

# Sustainable Communities Act Proposal from Weymouth Town Council, Dorset

Form for Submitting A Sustainable Communities Act Proposal

**Name of Council** Weymouth Town Council

**Explain the reasons for your proposal and how the economic, social or environmental well-being of your area will be improved if the Government agrees to it.**

Weymouth Town Council noted that at present the Council is not permitted to pay an allowance for childcare or dependent's care expenses. This is under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003/1021 and The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) (Amendments) Regulations 2004/2596.

This represents an inequality placed on Town Councillors in England. Currently Borough, District, County and Unitary Councillors in England can receive such allowances, as can Town and Parish Councillors in Wales.

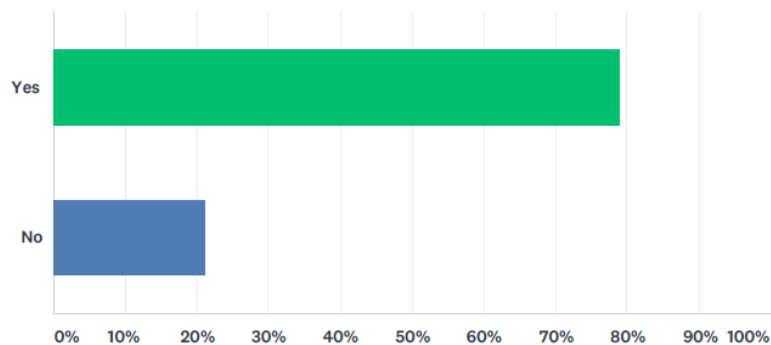
We are seeking under the Sustainable Communities Act for a change to the legislation listed above to allow such payments to be made and the inequality lifted.

**Please provide details of your consultation with representatives of the local community, including the outcome.**

The Town Council ran a poll on social media. The majority of respondents supported such payments (79%) and supported moves to end the inequality (79%). 26% of respondents said that the payment of such expenses would encourage them to stand.

Q1 Do you think that councillors should be allowed to receive a payment for a dependant's care?

Answered: 76 Skipped: 0

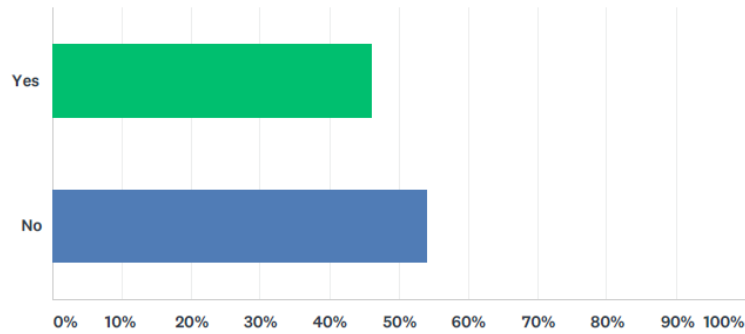


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.95%	60
No	21.05%	16
Total Respondents: 76		

# Sustainable Communities Act Proposal from Weymouth Town Council, Dorset

Q2 Would having access to a payment for the care of dependants mean that you would consider standing for election?

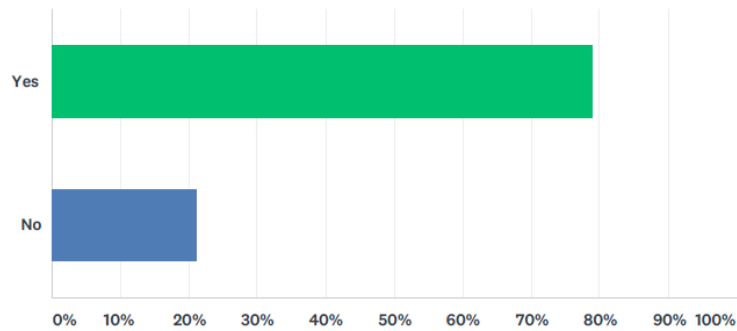
Answered: 74 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	45.95%	34
No	54.05%	40
Total Respondents: 74		

Q3 Do you think that town and parish councils in England should be able to pay for a dependant's care expenses like they can in Wales?

Answered: 76 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	78.95%	60
No	21.05%	16
Total Respondents: 76		

## **Sustainable Communities Act Proposal from Weymouth Town Council, Dorset**

A local Facebook group also ran a poll. The Council had no control over the wording. The responses were 105 in favour, 57 against:

“We’ve briefly spoken about this before on here about members of the public who wanted to become town councillors but didn’t step forward because of the lack of a child care allowance given in the job.

In this day of equality where we have to adapt and work with or alongside disabled people, not having this childcare right is breaking the equality rule. So I’m wondering what your thoughts and opinions are on this one along with a poll for the week (ending on Friday).

Should Town and Parish councillors be allowed an allowance for childcare?

Yes: 105

No: 57” \*

### **Are there any other organisations, groups or individuals that support this proposal? Please provide details:**

The formal wording of NALC’s position on DCA is “The Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations, 2003 to be amended so that the provisions of paragraph 7 apply equally to local councils as to principal authorities.”

Wendlebury Parish Council and Caversfield Parish Council wrote to their MP in 2018 to ask for this change in the law. This was referred to Rishi Sunak, then Minister for Local Government, who relied that there were no plans to change the law. There was little recognition that this was an equalities issue and a barrier to people standing for election in England, but not in Wales. It was also not acknowledged that this was an inequality between parish and town councils, and borough, district unitary and County Councils, as only parish and town Councillors were penalised in this way.

Witney Town Council have also voiced concern at this equality and that it may be preventing younger women from standing. This proposal is also supported by the Dorset, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Associations of Local Councils.

# **Sustainable Communities Act Proposal from Weymouth Town Council, Dorset**

## **Evidence**

The following poll was run on a Town and Parish Clerks Facebook page over three weeks:

“Clerks in England.

Would it increase the diversity and numbers of residents standing for election if Parish and Town Councils could pay dependants care expenses (eg childcare)?

Yes: 48

No: 14” \*

Anecdotal evidence from Clerks in England:

- I have a Member who is a single father who has childcare costs to pay so he can attend our meetings. He feels he can contribute a lot to the village but has mentioned his concern at being out of pocket and may stand down as a result of this.
- I had a councillor who had to resign as a single parent due to lack of childcare. But I think the attitude towards our sector needs radical change to increase diversity.
- I have a Councillor (and excellent Chairman) who is a single parent and she's having to pay for a babysitter so she can attend meetings. I think this is unacceptable, particularly as if she were a District or County Councillor her childcare responsibilities would be covered.
- I've also had a Councillor who had caring responsibilities for her ill husband and she also had to pay for care as he couldn't be left alone.
- I have a Councillor who has brought their two-year-old to meetings as her husband gets stuck at work.

## **Benefits**

Ending this inequality between Town and Parish Council in Wales and in England will increase the numbers of those willing to stand for election, thus increasing diversity and community representation.

The removal of this barrier will increase the number of women standing and increases the views of traditionally marginalised members of the community eg young parents and carers.

Further information is available at Appendix A and a letter from MHCLG Minister Luke Hall, MP is also attached on this critical issue as Appendix B.

## **Proposal submitted by**

Jane Biscombe  
Town Clerk

Weymouth Town Council  
Commercial Road  
Weymouth  
Dorset  
DY4 8NG

# **Sustainable Communities Act Proposal from Weymouth Town Council, Dorset**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Introduction**

Weymouth Town Council noted that at present the Council is not permitted to pay an allowance for childcare or dependent's care expenses. This is under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003/1021 and The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) (Amendments) Regulations 2004/2596.

This represents an inequality placed on Town Councillors in England. Currently Borough, District, County and Unitary Councillors in England can receive such allowances, as can Town and Parish Councillors in Wales.

### **Proposal**

We are seeking under the Sustainable Communities Act for a change to the legislation listed above to allow such payments to be made and the inequality lifted.

### **Evidence**

The Town Council ran a poll on social media. The majority of respondents supported such payments (79%) and supported moves to end the inequality (79%). 26% of respondents said that the payment of such expenses would encourage them to stand.

A local Facebook group also ran a poll. The responses were 105 in favour of payment of such expenses, 57 against.

### **Benefits**

Ending this inequality between Town and Parish Council in Wales and in England will increase the numbers of those willing to stand for election, thus increasing diversity and community representation.

The removal of this barrier will increase the number of women standing and increases the views of traditionally marginalised members of the community eg young parents and carers.

\* To comply with data protection legislation, MHCLG has removed images that may contain personal information.