

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES

MEETING HELD ON 16th June 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); Mr Tom Jenkins (Review Officer); Mr Ross Evans (Review Officer); Mr Ralph Handscomb (Review Officer); and Mrs Catherine Thomas (Review Assistant)

Apologies: Mrs Rachel Williams (Business Support Manager);

Time Started: 9:30 am

Time finished: 11:10am

1. **Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1. Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Review: The Review Officer conducting the review had declared an interest as a resident and elector in the Church Village ward of Llantwit Fardre, and having lived next door to the councillor for the ward for 20 years. The Commission noted the declaration.

2. **Chair's Announcements**

- 2.1. The Chair announced that Framework Document had been agreed and that the Commission have now received a signed copy.
- 2.2. The Chair reported that interviews had taken place for two additional members of the Commission.
- 2.3. Welsh Government proposals for Local Government re-organisation were expected to be announced within the coming week.

3. **Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 14th May 2015**

- 3.1. It was **Resolved** to approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2015.

4. **Issues Arising**

- 4.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 8th June by the Chief Executive on Issues Arising.
- 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 and it was felt that the IT Strategy was now at an advanced stage of completion and could be removed from the Issues Arising list and be monitored as appropriate. **Ralph Handscomb**
- (Issue 2) Pembrokeshire post-review questionnaire - responses close at end of June. An analysis of the responses will be presented to the 21st July 2015 meeting. **Ralph Handscomb**
- (Issue 3) General Questionnaire – to be developed for distribution at a later date. **Ralph Handscomb/ Steve Halsall**
- (Issue 4) Principal areas reviews – desks instructions to be updated. November 2015. **Matt Redmond**
- (Issue 5) Community Council Size – to be considered further following WG consideration of local democracy. **Steve Halsall**
- (Issue 6) Community Reviews – desk instructions are being tested as work is undertaken. Ongoing. **Matt Redmond**
- (Issue 7) Community Order making powers – consider implications and take actions required. This has been deferred until such time as the powers are required. **Steve Halsall/ Matt Redmond**
- (Issue 8) Meeting of Elections Planning Group – next meeting October 2015. **Steve Halsall**
- (Issue 9) Electoral Reviews Planning – To be developed further on receipt of Welsh Government's proposals. June 2015. **Matt Redmond**
- (Issue 10) Travel and Subsistence – investigate insurance cover. June 2015. **Matt Redmond/ Rachel Williams/ Ross Evans**
- (Issue 12) Framework Document – signed copy received. **Steve Halsall**
- (Issue 14) Legal Services – permission to extend the contract with TSol has been given by Cabinet Office. We are still awaiting a response from TSol. **Rachel Williams**
- (Issue 15) Commissioner Appointments – assist WG in appointments process. September 2015. **Steve Halsall**
- (Issue 16) Rhondda Cynon Taf Community Review – Final report to be published. June 2015. **Tom Jenkins**
- (Issue 18) One Voice Wales - The Commission Chair has been invited to speak at the One Voice Wales, Larger Councils Conference in Builth Wells on 8th July 2015.

New Issues Arising

- Inter-Commission Meeting – a provisional date of 17th/ 18th November has been set and Welsh Commissions have responded to the invitation.
- Welsh Language Standards Investigation – a report of the investigation has been received. An analysis will be prepared for consideration at the 21st July meeting.
Steve Halsall
- Initial Reviews Workshop – for all staff and Commissioners, 10:30am, 23rd June 2015. **Steve Halsall/ Matt Redmond**

5. Minutes of the Workforce Sub-committee Held on 14 May 2015

- 5.1. It was **Resolved** to note the Report. A further meeting of the Workforce sub-committee would be held in July 2015.

6. Flintshire Community Review

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 20th May 2015 by the Review Officer. The report analysed the responses received following a limited 12-week consultation period on the proposal for the Flint Mountain area.
- 6.2. The Commission **Noted** the analysis of the 31 representations received and their preferred proposal for the Flint mountain area.
- 6.3. It was **Resolved** to agree the results of the Consultation Report and for the Proposal to maintain the current community arrangements for the Flint Mountain area. **Action: Review Officer**

7. Welsh Language Scheme Annual Report 2014-15

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 15th May 2015 by the Review Officer.
- 7.2. The Commission Resolved to approve the annual report produced in adherence to its Welsh Language Scheme, subject to minor amendments.
- 7.3. The Commission **Discussed** the feedback received from the Welsh Language Commissioner which focused on its response to the Welsh Language Standards Investigation and its Welsh Language Policy, and considered the future stages of involved in adopting the Welsh Language Scheme annual report.
- 7.4. It was **Resolved** to await a further Report on the impact of the Standards on the work of the commission.

8. Annual Report 2014-15

- 8.1. Consideration was given to the Draft Annual Report dated 4th June 2015 by the Chief Executive. The draft included pending financial data which will be updated following an audit, so it was resolved to note and discuss the main body of the Annual report.
- 8.2. The Commission **Noted** the main body of the report and put forward the following amendments.
- Section 2.1 – inclusion of “(latterly to the Minister for Public Services)”
 - Section 2.6 – inclusion of a statement confirming that the ten year programme is currently suspended, pending a Welsh Government announcement on the reorganisation of Local Authorities in Wales.
 - Section 6.1 – Correction of “Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales”, to *Local Democracy and Boundary Commission for Wales*.
- 8.3. The Commission **Resolved** to agree the Report with the above amendments and await an updated version once updated financial data is included.
Action: Chief Executive

9. Online Consultation Portal

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 8th June 2015 by the Deputy Chief Executive regarding the online consultation portal which is already being utilised by both the English and Scottish Commissions.
- 9.2. The Commission **Noted** the report and attached business case which has been put together following a recommendation provided at the Welsh Government liaison meeting on the 19th May 2015.
- 9.3. The Commission **Discussed** the business case, future stages and any potential issues arising during the tender process. It was resolved to make a minor amendment to the wording within the Report, Costs section. The Commission also agreed that Welsh Government would be offered a spot to sit on the tender board if they wish.
- 9.4. It was **Agreed** to put the costed proposal to Welsh Government, and await a response to this business case prior to progressing onto the procurement phase.
Action: Deputy Chief Executive

10. Bank Mandate and Payment Authorisations

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 28th May 2015 by the Finance Manager.

- 10.2. The Commission reviewed the previous bank mandate requirement for multiple signatories and noted that it conflicted with the online banking arrangement for single signatory authorisation level. It was reported that the courses of action available to the Commission would be to either change the bank mandate to allow for single authorisation or change the online banking arrangements to require multiple authorisations.
- 10.3 The Commission considered that there were sufficient supplementary controls in place, such as storage of bank items in a safe and multiple paper signatures required for authorising payments. They also considered that requiring multiple authorisations for online banking payments in a body as small as the Commission would make processing payments inefficient and subject to delays if senior staff were absent for long periods. Allowing for the level of authorisation for bank payments to be set at single signatory level presented the best balance between efficiency and control. The Commission **Agreed** to authorise the signing of the bank mandate to one of the several authorised signatories, for authorisation of banking payments and transactions.

11. Risk Management

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 3rd June 2015 by the Finance Manager.
- 11.2. The Commission considered that the current Risk Register accurately reflected the risks to the Commission's objectives and therefore no changes were required.
- 11.3. The Risk Register was **Noted**.

12. Budget Report

- 12.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 3rd June 2015 by the Finance Manager.
- 12.2. The Commission **noted** the budget position to the end of May 2015 and the £17,000 underspend which was mainly due to the continuing staff vacancy although an appointment had been made and it was expected that the new staff member would take up the post of Review Officer at the start of August, 2015. Other underspends noted, such as translation, printing and postage, were due to funds which would be expended on the coming review work. There were also some minor instances of overspending but it was expected that these would revert back within budget in coming months.
- 12.3. It was reported that some of the underspend would be taken up as there would need to be significant expenditure of approximately £4,000 on training Review Officers to use the new MapInfo version 12.5 and also MapInfo training for the new Review Officer.

13. Reviews Progress Report

- 13.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 9th June 2015 by the Deputy Chief Executive.
- 13.2. The Deputy Chief Executive updated the Commission on the current status of all reviews and reported that the recently discovered discrepancy within the Further Review of Electoral Arrangements for Prestatyn, published in 2013, had been rectified.
- 13.3. The Commission will consider the draft of the Flintshire Community Review Final Proposals Report at the July Commission meeting. The draft report (including maps) to be sent to the Lead Commissioner in advance of that meeting.
- 13.4. The Commission noted that the Lead Commissioner would consider the Rhondda Cynon Taf Final Proposals Report before it is published.

14. Calendar of Events

- 14.1. The Calendar was **Noted**.
- 14.2. The Commission discussed the best options for Commission meetings in 2016 to accommodate the future review programme. A draft programme would be considered in due course.

15. Any other Relevant Business

- 15.1. The Commission noted the communication received through the Welsh Government Investment to Save Scheme. The Commission could not identify an area where this scheme could be utilised.
- 15.2. The Commission confirmed the re-appointment of Mrs Julie James as an independent member for a period of twelve months and a letter is to be sent to her to confirm this re-appointment.
- 15.3. The Commissioners gave permission for their email addresses to be given to Academi Wales for training courses.

16. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 21st July 2015