

Giving more people a say in local democracy

They reflect last year's Welsh Government consultation on reforming the electoral system in Wales, which received almost 1000 responses.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies, said:

"Local democracy is all about participation. We want to boost the numbers registered as electors, make it easier for people to cast their votes, and give more people the right to take part."

Under the proposals to be announced this week, 16 and 17 year olds would be given the right to vote in council elections, along with all foreign nationals legally resident in Wales. Automatic registration would help ensure fewer people were missed from the electoral register.

Alun Davies said he wants councils to pilot innovative new voting methods, which reflect people's busy lives. These could include remote digital voting, mobile polling stations and voting at places like supermarkets, local libraries, leisure centres and railway stations.

To ensure that people have a clear choice, councils would have to post policy statements from the candidates on line and all those standing would have to declare any party affiliation. Voters will know what candidates stand for and have more reason to vote.

Alun Davies said:

"I am concerned we are still seeing far too many people, particularly young people, disengaged from the political process.

"There are many reasons for this but we must do more to make the process more attractive, welcoming and transparent. The proposals we're announcing this week will, we hope, help increase participation and improve the democratic process for everyone in Wales.

"I would like to see authorities in Wales take the lead and pilot a number of innovative voting methods, something put on hold at the UK level since the mid-2000s. I want to see whether, for example electronic voting or counting, voting on more than one day and in places other than traditional polling stations, could boost participation rates and improve the overall experience for Welsh voters."

Jessica Blair, Director of the Electoral Reform Society Cymru said:

“We are delighted to see the Welsh Government bringing forward these innovative ideas to modernise our democracy. It is an opportunity for Wales to lead the way in creating a political system that works for everybody and it is particularly pertinent as we recognise the centenary of the first women getting the vote.

“Last year our Missing Voices project, in which we talked about politics and voting with nearly 1,000 people across Wales, revealed an appetite for doing things differently. We believe these recommendations are the first step in making that happen.”