

LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR WALES MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2019 AT HASTINGS HOUSE, CARDIFF.

This document is available in Welsh.

Present: Mr Ceri Stradling (Acting Chair); Mr David Powell (Acting Deputy Chair), Mr Theodore Joloza and Mrs Julie May.

LDBCW Officers attending: Mrs Shereen Williams (Chief Executive); Mr Matt Redmond (Deputy Chief Executive); Mr Dave Carr (Finance Manager); Mr Huw Blacker (Review Officer); Mr Rhys Brooks (Review Officer); Mr Josh Lovell (Review Officer); Mrs Caroline Redmond (Business Support Officer)

Apologies: Mr Tom Jenkins (Review Manager)

Time Started: 10:00

Time Finished: 16:00

1. Declarations of Interest

- 1.1. Mr Theodore Joloza declared an interest in Newport.
- 1.2. Mrs Julie May declared an interest in Neath Port Talbot.
- 1.3. Mrs Shereen Williams declared an interest in Newport.

The Chair did not consider that any of the declared interests prevented the Commissioners concerned taken a full part in discussions and decision making except when the electoral ward specific to an individual was under consideration.

2. Chair's Briefing

- 2.1. The Acting Chair updated the Commission on the appointment of Mr David Powell as the Acting Deputy Chair.
- 2.2. The Acting Chair advised that an update on the pay scale for Commissioners was imminent.
- 2.3. The Commissioners welcomed the new Review Officer to the Commission
- 2.4. Post Electoral Review Survey discussed. Agreed they need to be issued after the completion of a review rather than following an order.
- 2.5. Merthyr Council's two external consultants who will be supporting Merthyr's Political Leadership and Officers to be invited to the Commission for an informal meeting to share information regarding the review process and overview

3. Minutes of the Commission meeting held on 25 June 2019

- 3.1. Subject to some minor amendments and a decision to document the audit trail of electoral wards from pre- review to post review it was **Resolved** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2019 as a correct record of the matters considered.

4. Issues Arising

- 4.1. Consideration was given to the report dated 22 July 2019 by the Chief Executive on Issues Arising.
- 4.2. It was **Resolved** to accept the Report as a whole.
- **(Issue 1)** 2019/20 Remit Letter (Accessibility of Review Reports).
 - **(Issue 2)** Change Program
 - **(Issue 3)** Small Workplace Health Award.
 - **(Issue 4)** 'Shadowing Opportunities – PBU.

5. Newport Electoral Review – Draft Options

- 5.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 23 July 2019 by the Deputy Chief Executive.
- 5.2. The Commission considered the proposals for the electoral wards of Beechwood, Bettws and Victoria.

The Commission agreed with the proposals to reduce the number of members in Beechwood and Bettws by one. The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Provides improvements to electoral variance.
- Aligns the proposal with the Commission's Council Size Aim
- Retains existing boundaries of electoral wards and communities.

The Commission also considered changes to the Victoria electoral ward due to the potential inappropriate variance suggested in the projections provided by the Council. It was decided that it was inappropriate to provide an additional member for Victoria given that it has some 500 fewer electors than Beechwood and Bettws respectively.

- 5.3. The Commission considered the proposals for the electoral wards for Region 1 of Graig and Rogerstone and agreed Option 3a which contains the electoral wards of:

Graig, Rogerstone East, Rogerstone West and Rogerstone North.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves electoral variance
- Aligns the proposal with the Commission's Council Size Aim
- Provides for single-member wards whilst resolving the anomaly of Afon Village in the existing arrangements.

- 5.4. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 2 Marshfield and Tredegar Park and agreed Option 3 which contains the electoral wards of:

Marshfield West and Tredegar Park and Marshfield East.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Improves the overall level of electoral parity in the area.
- Aligns the proposal with the Commission's Council Size Aim
- Retains existing community boundaries.
- Proposes no split communities.

- 5.5. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 3 and agreed – Option 3 which contains the electoral wards of:

Pillgwenlly and Stow Hill

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves the levels of electoral variance
- Provides for easily identifiable boundaries
- Addresses potential imbalances in projected representation.

- 5.6. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 4 which contains the electoral wards of Langstone, Liswerry, Llanwern and Ringland and agreed Option 2a which contains the electoral wards of:

Bishton and Langstone, Liswerry, Llanwern and Ringland

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves levels of electoral variance

- Conforms to all or part of the majority of the representations received.
- Provides flexibility to retain the arrangements (with revised member allocation) if future developments take place.

6. Newport Electoral Review – Draft Report

- 6.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 23 July 2019 by the Deputy Chief Executive.
- 6.2. The Commission considered the content of the report, and proposed names for electoral wards.
- 6.3. The Report was **agreed** subject to minor amendments to be made by the Deputy Chief Executive before beginning the Quality Assurance process.

7. Neath Port Talbot Electoral Review - Draft

- 7.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 22 July 2019 by the Review Officer.
- 7.2. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 1 – which contains the electoral wards of:

Cwmllynfell, Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, Godre'r Graig, Lower Brynamman, Ystalyfera

Options 3 was agreed which contains the proposed electoral wards of Cwmllynfell, Godre'r Graig and Ystalyfera and the electoral ward of Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen and Lower Brynamman.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves electoral variance
- Aligns the proposal with the Commission's Council Size Aim
- Maintains the integrity of the communities as much as possible.

- 7.3. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 2 and agreed Option 1 which contains the electoral wards of:

Pontardawe and Trebanos

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Improves the overall level of electoral parity in the area.
- Addresses the representations received from NPT Council

- Retains the integrity of the communities as much as possible.

7.4. The Commission considered the Draft Proposal for Region 3 which contains the electoral wards of:

Blaengwrach, Crynant, Glynneath, Onllwyn and Seven Sisters

Option 1 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral ward of Blaengwrach and Glynneath and the proposed electoral ward of Crynant, Onllwyn and Seven Sisters.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves the levels of electoral variance
- Conforms to the representation received from NPT Council.
- Retains the integrity of communities as much as possible.

7.5. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 4 which contains the electoral wards of:

Cymmer, Glyncorrwg and Gwynfi

Option 2 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Cymmer and Glyncorrwg, and Gwynfi with Croeserw.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves levels of electoral variance
- Retains the integrity of the communities as much as possible.
- Provides acceptable variance based on the projected figures.

7.6. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 5 which contains the electoral wards of:

Bryn and Cwmavon, Cimla, Pelenna, Resolven and Tonna and agreed Option 2 that contains the proposed electoral ward of Bryn, Cwmavon and Pelenna, the proposed electoral ward of Resolven and Tonna and the proposed retained ward of Cimla

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Significantly improves electoral parity within the area
- Maintains the integrity of the communities as much as possible.

7.7. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 6 and agreed Option 1 which retains the electoral wards of:

Neath East, Neath North and Neath South

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Provides acceptable levels of electoral variance.
- Retains existing electoral wards and community boundaries.

- 7.8. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 7 which contains the electoral wards of:

Aberavon, Margam, Port Talbot, Tai-Bach

Option 2 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Aberavon, Port Talbot and the proposed ward of Margam and Tai Bach.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Best addresses the existing levels of electoral variance
- Aligns the proposal with the Commission's Council Size Aim.

- 7.9. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 8 and agreed Option 1 which contains the electoral wards of:

Coedffranc Central and Coedffranc West.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Takes account of housing development in the area.
- Improves identifiable boundaries and projected over-representation in Coedffranc West.
- Creates no split communities.
- Conforms to the representation received from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

- 7.10. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 9 which contains the electoral wards of:

Aberdulais, Bryn-Coch North, Bryn-Coch South, Cadoxton, Coedffranc North and Dyffryn.

Option 3a was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Bryn-Coch North, Bryn-Coch South, Coedffranc North, Dyffryn and the proposed electoral ward of Aberdulais and Cadoxton.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Best addresses the existing levels of electoral variance.
- Provides for the best communication links.

8. Wrexham Electoral Review – Draft Options.

8.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 24th July 2019 by the Review Officer.

8.2. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 1 which contains the electoral wards of:

Cefn, Llangollen Rural, Penrycae, Penrycae and Ruabon South, Plas Madoc and Ruabon.

Option 1 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of:

Acrefair North, Cefn East, Cefn West, Llangollen Rural, Penrycae, Ruabon and the electoral ward of Penrycae and Ruabon South.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- This scheme best addresses the existing levels of variance in the area
- Minimises the number of split communities
- Utilised the existing community structures and promoted community ties in an arrangement with appropriate levels of electoral variance.
- It minimises the number of multi-member wards
- It is supported by the representations

8.3. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for the Region 2 which contains the electoral wards of:

Brymbo, Esclusham, Johnstown, Minera, Pant, Ponciau.

Option 2 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Brymbo, Esclusham, Minera, Pontciau, Rhos and the proposed ward of Johnstown and Pant.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- This scheme best addresses the existing levels of variance in the area.
- Utilised the existing community structures

- Promoted community ties which resulted in appropriate levels of electoral variance
- Addressed the problems with the Council's proposed boundary changes to the Ponciau and Rhos community ward boundaries

- 8.4. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 3 which contains the electoral wards of:

Bryn Cefn, Gwenfro, Gwersyllt North, Gwersyllt West, Gwersyllt East and South, New Broughton.

Option 2 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Bryn Cefn, Gwenfro, Gwersyllt North East, Gwersyllt North West, Gwersyllt South and New Broughton.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- This scheme provides appropriate levels of electoral variance across the area.

- 8.5. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 4 which contains the electoral wards of:

Cartrefle, Gresford East and West, Holt, Queensway, Smithfield, Whitegate, Wynnstay

Option 1 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Cartrefle, Gresford East and West, Holt, Queensway, Smithfield, Whitegate, and Wynnstay.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Best addresses the existing levels of variance in the area
- Adheres to the Commissions preference for single-member electoral wards.
- It minimises the number of multi-member wards
- It is supported by the representations

- 8.6. The Commission considered the Draft Proposals for Region 5 which contains the electoral wards of:

Llay, Marford and Hoseley, Rossett.

Option 3 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Allington, Burton and Llay, and Marford and Hoseley.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Provides optimum electoral variance for the region
- It minimises the number of multi-member wards

- 8.7. The Commission discussed the Draft Proposal for the Region 6 and agreed Option 1 which contains the electoral wards of:

Brynyffynnon, Erddig, Hermitage, Offa

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Option 1 presents the only scheme entirely composed of single-member wards and resolves the under-representation within the Brynyffynnon electoral ward.

- 8.8. The Commission considered the Draft Proposal for the Region 7 which contains the electoral wards of:

Bronington and Overton.

Option 2 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Bangor-Is-y-Coed, Bronington and Hanmer, Overton and Maelor South.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Best addresses the existing levels of electoral variance
- It minimises the number of multi-member wards

- 8.9. The Commission considered the Draft Proposal for Region 8 which contains the electoral wards of:

Acton, Borrass Park, Little Acton, Maesydre, Rhosnesni.

Option 2 was agreed that contains the proposed electoral wards of Acton and Maesydre, Borrass Park, Little Acton, Rhosnesni.

The following reasons were noted in support of the decision:

- Best addresses the existing levels of electoral variance
- It minimises the number of multi-member wards

9. Bridgend Electoral Review – Final Report.

- 9.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 22nd July 2019 by the Review Officer.
- 9.2. The Report was **agreed** subject to minor amendments to be made by the Review Officer before beginning the Quality Assurance process.
- 9.3. The Commission agreed the Equalities Impact Assessment and the Welsh Language Impact Assessment.

10. Risk Management – Risk Register

- 10.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 23 July 2019 by the Finance Manager.
- 10.2. It was noted that Risk CR2 required updating in light of the recent recruitment of additional staff. It was **agreed** that the residual risk rating of Risk CR2 should be reduced from 20 to 12.
- 10.3. The Commission considered that the delay in Welsh Government issuing an order for the Monmouthshire community review was threatening to have a significantly detrimental effect on the timetable for completion of the Monmouthshire electoral review by the required 2021 deadline. It was **agreed** to that the inherent risk rating for risk CR4 should be increased from 15 to 25 and the residual risk increased from 8 to 20.
- 10.4. It was **agreed** that an additional mitigating action would be added to risk CR4 that a letter be sent to the Welsh Government Deputy Director of Local Government to alert her to the risk to the Commission and offer assistance in drafting the order for the Monmouthshire community review.
- 10.5. The Commission considered that the risk of the electoral reviews not being implemented on time by Welsh Government had increased due to the possibility of other emerging issues being given priority. It was **agreed** to increase the inherent risk from 12 to 20 and the residual risk from 6 to 16.

11. Budget Report

- 11.1. Consideration was given to the Report dated 30 July 2019 by the Finance Manager.

- 11.2. The Commission noted the transfer of funds between the staff costs budget categories and the underspend for the period.
- 11.3. The Finance Manager reported that the Welsh Government were close to finalising a pay award for staff. Based on the provisional figures for the pay award, the cost to the Commission for the current financial year would be approximately £10.5k. This additional expenditure could be accommodated in the existing budget because provision for a staff pay increase had been included in the original budget estimate.

12. Reviews Progress Report

- 12.1. Consideration was given to the Report by the Deputy Chief Executive.
- 12.2. No changes to the existing risks were raised.
- 12.3. The content of the report was **noted**.

13. Calendar of Events

- 13.1. No additions were made to the Calendar of events.
- 13.2. The Commission **noted** the calendar.

14. Any Other Business

- 14.1. The Commission discussed a request from WG regarding clarification on Powys Final Recommendations. Response to be drafted.
- 14.2. It was reported that advice had been obtained from HMRC regarding tax on Members' expenses. All travelling expenses to and from the Commission's offices as well as other claimable expenses were subject to tax as this was considered a taxable benefit by HMRC. Expenses incurred travelling to all other locations in Wales were exempt from tax.
- 14.3. The Commission considered the difficulties experienced in obtaining suitable travel insurance for staff. It was noted that this position was delaying the long overdue update of the Travel & Subsistence policy required by a long-standing audit recommendation. It was **agreed** that the Commission would not continue attempts to obtain travel insurance and that the low level of likelihood risk involved would be tolerated.

Date of Next Meeting: 27 August 2019