DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION CYMRU ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

HELD AT 10:30 AM ON 10th April 2026 AT CP2 AND MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present: Karen Jones (Chair); Eifion Evans (Deputy Chair); Ian Bancroft (DBCC Commissioner); Bethan Williams Price (Member); Beverly Owen (Member); Neal Cockerton (Member); Paul Orders (Member); Frances O'Brien (Deputising for Martin Nicholls).

DBCC Officers attending: Shereen Williams; Mark Pascoe (Head of Democratic Health); Michal Harris-Edwars (Business Support Officer).

Invitees: Sarah Ling (Consultant); Cath Uphill (EC); Rhydian Thomas (EC); Michael Kay (WG); Mathew Xerri (WG); Lowri Edwards (Ceredigion Council); William Whiteley (WG); Elan Closs Stephens (EC); Rhys George (AEA); Arwyn Jones (Senedd); Richard Harris (AEA); Paula Waters (WLGA); Eleanor Wrighton (Election Transition Manager for Senedd Cymru)

Apologies: Martin Nicholls (Member); Ywain W (NCSC); Simon Belcher (SWP)

Time Started: 10:31
Time Finished: 11:58

The Chair **welcomed** the new Commissioner to the EMB, **noting** that she will step down to focus her roles as the Chair of the DBCC while the new Commissioner takes on the role of Chair of the EMB.

3. Declarations of interest

3.1. None.

4. **Minutes of previous meeting**

4.1. It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6th March.

5. Action Log

5.1. It was **noted** that all imminent and current actions have been closed, and all open actions are for future dates.

6. Elections Planning Group (EPG) – update and issues arising

6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated March 2026.

6.2. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** that the Elections Planning Group had met for the last time before the election, where the immediate aftermath of the election was discussed, focussing on the arrangement for new Senedd members.

6.3. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** that an informal recommendation will be put in place for the declaration of results based on representations from media organisations to include the numbers of votes cast for each political party and candidate as part of the declaration. It was **noted** there has been positive feedback on this, and template for a script has been drafted.

6.4. The Chair **briefed** that it is the decision of ROs to determine how their results are shared at the local level, and this has been made clear to the media.

6.5. The Chair **briefed** that conversation with the media after the election can help with these matters for future elections.

6.6. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** of the discussions had around problems with the ordering of the ballot for candidates and political parties. It was **noted** that discussions between the DBCC, the EC, and WG resulted in more detailed guidance from the EC on this matter, which should broadly resolve the issue.

6.7. The EC **briefed** that there has been good feedback about the new guidance.

6.8. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** that a meeting had been held with Democracy Volunteers. It was **noted** that they will have 30 to 40 observes, with at least one in every constituency. It was **noted** that Democracy Volunteers brought up the new EC guidance where it says that observers should bring concerns to electoral officials on the spot. They will be seeking a meeting with the EC before the election to discuss how to implement this.

6.9. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** that a meeting had been held with Royal Mail to get further assurances on their operations. It was **noted** that Royal Mail has assured the EMB that there were no significant concerns on their side. It was **noted** that there will be weekly catch-ups until the election.

7. EMB Assurance update

7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 2nd April 2026.

7.2. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** that following the last meeting on 6th March, a second assurance checkpoint questionnaire was circulated to ROs and their teams. It was **noted** that no significant concerns were raised.

7.3. It was **noted** that the respondents confirmed that they have followed directions that were issued relating to the WEIP.

7.4. It was **noted** that 13 of 16 constituencies have responded.

7.5. It was **noted** that broadly speaking, respondents aim for the declaration of results to take place around mid-afternoon.

7.6. It was **noted** that a political party has described themselves inconsistently on nomination papers as a result of using 'Wales' or not before their registered party name, and this may result in differences in ballot paper ordering in different constituencies. It was **noted** that apart from this, most parties have similar names across constituencies.

7.7. A discussion was held around what would happen in the case of potential delays caused by a recount. It was **noted** that one cannot do a partial recount given the electoral system. It was noted that this is up to the individual RO to decide, and would also depend on the count mechanism used.

8. SW Police Update

8.1. Item 6 was delivered verbally.

8.2. The Chair **delivered** the update since the representative could not attend the meeting.

8.3. The Chair **briefed** that during a meeting with South Wales Police, the idea was raised to have more consistency across Wales on how elections are policed. It was **noted** that this was accepted during the meeting, and that assurances will be taken from some chief officer in the various forces in the days following that meeting.

8.4. **ACTION:** The Chair will contact South Wales Police to get an update on this and circulate that to EMB members.

8.5. It was **noted** that at least one of the ROs has been contacted by their local operational police about operations plans for the election.

9. **Electoral Commission update**

9.1. Item 7 was delivered verbally.

9.2. It was **noted** that the EC had given guidance to the parties that were likely to stand about the ballot paper ordering issue.

9.3. It was **noted** that the EC's booklet is still being delivered, with the campaign lasting until the registration deadline.

9.4. It was **noted** that there are also advertisements and talking to the public to further raise awareness of the registration deadline.

9.5. It was **noted** that the EC has been working closely with the police.

9.6. It was **noted** that the EC's Regulatory Lead in the Wales Team has been attending many RO candidate sessions, and if anyone would like him to attend a session, they can contact the EC to arrange that.

9.7. It was **noted** that the EC will probably let the EMB know what areas they will be observing across Wales.

9.8. It was **noted** that four new bulletins have been posted on the EC website. It was **noted** that these bulletins include 'Your vote is yours alone' campaign resources, an invitation to candidates' and agents' advice surgeries, the discussed ballot ordering issue, and guidance on flags at polling stations.

9.9. It was **noted** that the EC are on hand to deal with enquires and are running an out of hours call service.

10. Senedd elections 2026 risk register

10.1. Consideration was given to the report dated March 2026.

10.2. The Head of Democratic Health **briefed** that some risks have been closed off, and those that are open are open in order to monitor them. It was **noted** that all actions identified on the register have been carried out.

10.3. The Head of Democratic Health **noted** that the ballot paper ordering issue was added as a result of the last Planning Group Meeting. The Head of Democratic Health **noted** that this risk could be closed as a result of the EC's guidance.

10.4. It was **noted** that different risks arise as a result of progressing through the election timetable. The next big risks are postal votes and opening, followed by verification and count issues.

10.5. **ACTION:** The Head of Democratic Health will update the risk around the ordering of the ballot papers and then that can be closed.

10.6. It was **noted** that there are concerns in relation to the cyber area across Wales and any potential attacks that could happen.

10.7. **ACTION:** The Head of Democratic Health will look into this issue, and may contact the security teams in the UK Government.

10.8. It was **noted** that there has been a DOS attack on a few councils in Wales, although it doesn't seem to have had an impact on nominations.

10.9. **ACTION:** The Head of Democratic Health will share the contact details of Ywain W from NCSC.

10.10. A discussion was held around the use of title for ROs in election material, specifically whether to use the term Returning Officer for various roles, or to use Constituency Returning Officer also where appropriate. It was **noted** by an RO that he uses Returning Officer in formal communication as that is what the public understands. It was **noted** that another RO uses both since his election material spans different constituencies and it needs to be clear who is accountable for what.

11. Communications update

11.1. Item 9 was delivered verbally.

11.2. It was **noted** that there is one more meeting of the Comms group before the election.

11.3. It was **noted** that all partners are going ahead with their communication plans.

11.4. It was **noted** that at the next meeting, the group will start to look at lessons learned.

11.5. It was **noted** that plans need to be made for the local election in 2027.

12. Senedd Cymru Transition update

12.1. Item 10 was delivered verbally.

12.2. The Election Transition Manager for Senedd Cymru **briefed** that the welcome events for new MSs will start on the Friday and run through the weekend to get all members to swear in their oath by the end of Monday because of plans to have a plenary meeting on Tuesday.

12.3. It was **noted** that the official return from an RO must be received before an oath for a member can be processed.

12.4. It was **noted** that all Returning Officers should have received a letter from the Chief Executive, Manon Antoniazzi.

12.5. It was **noted** that the new form 22 needs to be filled in and sent to the election returns email address and a backup sent by post as soon as possible.

12.6. It was **noted** that a statistics form was also sent out, and that the Election Transition Manager would be grateful if that could be also filled out and sent back with the return.

12.7. It was **noted** that at the end of April, a second letter will be sent out to ROs to remind them of the general process and the six packs per constituency for successful candidates. The Election Transition Manager **asked** that ROs hand out the packs to successful candidates.

12.8. It was **noted** that county and county borough members currently sitting who are standing as candidates at the election must resign is they have successfully been elected, and this must be done before they sign their oath of allegiance. It was **noted** that because of the small window in which the oaths are to take place, an extra check might be helpful to not cause disqualification.

12.9. The Election Transition Manager **briefed** that checks have been put in place, both with questions about disqualifying circumstances on the booking line and directly before they take the oath.

12.10. It was **noted** that some ROs have prepared a briefing note and a template resignation letter to help with the process.

12.11. It was **noted** that resignation from these positions is not an option for successful candidates who are to take the oath.

13. Platform project update

13.1. Item 11 was delivered verbally.

13.2. It was **noted** that the WEIP has been running live for 6 weeks.

13.3. It was **noted** that all legislative requirements are being met.

13.4. It was **noted** that the website went live without the count result functionality (as planned). It was **noted** that the legal requirement will be met regardless since a PDF of the results will be published on the site.

13.5. It was **noted** that for the count results, development is under way on the electoral administrator side of inputting results, the constituency level results being presented on front-facing pages, and also a national level picture.

13.6. It was **noted** that UAT is due for the weekend of the 25th and 26th, with the target deployment date being Wednesday 29th April.

13.7. It was **noted** that all 16 Notices of Election have been published on the site the same day that they were published by the respective RO.

13.8. It was **noted** that 10 candidate data files have been received, and three have been published on the front end after some operational difficulty, both from the function of the website and from all three EMS suppliers.

13.9. It was **noted** that the EMB is currently publishing Statements of Parties and Persons Nominated, Notices of Poll, and for some ROs, their Notices of Situation of Polling Stations on the site.

13.10. It was **noted** that all changes have been worked through in a timely manner.

13.11. It was **noted** that the next element will be the publication of election addresses from parties and candidates. It was **noted** that only two election addresses have been sent in to date.

13.12. It was **noted** that the EMB is in the process of contacting parties and independent candidates to support them with the process.

13.13. It was **noted** that the first election address submission deadline is next Tuesday, with the publication day being the Thursday after. The second and third deadline will be the two weeks directly after the first, again with submission deadline on the Tuesdays and publication on the Thursdays.

13.14. It was **noted** that an RO said that it can be hard to get a hold of some parties and candidates, and that they sometimes deal with party HQ rather than nominating officers or the election agent.

13.15. A PowerPoint presentation was shared showing statistics and pictures of the media campaign. It was **noted** while analysing the statistics for the website that poll cards being dispatched caused a peak in traffic for the site.

13.16. **ACTION:** Sarah is to include a breakdown for visitors to the English and Welsh language sites.

13.17. It was **noted** that the bus advertisements have delivered more than expected.

13.18. It was **noted** that there will be a quick turnaround to prepare the site for the local elections next year, especially because there will be much more data to process, and so manual fixes cannot be relied on.

13.19. It was **noted** that the PID for the next development phase is being drafted.

13.20. It was **noted** that data will need to be collected for the Welsh Government report to confirm that the site satisfies the requirements in the legislation.

14. **Automatic voter registration update and discussion**

14.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated April 2026 by Welsh Government.

14.2. It was **noted** that the workshop for AVR was reconvened, and the membership has been extended to all authorities, the EC, and the AEA.

14.3. It was **noted** that the open register has been abolished, and the provisions in the Election of Selected bodies Act have commenced. It was **noted** that the process is not yet deliverable until a detailed set of regulations for AVR is made. It was **noted** that a draft of this is being prepared.

14.4. It was **noted** that these changes are a result of the lessons learned from the pilot.

14.5. It was **noted** that some of the proposed changes, like reducing the dates for the timing from 60 days to 28 days for the notification, are changes to primary legislation, and so the process for Senedd scrutiny may be longer.

14.6. It was **noted** that this is dependent on the post-election administration still supporting AVR.

14.7. It was **noted** that funding information has been shared.

14.8. It was **noted** that the current ministers would like a system of AVR to be to be implemented in time of the local elections in May 2027.

14.9. It was **noted** that election administrators want the planning and preparations to be inclusive of the people who will be doing this on the ground and consideration for how it will impact in terms of the workload and avenues for funding support.

14.10. It was **noted** that this will be discussed further in the meeting in June.

15. **Welsh Government**

15.1. Item 13 was delivered verbally.

15.2. It was **noted** the Senedd Cymru Member Accountability and Elections Bill was passed on the 17th May.

15.3. It was **noted** that the Bill is currently in the intimation period, and both the Attorney General and the Council General have said that they are not going to refer it.

15.4. It was **noted** that this means the Bill is awaiting Royal Assent before it can become an act.

15.5. It was **noted** that the most relevant part of the Bill for the EMB would be the recall section. It was **noted** that this doesn't automatically commence, and that the pre-election period is being used to plan around potential timescales.

15.6. It was **noted** that the recall section entails extending the EMB's remit to include recall polls, and that it is essentially a conduct order to run recall polls in Wales.

15.7. It was **noted** that there will be a post-election discussion within the Senedd to decide on the details.

15.8. It was **noted** that in Part Three of the Bill, which relates to deliberate deception, there is a duty on ministers to bring forward provisions in that respect.

15.9. **ACTION:** The Chair will invite WG Officials to the EMB Meeting after Royal Assent is given that the additional planning is complete to give an update.

16. UK Government

16.1. Item 14 was delivered verbally.

16.2. It was **noted** that the Representation of the People Bill was still ongoing.

16.3. It was **noted** that the last topical question before the Senedd dissolved was to discuss the Rycroft review into foreign financing and financial interference in elections.

16.4. It was **noted** that a list of consent memorandum has been published, which set out what the bill looks like for Wales. It was **noted** that the Senedd was not asked to formally consent because of the timing of the dissolution of the Senedd, so there are also recommendations for when the 7th Senedd can consent.

16.5. It was **noted** that the EMB is keeping track of how with the Bill is progressing, and after the election, the UK Government may be invited to present to the EMB on the expected timetable.

17. Association of Electoral Administrators

17.1. Item 15 was delivered verbally.

17.2. It was **noted** that the AEA is supporting delivery and is offering weekly drop-in sessions for administrators.

17.3. It was **noted** that the AEA have received a few queries, but not as many as could be expected around election time.

18. AOB

18.1. The Chair **briefed** that the Schedule of Meetings for 2026-27 has been proposed.

18.2. Members and attendees of the meeting **thanked** the Chair for her work for the EMB since this was her last meeting as Chair of the EMB.

19. **Date of Next Meeting:** 12th June