responses also showed that abuse and intimidation of councillors has a significant impact on individual councillors and those around them. Many respondents described how their experiences of abuse had negatively impacted their mental health and their ability to carry out their role effectively.

Targeted abuse

- 6.12 Targeted abuse towards councillors was a recurring theme in the responses, with councillors reporting experience of this behaviour or witnessing it regularly as part of their role. Cases of misogyny, racism and homophobia were all reported by respondents, and inappropriate behaviour directed towards women councillors were particularly common.
- 6.13 Evidence from the survey showed that female elected members often faced misogynistic behaviour aimed at disparaging and undermining them:

As a female the prevalence of older males in public life has led to situations where I felt ignored, overridden, not listened to. There is a lot of 'in the club' behaviour by councillors at county level. Some are ill or carers and cannot and do not carry out their role to represent people, but stay to get the money. They should stand down. You need to deal with this. (Town and Community Councillor)

I joined a community council where most males, including the clerk, [were] misogynistic bullies. None had training. They had been on the council for decades and had no intention of being anything other than an 'old boys' network. I was also personally verbally attacked, spoken over, ignored, belittled and subject of snide comments (other female councillors witnessed and experienced similar issues). I reported it to the monitoring officer but was advised to go to the Ombudsman. I could see from past published Ombudsman reports that issues like this were difficult to prove [...] so it seemed pointless to create even more tension and anxiety. [...] There was nowhere to turn really. (Town and Community Councillor)

I've witnessed more misogyny and sexism in my short time as a Cllr, than 20 years of working on a building site - 'Girls go over there!' Mainly men talking over me, then, a minute later saying what I said. Being giggled at while I'm speaking. (Dual-hatted councillor)

As a woman I have experience aggressive behaviour from male councillors. I am often treated less respectfully than male colleagues and my points of view are often ignored or dismissed. (Town and Community Councillor)

6.14 Several respondents also noted that they had witnessed unacceptable behaviour from older or more experienced councillors towards younger or recently-elected colleagues.

Lack of compliance with standards

6.15 Many councillors noted that unacceptable behaviour was often left unchallenged and where complaints had been made several respondents described the difficulties they had experienced raising issues with monitoring officers, and subsequently getting them investigated by the Ombudsman, and as a result no action being taken.

6.16 There was also evidence of the normalisation of abuse towards councillors and an expectation that councillors should deal with the unacceptable behaviour and accept it as 'part of the job'. Many argued that this issue needed to be addressed and called for more support for more training and guidance for councillors to deal with these issues.

Party politics

6.17 The evidence presented during our research suggests the interplay of party politics had a negative impact on relations between councillors. A number of respondents reported that party politics was to blame for much of the unacceptable behaviour, with councillors failing to respect each other's viewpoints and becoming increasingly less tolerant of others' views, as this councillor emphasised:

Some of the other councillors behaviour is bullying / intimidating. It's not a welcoming place to be. Party politics has no place in a town council but some people like to use it as a weapon to intimidate, bully and prevent progress for the sake of it (to the detriment to the local population) (Town and Community Councillor)

6.18 Councillors provided some anecdotal evidence of partisan divisions within their council and noted that it was common for councillors to show animosity towards councillors from different parties and to be less willing to support policies and share information.

Elected members and officer interactions

- 6.19 The survey also provided some evidence of a breakdown in the relationship between officers and elected members, with several councillors expressing concern about the behaviour of some council officers. Principal councillors provided examples of threats and bullying by officers:

Bullying by the leader and several other councillors, bullying by officers towards other councillors." (Principal Councillor)

"An officer has lied about me and tried to bully me. (Principal Councillor)

- 6.20 A number of respondents also observed that officers appeared to show less respect to councillors, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic, by failing to share relevant information and advice:

Personally I don't like councillors who council bash and write harmful blogs, but sometimes they are driven to it if officers block things - and they do ... I've had senior officers working against me (as a cabinet member) and gossiping about me. I took it to heart in the early days - I wasn't prepared for the level of resistance to change from some officers. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

Particularly during the last 18 months it has been increasingly difficult to get timely or in fact any response from officers at County Council level - this has led to high levels of frustration. (Town and Community Councillor)

Officers not providing information about matters in my ward and not answering emails and queries. Statements to the press from the Council about issues in my ward without first making me aware. (Principal Councillor)

I have a great working relationship with the majority of officers, including most senior management, but there has been numerous occasions where I have had to constantly push for action, or just a get simple update on a case. It is very frustrating and it makes it difficult to conduct casework effectively. (Town and Community Councillor)

Abuse from members of the public

- 6.21 Abuse of councillors from members of the public was another recurring theme that emerged from the survey responses. Many respondents noted that councillors were particularly vulnerable to abuse due to the nature of their role and the growing use

of social media meant they were increasingly exposed and under relentless scrutiny by constituents and the general public.

- 6.22 Alongside this, several community and town councillors and dual-hatters referred to the increasingly toxic nature of both national and local politics:

The level of inappropriate behaviour by Councillors at some levels of Council is astonishing. They think it ok to lie and spread misinformation just to bad mouth opposition members. I have come to hate my time on my [Town and Community] Council because of the way they treat people that disagree with them. The environment is so toxic I know it has driven people to leave my [Town and Community] Council. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

Politics in this council is completely toxic and officers [...] allow Councillors to be bullied. Officers are only interested in protecting the interests of the ruling Councillors and the opposition Councillors get nothing. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

As a general point, it appears that some individuals and factions in society are much less tolerant these days, and more willing to voice their opinions and complaints - regardless of how valid or reasonable those are. Social divisions and distressing comments became particularly evident during the campaigning around Brexit. (Community and Town Councillor)

Since Covid some people seem to have lost patience and manners (Town and Community Councillor)

Anti-social behaviour by some members of the public, especially since the current pandemic started and lockdown measures were put in place. (Dual-hatted Councillor)

- 6.23 As a result, councillors were experiencing increasing online intimidation, abuse and threats against them. Several councillors emphasised that the use of social media and the creation of 'like-minded' online communities meant that the public could easily choose to view only information that supported their own opinions, thereby increasing polarisation, encouraging the use of insensitive and inflammatory language and a general lack of respect towards other views. Councillors highlighted several instances of councillors being attacked and harassed on social media:

Since the emergence of greater use of social media there appears to be an increasing trend to think you can harass and bully Councillors and that can be from members of the public and from other Councillors on occasions (especially from community and town

councillors who may have failed to get elected at the last election to the County Borough). (Dual-hatted councillor)

Some shocking comments on social media by one councillor towards other councillors and members of the public. [...] Comments from members of the public towards some councillors on social media are also at times beyond what I would deem acceptable. (Principal Councillor)

Some members of the public can be abusive especially online or can make allegations about councillors honesty. (Principal Councillor)

6.24 Another respondent raised concerns about inappropriate behaviour at community council meetings, especially when they were required to consider contentious issues or matters relating to their area and the safety implications of this.

6.25 Experiences of intimidatory behaviour within the community were also commonly highlighted, with several councillors noting that some members of the public would approach them regularly and would often demand responses at any time of day. A dual-hatted councillor echoed the concerns of many respondents:

Social media allows people access to us 24 hours a day. Misinformation and malicious claims can be spread via social media, but we have very little ability to counter them without inflaming the situation and spreading them further by commenting.

6.26 Several councillors and their families had been subject to personal threats and intimidation while carrying out their roles. Examples were provided of a number of incidents both out and about in the community and at or near councillor's homes:

I'm aware of a member of the public sending a councillor an email to the threatening effect of 'I know where you live. (Community and Town Councillor)

When I was elected an ex-councillor walked round to the back door and into my house and threatened me for pursuing a goal on the council he didn't agree with. (Community and Town Councillor)

I have experienced members of the public shouting at me in the street on numerous occasions due to frustrations with a lack of action from the council (Dual-hatted councillor)

Some members of the public have been aggressive at surgeries and on the doorstep and on emails and social media (Principal Councillors)

6.27 Incidents involving physical threats, intimidatory behaviour and harassment were also reported by a number of councillors and several of these had been reported to the police, as these quotes highlight:

I have received death threats from members of the public [...] and I had to have police protection. I was threatened by a 'fellow' councillor [...]. This will help to explain my answer about whether [...] I am standing again!!! (Town and Community councillor)

I have received physical threats in person [...] These caused me to request Police support on occasions and PCSO regularly checked on my residence [...]. It was also necessary to install CCTV at my residence. (Principal Councillor)

I had to have a panic button in my house because of threatening calls from members of the public. (Dual-hatted councillor)

Changes in the standard of behaviour

6.28 Following on from this question, respondents were asked if they thought that the standard of behaviour towards councillors in their areas had either improved, stayed the same or got worse in the last few years. Of the 1,137 councillors who responded to this question, around half (53 per cent) thought that the standard of behaviour had stayed the same, just under a third (29 per cent) thought it had got worse and only 7 per cent thought the standard of behaviour had improved. Around a tenth of respondents noted that that they did not know.

Table 19: In the last few years, do you think the standard of behaviour towards councillors in your area has:

	Percentage of respondents
Improved	7
Stayed the same	53
Got worse	29
Don't know	11

Base: 1137 respondents (487 respondents chose not to answer this question)

6.29 Respondents who said that the standard of behaviour towards councillors had either improved or got worse during their time in the role were then asked to explain their answer in a follow-on, open-ended question. Some 370 comments were received, most of which were focused on how behaviour towards councillors had deteriorated. The vast majority of these comments cited disrespect, bullying and harassment on

social media as being the main issues, with councillors providing examples of how they had experienced increasing online intimidation, abuse and threats against them, from both the public and other councillors.

- 6.30 A number of councillors also commented on the increasing levels of polarisation in public debate at a local level, which many felt had intensified in recent years by the impacts of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic and declining levels of trust in politicians and the democratic system as a whole.
- 6.31 A small minority of councillors, however, responded more positively, with some noting that the use of online meetings during the pandemic had helped to improve the standard of behaviour. Interestingly, the growing use of social media tools was also framed in more positive terms by a number of councillors, with many noting that it allowed them to increase their visibility in the local area and connect with residents.
- 6.32 The survey sought councillors' perceptions on whether there were suitable arrangements in place to deal with any inappropriate behaviour they witnessed or experienced by members of the public, council officers or other councillors while undertaking their role. Overall, a large proportion of the 1,127 councillors that answered this question responded positively, with around three out of five respondents saying that there were suitable arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors by council officers (58 per cent) or by other councillors (58 per cent). The proportion of respondents who felt that there were suitable arrangements to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors from members of the public was slightly lower at 41 per cent.
- 6.33 There did, however, appear to be some uncertainty among councillors around this issue. Around a quarter of respondents (23 per cent) thought that there were no suitable arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors by members of the public and a further 35 per cent said they were unsure. Similarly, 17 per cent of respondents disagreed that there were suitable arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors by other councillors and a further 22 per cent were unsure, while around a tenth of respondents (11 per cent) thought there were no suitable arrangements in place to

deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors by council officers and just over a quarter (28 per cent) said they did not know.

Table 20: Are there suitable arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors by...

	Percentage of respondents		
	Yes	No	Don't know
Members of the public	41	23	35
Officers	58	11	28
Councillors	58	17	22

Base: 1127 respondents (497 respondents chose not to answer this question)

7. Training and development

- 7.1 The survey included questions about the training and development activities councillors had undertaken as part of their role. Respondents were asked whether their council had provided any induction training for newly elected members after the election, as well as any regular or ongoing training offered as part of their day-to-day role.
- 7.2 Just under two-thirds of the 1,131 councillors who responded (64 per cent) confirmed they had been offered an induction programme when they were elected as a councillor, while around a third (32 per cent) had not been offered any induction training. Around half of the respondents (53 per cent) who had been offered an induction were community and town councillors, just over a quarter (26 per cent) were principal councillors and a fifth (20 per cent) were dual-hatters. Of the 367 councillors who had not been offered an induction, the majority (88 per cent) were community and town councillors.
- 7.3 Most of the 718 councillors (93 per cent) who had been offered an induction programme had completed the training. Of this figure, around half (51 per cent) were community and town councillors, over a quarter (28 per cent) were principal councillors and a fifth (20 per cent) were dual-hatters. The 52 councillors who said they had not completed the induction programme offered to them were then asked to explain their answer in a follow-on, open-ended question. Responses were received from 44 councillors, the majority of which were community and town councillors.
- 7.4 A key issue identified by community and town councillors was that they did not have sufficient time for training and several who worked full-time also cited the timing of training as a key reason for not attending or completing the induction. A small number of community and town councillors who had previously worked in local government or public-facing roles or had past experience as councillors felt that the training was unnecessary and noted that they had made a conscious decision not to attend the induction to save taxpayers money.
- 7.5 The six dual-hatted councillors who provided further information also cited difficulties in attending induction courses due to work and family commitments.

- 7.6 Comments on councillors' experiences of the induction programme were wide-ranging, with respondents offering both positive and negative comments. Some noted that the information and training provided as part of the inductions was helpful and informative. A number of councillors felt that it was better to learn through experience and through guidance from fellow councillors, for example through informal mentoring. Similarly, another respondent noted that while the induction training they received was appropriate, it could have included more detailed guidance for newly elected councillors about the role.
- 7.7 The issue of whether training for councillors should be voluntary or a compulsory element of their office was highlighted regularly. A number of community and town councillors felt that there was a need for a more training, particularly on issues of equality and diversity.
- 7.8 The survey also asked councillors whether they received any regular or ongoing training as part of their role. Once again, the vast majority of the 1,122 councillors that responded to this question (69 per cent) had received training, while just over a quarter (28 per cent) said that they had not. The type of training undertaken by councillors varied greatly. Most respondents indicated that they attended training courses or had received a training pack or handbook.
- 7.9 Evidence collected as part of the survey suggested the training provided to councillors needed to be improved, in terms of the amount and the nature of the training that was offered, and crucially the timing. A number of areas of training were also suggested by all types of councillors. These included: equality and diversity issues, improving community engagement practice, legislative changes, IT skills and general personal development. The need for more guidance for handling intimidation and specific training on personal safety was also raised as an issue by all types of councillors.

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Annex A: Councillor Survey questions

Councillor remuneration and citizen engagement with councillors:

Survey of councillors

Section 1: Background

This survey has been designed to capture information which will help Welsh Government understand your experiences of being a councillor in Wales.

We would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this survey because your responses will be valuable in increasing diversity in the people who want to stand for elected office. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence, and any findings which are reported will be anonymised so you will not be identified.

Your identity will be hidden.

When hidden identity is used in surveys, no identifiable information, such as browser type and version, internet IP address, operating system, or e-mail address, will be stored with the answer. This is to protect the respondent's identity.

Section 2: Your role as a councillor

In order to properly understand your experience as a councillor, we would now like to ask you a few questions about your role.

Question 1
What type of councillor are you?
Response options <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. County (Principal) councillor2. Community and town councillor3. County and community and town councillor ('dual-hatted' councillor)

Question 2
How long have you served as a councillor?
Response options <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 1-2 years2. 3-5 years

3. 6-9 years
4. 10-15 years
5. 16-20 years
6. 21-25 years
7. More than 25 years

Question 3

Do you hold any senior positions within the council?

Response options

1. Leader
2. Cabinet Member
3. Chair of the Council
4. Committee Chair (routing to Q4)
5. Committee Member (routing to Q4)
6. Leader of the Opposition
7. Other senior role

Please provide details

Response options

Free text

Question 5

In addition to your work as a councillor do you undertake any of the following:

Response options

1. Full-time paid employment
2. Part-time paid employment
3. Self-employed or freelance
4. Unemployed
5. Retired
6. Looking after home / family
7. Full-time education
8. Other (please provide details)

Question 6
Do you undertake any voluntary activities alongside your role as a councillor?
Response options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes (routing to Q7) 2. No

Question 7
Please provide details:
Response options
Free text

Question 8
What was your main reason for standing as a councillor?
Response options
Free text

Question 9
What do you see as the most important role of a councillor? Please select all responses that apply.
Response options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Represent the views and needs of local residents 2. Support the local community 3. Listen to views of local community 4. Work with residents to address local issues 5. Attend council meetings 6. Make or influence decisions about the work of the council 7. Keep local residents informed 8. Deal with complaints 9. Hold surgeries 10. Other (please provide details)

Question 10
Has your understanding of the role and responsibilities of councillors changed at all during your time in the role?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes (routing to Q11) 2. No (routing to Q11) 3. Don't know / I have no opinion

Question 11
Why do you say this?
Response options
Free text

Question 12
How aware, if at all, would you say members of the public are of the difference between the role of a county councillor and a community and town councillor?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not at all aware 2. Slightly aware 3. Moderately aware 1. Very aware 2. Don't know / I have no opinion

Question 13
From your experience as a councillor, what are the most common misconceptions held by the public about the role?
Response options
Free text

Question 14
How much influence do you feel you have as a councillor?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. More influence to change things than expected2. Less influence to change things than expected3. As much influence as expected4. Don't know

Question 15
Thinking back to when you were considering becoming a councillor, what was your expectation in terms of the hours you would be required to commit to the role each week?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 10 hours or less2. 11-20 hours3. 21-30 hours4. 31-40 hours5. More than 41 hours6. No expectation

Question 16
How many hours do you spend each week on council business?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 10 hours or less2. 11-20 hours3. 21-30 hours4. 31-40 hours5. More than 40 hours

Question 17
How do you manage the time you make available for council work (for example, responding to queries from members of the public, holding councillor surgeries etc.)?

Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am available 24 hours a day, seven days a week 2. I only allocate a specific number of days a week to the role and outside of these hours I don't respond to queries 3. Other (please provide details)

Question 18
Please provide further details
Response options
Free text or check boxes

Question 19
<p>Approximately how many hours a week do you spend working on the following activities (these activities can be undertaken online, over the telephone or face-to-face):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparation for council meetings and/or committees 2. Attendance at council meetings and/or committees 3. Engaging with constituents (councillor surgeries and/or correspondence) 4. Working with community groups or organisations 5. Training and development activities 6. Specific tasks relating to senior or committee roles 7. Other (please provide details)
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10 hours or less 2. 11-20 hours 3. 21-30 hours 4. 31-40 hours 5. More than 40 hours

Question 20
Before the Covid-19 pandemic, did you regularly undertake council business from home?

Response options
1. Yes (routing to Q21 and Q22) 2. No

Question 21
Approximately how many hours a week did you spend working from home?
Response options
1. 10 hours or less 2. 11-20 hours 3. 21-30 hours 4. 31-40 hours 5. More than 40 hours

Question 22
What type of work did you undertake from home?
Response options
Free text

Question 23
How has your day-to-day role as a councillor changed during the Covid-19 pandemic?
Response options
Free text

Question 24
During the Covid-19 pandemic, arrangements were put in place to allow local authorities to hold council meetings and carry out council business remotely. Did you make use of these arrangements?

Response options
1. Yes (routing to Q25) 2. No

Question 25
Would you like these arrangements to continue in future?
Response options
1. Yes (routing to Q26) 2. No (routing to Q26) 3. Don't know

Question 26
Why do you say this?
Response options
Free text

Question 27
Would you encourage others to become a councillor?
Response options
1. Yes (routing to Q28) 2. No (routing to Q28) 3. Don't know / No opinion

Question 28
Why do you say that?

Response options
Free text

Question 29
Do you intend to stand for re-election?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Yes2. No (routing to Q30)3. Don't know

Question 30
Why do you say that?
Response options
Free text

Section 3: Remuneration

We would now like to ask you some questions about the remuneration that councillors receive as part of their role and the additional allowances and expenses they are entitled to claim.

Q31. This section will ask a set of questions based on your role as either a Community and town councillor or a County (Principal) councillor. Please select the option that applies to you to continue.

- Community and town councillor (routing to section 3 Q.32-37)
- County (Principal) councillor (routing to section 3 Q.38-43)
- Dual-hatted councillor (routing to section 3 Q.32-37)

Community and town councillor

When you were thinking of standing for election...

Question 32
Did you know that you would be entitled to a basic payment?
Response options 1. Yes 2. No

Question 33
Did you know that if you held a senior role you would be paid a senior salary?
Response options 3. Yes 4. No

Question 34
Did you know that councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:
Response options 1. Travel and subsistence costs for attending approved duties both within and outside the area of the council – Yes / No 2. Compensation for loss of earnings – Yes / No 3. Reimbursement of care costs for dependents up to a maximum sum – Yes / No 4. Reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance – Yes / No

Since becoming a Councillor:

Question 35
Have you received your basic and any senior payment in full?
Response options 1. Yes 2. No (routing to Q37)

3. Don't know

Question 36

Why is this?

Response options

Free text

Question 37

Have you received any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?

Response options

Travel and subsistence costs

1. I claimed in full
2. I claimed part of my cost
3. I had these costs but did not claim
4. I did not have these costs

Compensation for loss of earnings

1. I claimed in full
2. I claimed part of my cost
3. I had these costs but did not claim
4. I did not have these costs

Care and/or personal assistance costs

1. I claimed in full
2. I claimed part of my cost
3. I had these costs but did not claim
4. I did not have these costs

County (Principal) councillors:

When you were thinking of standing for election:

Question 38
Did you know that you would be entitled to a basic payment?
Response options 1. Yes 2. No

Question 39
Did know that if you held a senior role you would be paid a senior salary?
Response options 1. Yes 2. No

Question 40
Did you know that councillors are entitled to receive the following allowances and expenses:
Response options 1. Travel and subsistence costs for attending approved duties both within and outside the area of the council - Yes / No 2. Reimbursement of care costs for dependents up to a maximum sum - Yes / No 3. Reimbursement of care costs for personal assistance - Yes / No

Since becoming a County (Principal) councillor:

Question 41
Have you received your basic and any senior payment in full?
Response options

1. Yes
2. No (routing to Q43)
3. Don't know

Question 42

Why is this?

Response options

Free text

Question 43

Have you reclaimed any of the following allowances and expenses as part of your role?

Response options

Travel and subsistence costs

I claimed in full

1. I claimed part of my cost
2. I had these costs but did not claim
3. I did not have these costs

Care and/or personal assistance costs

1. I claimed in full
2. I claimed part of my cost
3. I had these costs but did not claim
4. I did not have these costs

Section 4: Equipment

We would now like to ask you a few questions about the equipment you use to undertake your role.

Question 44
Have you been given any equipment to undertake your work as a councillor?
Response options
1. Yes (routing to Q45 and Q46) 2. No 3. Don't know

Question 45
What type of equipment have you received?
Response options
Free text

Question 46
Was this equipment:
Response options
1. Provided by the Council 2. Self-funded 3. Other

Question 47
Is there any additional equipment you need that would allow you to carry out your role more effectively?
Response options
Free text

Section 5: Behaviour and attitudes towards councillors in your area

I'm now going to ask you some questions about general behaviour and attitudes towards councillors in your local area.

Question 48
Since becoming a councillor, have you experienced or witnessed any type of inappropriate behaviour while undertaking your role? Please select all that apply. Inappropriate behaviour is any behaviour that causes people nuisance, annoyance, alarm or distress. This can include behaviours that are aggressive or intimidating or that impact upon a person's quality of life.
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. By members of the public – Yes (routing to Q49) / No / Don't know2. By officers – Yes (routing to Q49) / No / Don't know3. By councillors - Yes (routing to Q49) / No / Don't know4. Other

Question 49
Can you describe the behaviour you experienced or witnessed?
Response options
Free text

Question 50
In the last few years, do you think the standard of behaviour towards councillors in your area has:
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Improved (routing to Q52)2. Stayed the same3. Got worse (routing to Q52)4. Don't know

Question 51
Why do you say this?
Response options
Free text

Question 52
Are there appropriate arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards councillors as they undertake their role?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By members of the public - Yes / No / Don't know 2. By officers - Yes / No / Don't know 3. By councillors – Yes / No / Don't know

Section 6: Training and development

I'm now going to ask you some questions about any training and development you have received as part of your role as a councillor...

Question 53
Were you offered an induction programme when you became a councillor?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes (routing to Q55) 2. No (routing to Q55) 3. Don't know

Question 54
Did you complete the induction programme?

Response options
1. Yes 2. No (routing to Q56)

Question 55
Why was this?
Response options
Free text

Question 56
Is there anything else you think it would be useful to include in the induction programme?
Response options
Free text

Question 57
Do you receive regular training as part of your role? This could include training on new legislation and regulation, or any new areas relating your role?
Response options
1. Yes (routing to Q59) 2. No 3. Don't know

Question 58
What type of training have you received (for example, health and safety, equality and diversity, IT etc.)?
Response options

Free text

Question 59
If there is anything else you would like us to know about the issues discussed in this survey, please tell us below.
Response options
Free text

Section 7: Demographics

Finally we would like to ask for some personal information from you. This information will be helpful in contextualising the responses you provide in the survey. It will also enable the Welsh Government to gather important data about the diversity of councillors in Wales and to identify ways to support greater diversity among elected representatives.

Question 60
What is your sex? <i>A question on gender identity will follow.</i>
Response options
1. Female 2. Male

Question 61
What is your age?
Response options
1. 18-24 2. 25-34 3. 35-44 4. 45-54 5. 55-64 6. 65 and older

Question 62
What is your ethnic group?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. White (routing to Q64) 2. Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups (routing to Q64) 3. Asian, Asian Welsh or Asian British(routing to Q64) 4. Black, Black Welsh, Black British, Caribbean or African (routing to Q64) 5. Other ethnic group (routing to Q64)

Question 63
More specifically, what is your ethnic group?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish or British 2. Irish 3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller 4. Roma 5. Any other White background (please describe)
Free text

Question 64
More specifically, what is your ethnic group?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. White and Black Caribbean 2. White and Black African 3. White and Asian 4. Any other Mixed or Multiple background (please describe)
Free text

Question 65
More specifically, what is your ethnic group?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Indian 2. Pakistani 3. Bangladeshi 4. Chinese 5. Any other Asian background (please describe)

Question 66
More specifically, what is your ethnic group?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Caribbean 2. African background (please describe below) 3. Any other Black, Black Welsh, Black British or Caribbean background (please describe below)

Question 67
More specifically, what is your ethnic group?
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Arab 2. Any other ethnic group (please describe below)
Free text

Question 68
Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh? <i>Select all that apply</i>
Response options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Understand spoken Welsh

2. Speak Welsh
3. Read Welsh
4. Write Welsh
5. None of the above

Question 69

What is your main language?

Response options

1. Welsh
2. English
3. Other – including British Sign Language (please describe below)

Free text

Question 70

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

Response options

1. Yes (routing to Q68)
2. No

Question 71

Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

Response options

1. Yes, a lot
2. Yes, a little
3. Not at all

Question 72

Do you look after, or give any help or support to anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

Exclude anything you do as part of your paid employment

Response options

1. No
2. Yes, 9 hours a week or less
3. Yes, 10 to 19 hours a week
4. Yes, 20 to 34 hours a week
5. Yes, 35 to 49 hours a week
6. Yes, 50 or more hours a week

Question 73

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?

This question is voluntary

Response options

1. Yes
2. No (describe your gender identity)

Free text

Annex B: Demography data

Sex

What is your sex?

Sex	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Female	39	430
Male	61	676

Base: 1,106 respondents (518 respondents chose not to answer this question)

Age

What is your age?

Age	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
18-34	3	34
35-44	8	84
45-54	14	149
55-64	27	299
65 and older	49	539

Base: 1,105 respondents (519 respondents chose not to answer this question)

Ethnicity

What is your ethnicity?

Ethnic group	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
White	97	1069
Black, Asian or Minority ethnic	2.9	32

Base: 1,101 respondents (523 respondents chose not to answer this question)

Welsh language skills

Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?

Welsh language skills	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Understand spoken Welsh	34	371
Speak Welsh	30	331
Read Welsh	31	342
Write Welsh	26	290
None of the above	58	640

Base: 1,102 respondents (522 respondents chose not to answer this question)

Health status

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last 12 months or more?

	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Yes	24	264
No	76	838

Base: 1102 respondents

Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?

	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
Yes, a lot	14	36
Yes, a little	48	125
Not at all	39	101

Base: 264 respondents

Do you look after, or give any help or support to, anyone because they have long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses, or problems related to old age?

	Percentage of respondents	Number of respondents
No	76	843
Yes, 9 hours a week or less	12	136
Yes, 10 to 19 hours a week	5	52
Yes, 20 to 34 hours a week	2	22
Yes, 35 to 49 hours a week	1	13
Yes, 50 or more hours a week	4	39

Base: 1105 respondents