

# LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

## MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2015 AT HASTINGS HOUSE.

**Present:** Mr Owen Watkin (Chair); Mr Ceri Stradling; and, Mr David Powell.

**LDBCW Officers attending:** Mr Steve Halsall (Chief Executive); Mr Matt Redmond (Deputy Chief Executive); Mr David Carr (Finance Manager); Mrs Rachel Williams (Business Support Manager); Mr Ross Evans (Review Officer); Mr Tom Jenkins (Review Officer); Mr Ralph Handscomb (Review Officer); and Miss Caroline Roe (Office Assistant).

**Time Started:** 9:30 am

**Time finished:** 3:00 pm

### 1. Declarations of interest

1.1. There were no declarations of interest made.

### 2. Chair's Announcements

2.1. The Chair announced that the Local Government (Wales) Bill had been laid before the Senedd and that the Welsh Government had published its White Paper on Local Government Reform, Power to Local People as part of its Local Government re-organisation.

### 3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 16 December 2014

3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 December subject to a minor amendment to paragraph 6.2.

### 4. Issues Arising

4.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February by the Chief Executive.

4.2. It was **Resolved** to accept the Report as a whole and updated progress on the following Issues were noted:

**Issue 1 (IT Strategy)** a verbal update was given by the Review Officer. New software has been ordered by the Commission which includes an updated version of MapInfo and Adobe. The Commission is also due to have all computers updated to Windows 7 by Atos. The Commission expressed a concern about delivery of the software and making payment to Atos before the end of this financial year.

- Issue 3 (Pembrokeshire post-review Questionnaire)** To be considered at the March Commission meeting.
- Issue 7 (Community Reviews)** Community Reviews Desk Instructions are been tested by the current review of RCT and Flintshire.
- Issue 16 (Framework Document)** The Commission is awaiting a response from Welsh Government on the Framework Document
- Issue 22 (Commissioner Appointments)** Welsh Government is to place an advert for new Commission appointments in March.

## 5. Local Government (Wales) Bill

- 5.1. The Commission has been requested to submit written evidence to the Communities, Equality and Local Government (CELG) Committee 27<sup>th</sup> February and to attend a meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March.
- 5.2. The Commission **Considered** the Bill and discussed the relevant sections of the Bill.
- 5.3. The Commission **Considered** its written response to the Bill.
- 5.4. The Deputy Chief Executive had drafted a response which will be re-drafted following minor amendments and e-mailed to the Commissioners for further consideration before submitting the response to Welsh Government.  
**Action: Deputy Chief Executive**

## 6. Workforce Sub-committee

- 6.1 It was **Resolved** to approve the minutes as a true reflection of the previous meeting.

## 7. Initial Reviews Planning: Policy and Practice

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 27 November by the Deputy Chief Executive. The Report dealt with changes to timetabling and arrangements for conducting Reviews brought about by the need to include a new stage in the programme called the Initial Reviews.
- 7.2. The introduction of this new stage of working will require changes to the Policy and Practice document which will need to be consulted on and agreed well in advance of a planned starting date for the mergers programme. An outline of the major changes which need to be made was given and:

7.3. As shown in the Report, proposals in sections 1 & 2 of the Policy and Practice paper were **agreed**.

7.4. Section 3

- items a to h **agreed** as shown in the Report.
- Item i - **agreed** subject to the variance being specified as  $\pm 10\%$  with exceptions considered only if they demonstrate sufficient evidence.
- items j to m **agreed** as shown in the Report.

7.5. As shown in the Report, proposals in sections 4 to 14 **agreed**.

7.6. The draft of the Initial Reviews: Policy and Practice paper (Jan 2016) was to be amended as follows:

- Paragraphs 1.6, and 5.7 to be completed as and when the council size limit is finalised.
- Likewise, paragraph 3.1 ought to include reference to either a specified maximum councillor number or to a ratio as laid down through the Minister.
- Paragraph 4.2 to be completed as and when the completion date is agreed.
- Paragraph 4.6 to be confirmed by the final legislation.
- Paragraphs 4.11 and 4.12 to be refined to encourage Local Authorities to engage with the process but specify that any contacts with county, Town and/ or Community Councils will occur on a review by review basis.
- Paragraph 5.6 to contain reference to the  $\pm 10\%$  limit with a stressing of the requirement to demonstrate sufficient evidence before exceptions will be considered.

7.7. It was also **agreed** that the Policy and Practice paper be shared with Welsh Government throughout the drafting process.

7.8. The Deputy Chief Executive also recommended in the supplemental paper that a Review Manager be appointed to coincide with the commencement of the Parliamentary Review work. This was **agreed**. This work was included in the Reviews timetable planned as C9, which was then examined. This proposed C9 plan included the need to develop a further Policy and Practice paper to be used for the stand-alone authorities which are scheduled for completion at the end of the C9 programme of work. **Action: Deputy Chief Executive.**

## 8. Welsh Language Standards Investigation

8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 2 February 2015 by the Business Support Manager. Welsh Government had granted an extension for the reporting prior to the commencement of the Welsh Language Commissioner's investigation. **Action: Business Support Manager.** The Commission **noted** the report.

## 9. National Assembly for Wales - Disqualification Order

9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 21 January 2015 and to the response to the consultation drafted by the Chief Executive. The Report was **noted** and the draft response **agreed**.

## 10. Electoral Law

10.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 29 January 2015 by the Chief Executive. It was the Commission's view that polling districts were outside its remit and **agreed** that a suitable response to the consultation be made. **Action: Chief Executive.**

## 11. Procurement Contracts

11.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 27 November 2015 by the Business Support Manager. The Report was **noted** and **agreed**.

## 12. Risk Management

12.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 20 January 2014 by the Finance Manager. The Commission **Noted** the report. The Risk Register and Board Assurance Framework 2014-15 were Approved subject to the following amendments:

- Risk CR7 residual risk rating for impact to be increased to 4 resulting in an overall residual risk rating of 20.
- Risk CR7 to be re-worded to expand on risk consequence; now to mention how delayed directions from Minister could have an affect on the Commissions ability to effectively staff within appropriate timescales for the review program.

**Action: Finance Manager**

## 13. Budget Report

13.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 31 January 2015 by the Finance Manager. The Commission **Noted** the report and the current position with regards to the estimated year end under spend and the requirements identified for necessary software upgrades. It was considered that it was very unlikely that the Commission would receive the invoices for the software from Atos before 1 April 2015 and therefore the necessary funds would need to be carried over into 2015-16. This carry over would require permission from Welsh Government and it was **agreed** that the Chief Executive would write to sponsor division requesting

permission to carry over sufficient funds to meet the cost of the software upgrades.

**Action: Finance Manager**

- 13.2. The Commission considered that, given the amount of the estimated underspend for the year end it would be possible to surrender funds back to Welsh Government. It was **agreed** that the Commission would surrender £30,000 back to Welsh Government and that the Chief Executive would write to sponsor division informing them of this decision.

**Action: Finance Manager**

#### **14. Reviews Progress Report**

- 14.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 30 January 2014 by the Deputy Chief Executive. The Report was **Noted** by the Commission and the following points were **Agreed**:

- 14.2. **Flintshire Community Review** – Draft Proposal report published on the 28 January 2015. The Commission are currently receiving Representations up until the 22 April 2015 following publication.

- 14.3. **Rhondda Cynon Tâf Community Review** – The Commission received the Community review from Council on 5 January 2015. The end of the Representations period is the 16 February 2015

- 14.4. **Cardiff Community Review** - Awaiting final proposals to be submitted to the Commission. The final proposals are to be considered by council members in February Meeting.

- 14.5. **Carmarthenshire Community Review** – Council published Draft Proposals on 2 February 2015. The representations period for Draft Proposals will end on the 3 April 2015. It was **Agreed** that Mr Ceri Stradling be appointed Lead Commissioner for this review.

- 14.6. **The Vale of Glamorgan Community Review** – The Council have written to The Commission to request a review commence in October 2015. An officials meeting is to be arranged.

#### **15. Green Dragon Report**

- 15.1. Consideration was given to the Audit Report dated 14 January 2015. The Report was **Noted**.

#### **16. BCW/LDBCW Memorandum of Understanding**

- 16.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 2 February 2015 by the Chief

Executive. The report was **Noted**.

- 16.2. The Cabinet office response had requested amendments to the wording within the Memorandum. Mr David Powell put forward alternative wording suggestion which was **Noted** and **Agreed** by the Commission for response to BCW Commissioners and the Cabinet Office.

## **17. Calendar of Events**

- 17.1. The Report was **Noted**.
- 17.2. Consideration was given to amending the monthly Meeting dates to later within the month. This was **Noted**, however no changes were made to the future meeting schedule.

## **18. Any Other Relevant Business**

- 18.1. Consideration was given to future Commissioner appointments and the future structure/resource of LDBCW Commissioners.
- 18.2. It was **Agreed** that there should be an amended layout and wording within the new appointment newsletter.

## **19. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 10 March 2015**